

ANOTHER ANTIGONE

The Emergence of the Female Political Actor in Euripides' *Phoenician Women*

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The Phoenician Women, Euripides' peculiar retelling and refashioning of the Theban myth, offers a portrait of Antigone before she becomes the actor we mostly know today from Sophocles' play. In this under-studied Greek tragedy, Euripides portrays the political and epistemological dissolution that allows for Antigone's appearance in public. Whereas Sophocles' Antigone appears on stage ready to confront Creon with her appeal to the universal unwritten laws of the gods and later dissolves into the female lamenting a lost womanhood, Euripides' Antigone experiences the opposite journey, thereby offering insights into the conditions that allow for her exposure in the political arena. A speech by Eteocles at the center of the play questions the existence of absolutes, calls injustice beautiful, and opens the door for Antigone's entrance into the public sphere. With this speech Eteocles challenges us to consider the conditions of political openness in the modern age.

Keywords: *Antigone; Euripides; women's participation; inclusion*

The opening of the blockbuster movie “Troy” last spring brought out the range of sophisticated movie critics who, looking beyond the newly muscled Brad Pitt and the technical tricks of portraying a vast navy of 1,000 ships, noted with dismay all the license that had been taken with the Homeric text of the *Iliad* on which the movie supposedly was based. The recollections of the *Iliad* were there: the conflict between Agamemnon and Achilles, the death of a character named Patroclus, the visit of Priam to Achilles' tent. But many liberties were taken with the Homeric plot as well and for sure much of the texture of Homer's epic is missing: there are no similes to remind us of life

AUTHOR'S NOTE: An earlier version of this paper was presented at the 2004 meeting of the American Political Science Association. I am grateful to the panelists for their comments at that time, to an anonymous reviewer for this journal, and to Peter Euben—all of whom provided exceptionally valuable advice. I also thank Monicka Tuschka for her effective assistance in the early stages of this work.

POLITICAL THEORY, Vol. 33 No. 4, August 2005 472-494
DOI: 10.1177/0090591705275788
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beyond the battlefield, and the gods are emphatically banished from this film. Of course, Brysies was not a Trojan princess and certainly not Hector's cousin, nor did she begin a love affair with Achilles after he kindly protected her from a group of drunken soldiers. She was war booty. Patroclus as Achilles' “cousin” brought its range of guffaws as well. But worst of all, Agamemnon was killed in the last battle. There goes the *Oresteia*. No homecoming to Clytemnestra waiting for him with her purple carpet, net, and sword.

Nevertheless, as Daniel Mendelsohn noted in the *New York Review of Books*, the Greeks were always revising their myths (June 24, 2004, 47). Their myths were not the stable doctrine we sometimes imagine them to have been. The stories had a multitude of variations.¹ We tend to focus on and accept those versions of the myths that have found powerful presentations and have survived in the dramatic works from antiquity. Thus, “our” Oedipus will always be Sophocles'; “our” Clytemnestra will always be Aeschylus' and “our” Antigone will always stand firm against Creon with her speech about a higher law, defending the community of her family, as she does in Sophocles' play. The myths, however, are based not only on the *Iliad* but on other now-lost epics about the Trojan War that were subject to refashioning as they found their enactments on the dramatic stage of ancient Athens. Indeed, a movie that enjoys liberties with the stories in which we have found such resonance is consistent with the practice of the Greeks. Thus, a film in which the death of Agamemnon occurs before his return home should not in itself diminish our appreciation of the film—whatever its other defects may be.

In this essay I will discuss a play by Euripides, *Phoenician Women*, one seldom performed or discussed outside narrow academic circles, although throughout antiquity this play and Euripides' *Orestes* were, after the *Iliad*, the most commonly read and quoted classical texts (Dunn 1996, 180). In this tragedy, Euripides plays fast and loose with the Theban myth that we know from Sophocles. Among the multitude of peculiarities for those of us raised on Sophocles is that both Jocasta and Oedipus are very much alive when Polyneices comes to claim rule in Thebes and meet his death. In addition, Antigone goes off into exile with Oedipus *after* she threatens to defy Creon's decree against burial rites for Polyneices—and it is not clear that she ever actually performs the burial rites for Polyneices as she says she will. There is no suicide by hanging in a cave; there is no Haemon pleading with his father Creon to spare the life of his fiancée. I return to this peculiar play because in it Euripides offers us another Antigone who at first appears as a retiring young woman surreptitiously led by her tutor to the city walls to view the invading army. By the end of the play, Antigone has left the protective walls of her young girl's chamber for the field where her brothers are dying, for her confrontation with Creon, and for her daring journey out of the city with the blind

Oedipus. In this process, Antigone matures and becomes a political actor, expressing views and taking actions based on her own views. Whereas Sophocles' Antigone appears on stage ready to confront Creon with her appeal to the universal unwritten laws of the gods and later dissolves into the female lamenting a lost womanhood, Euripides' Antigone experiences almost the opposite journey. Arendt writes, "Whoever entered the political realm had first to be ready to risk his life, and too great a love for life obstructed freedom, was a sure sign of slavishness. Courage therefore became the political virtue par excellence, and only those men who possessed it could be admitted to a fellowship which was political in content and purpose and thereby transcended the mere togetherness imposed on all—slaves barbarians, and Greeks alike—through the urgencies of life" (1958, 36). This is precisely the story of both Sophocles' and Euripides' Antigones—only for Euripides' Antigone we see her in both roles, the cowardly young woman tied to her chamber and the daring spokesperson on the public stage.

Sophocles' play begins with Antigone in the grip of her family relations. The first line of the play has Antigone call her sister Ismene her *koinon autadelphon kara*, a virtually untranslatable phrase that entails commonality and a self-identification with her sibling(s), as well as the demand that Ismene see herself as inextricably bound to Antigone.² Antigone's explanation to Ismene for the need to disobey the speech of Creon depends on affirming the sanctity of the bonds of family, the commonality of their mother's womb and of their great suffering, and the great love for her brother ["mine, and yours too" she tells Ismene (45)] who lies dead and untended. In some readings of this play (e.g., Hegel's and those deriving from that³)—of which there are so many⁴—the central tension of the play is precisely Antigone's defense of the family against Creon's assertion of political power. The tragedy emerges from the isolation from family and from the generation of life to which Antigone's defense of the family brings her.⁵ Whether or not this captures the totality of the play's significance, we meet Antigone not as a little girl who matures through the action of the play, but as a strong-willed woman committed to performing the rites she sees as decreed by the demands of family ties and by the laws of Zeus. It is this woman—vocal before the male power of the state, defending what is hers and what is lawful in the eyes of the gods—who has captured the imagination of succeeding generations and has given us "our Antigone." Sophocles' version forces us to confront the tensions between family and city, between individual conscience and political power, between universal laws that come from the unwritten voice of the gods and particular laws issuing from human speech. As George Steiner has noted, "Between c. 1790 and c. 1905, it was widely held by European poets, philosophers, scholars that Sophocles' *Antigone* was not only the finest of

Greek tragedies but a work of art nearer to perfection than any other produced by the human spirit" (1984, 1). Perhaps it has slipped slightly in stature as "the nearest to perfection," but not far. And Sophocles' Antigone herself embodies a certain ideal of the independent feminine voice, erotically exciting in her strength of will.⁶ Sophocles' play speaks powerfully to us and his Antigone has become a lightning rod for discourse about our conflicting commitments and our awe before the "wondrous things" that tread the earth—of which, as is sung by the oft-quoted choral ode of *Antigone*, "none is more wondrous than man" (332-334).

With Euripides' unsettling alternative myth, one that rubs so harshly against the myth that we are so familiar with and has exerted so much influence over the ages, there is no such uplifting story to tell. The "heroic" stance of Antigone—if we can even call it that—only surfaces briefly at the end of the play and the play itself becomes an exploration of the troubling epistemological disruptions that allow Antigone to become a political actor, of how one who is female is enrolled in the body of political citizens giving voice to her own views, ready in Arendt's words to "transcend the mere togetherness imposed on all—through the urgencies of life." This understudied (and in many ways unpleasant) Greek tragedy explores the political and especially the epistemological dissolution that allows for the transformation of Antigone.⁷ At the center of Euripides' play is a debate between the two brothers, Polyneices and Eteocles, concerning the subjectivity of equality, the uncertainty that underlies any efforts to affirm who is to be identified as equal and who as unequal. All value terms become subject to individual constructions.⁸ The debate concludes with Eteocles' defense of the "most beautiful injustice of tyranny." It is this debate, I argue, that marks the transition point between the Antigone of the first scene and the final scenes of the play, the enclosed female (who never appears in Sophocles' version) and the actor on the public stage. We see in Eteocles' affirmation of subjectivity the political and epistemological unraveling that allows for Antigone's arrival in the public political arena. Euripides here displays his sensitivity to the challenges and potential dangers of the principles of democratic egalitarianism that he also seems to cherish. The greatness of the playwright is to comprehend both the heights and the depths of equality—and thus to speak to the modern world of the choices that have been made concerning the conditions and possibilities of politics.⁹

Of course, in the democratic regime of fifth-century Athens, women were in no sense equal to the males. They may on occasion have been called citizens (*politai, astai*) for purposes of determining the legitimacy of their sons, but (except on the comic stage) they played no role in the political decision-making processes.¹⁰ Despite the democratic ideology of equality—the

regime was originally called an *isonomia* (equality within/before the laws¹¹)—who was included or excluded and who considered equal was itself subject to constant debate.¹² As Aristotle summarizes, “And so since justice is for certain persons, and is divided in the same manner with respect to objects and for persons . . . they agree as to the equality of the object, but dispute about it for persons . . . They do this particularly because . . . they judge badly with respect to what concerns themselves” (*Pol* 1280a15-20; Lord translation). While there may have been the democratic commitment to equality, there was not any commitment to *who* was equal. And, of course, women were not the only ones excluded from citizenship; there were the slaves, the metics, those not born of citizen fathers and, after Pericles’ citizenship laws, of citizen parents. Citizenship at Athens was exclusionary, and Euripides in his plays not only acknowledges this about his city but criticizes it, perhaps most powerfully in the *Ion*.¹³ Below I want to turn to the conditions that may allow for the breakdown of those boundaries between citizen and noncitizen and the problematic, indeed frightening, nature of those conditions. The breakdown allows for the arrival of the female in the public political arena, but it also poses serious epistemological challenges to the stability of democratic equality.

Euripides has been well recognized as the most democratic of the ancient playwrights. Already in the fifth century BCE, Aristophanes can portray Euripides on stage as the spokesman for democratic egalitarianism. In the *Frogs*, which appeared in 405 BCE, Aristophanes has Dionysius—the god of the theater, dressed here as Hercules—go down into Hades to bring back Euripides. Euripides had died a year earlier and Dionysius is concerned about the absence of good theater to be performed at his festivals. He needs Euripides to come back from the dead and write plays for him. When Dionysius goes to Hades to retrieve a playwright for his festivals, there is a contest as to which playwright he should bring back, Aeschylus or Euripides, and there ensues in Aristophanes’ play a comic comparison of their artistic offerings. Whereas, according to Euripides in this comedy, Aeschylus never spoke clearly (927) and wrote tragedies “all bloated and uncertain / Weighed down with rich and heavy words, puffed out past comprehension” (940, 968),¹⁴ Euripides claims that in his works “I didn’t rave at random, or plunge in or make confusions” (945, 968). Aristophanes then has Euripides, after complaining about the silence of the Aeschylean characters that let the chorus do all the work, describe his own characters:

No one from the start with me could idle with security
They had to work. The men, the slaves, the women, all made speeches,
The kings, the little girls, the hags . . . (947-948, 968)

For this Aeschylus suggests Euripides should have been hanged. “No, by the lord Apollo,” Euripides responds, “It’s democratic (*demokratikon*)” (952). Dionysius warns Euripides to stop going along that path: “You’ll find the ‘little walk’ too steep; I recommend you quit it.” Euripides refuses to stop and continues,

Next I taught the town to talk with freedom . . . Taught them to see, think, understand, to scheme for what they wanted,
To fall in love, think evil, question all things . . . I put things on the stage that came from daily life and business.
Where men could catch me if I tripped; could listen without dizziness
To things they knew and judge my art. (952-961, 969)

Through all Euripides’ exaltation of his common touch, Aeschylus expresses his wish that Euripides had never been such a teacher to the many. Although one cannot ignore the comedic intention of Aristophanes’ plays, Aristophanes captures in this interchange the democratic spirit of Euripides’ plays, ones intended to speak to the many and, to use a modern term, validate their experiences. By doing so, he explored an equality that went beyond the politically constrained world of the democratic citizen body at Athens where women, slaves, little girls, and hags lived outside the participatory circle.

Further, in a number of Euripides’ own plays, Euripides addresses the consequences of a decision-making process that draws only on the wishes and interests of a limited body of male citizens eager for war, whether for gain or for fame. In the wrenching scenes of the *Trojan Women*, we are assaulted with the suffering and anguish of the women who are simply pawns in the war games of the men who decide on a whim whether to go to war and who among the captives shall die, who be taken as concubines, who sold into slavery. On a more personal and less overtly political level, we watch in terror the tragedy of *Medea* and see what madness the male desire for honor, fame, and connections arouses in the female who has been tossed aside. As one who speaks to the democratic city through the production of his plays, his works underscore the dangers of a politics that does not acknowledge the multiple needs of a city composed of multiple parts.¹⁵ In his plays, as Aristophanes has him say in his comedy, all speak, men and little girls, kings, and paupers.¹⁶ They all participate in constructing the message of the play. And Euripides speaks to all of them through the simplicity and directness of his verse.

The egalitarianism of Euripides’ dramatic works is certainly not reflected in the supposedly egalitarian democratic city in which they are performed. Although the *Phoenician Women*, set in Oedipus’ Thebes, does not take place in a democratic setting, and there is certainly no communal decision-making in the Thebes presented on the Euripidean stage, Euripides nevertheless

explores in the *Phoenician Women* the conditions that may allow for the inclusion of those who have been excluded from the “talk[ing] with freedom” that he claims in Aristophanes’ *Frogs* to have taught the town. The Athenians identified their democracy with this freedom—*parrhêsia* or *isêgoria*—and the practice was a critical aspect of their functioning society. The Athenians used public funds to build a boat named *Parrhêsia*, perhaps not because, as Euripides imagined in Aristophanes’ comedy, he had taught them to speak freely, but because they acknowledged the dependence of their regime on the ability to speak freely as the citizens of a political body of self-rule.¹⁷ To open speech to females is to allow them to enter the public stage. Creon in Sophocles’ *Antigone* struggles to silence Antigone, proclaiming that while he lives no woman shall rule over him (525). For Euripides’ Creon, the issue is not so much the speech of Antigone but the insistence that she go within to marry his son. This Creon calls Antigone noble (*gennaiotês*) but marked by folly (1680), and his response when she refuses marriage with his son and threatens to kill Haemon if there is an attempt to force her is to demand that she leave the land. Euripides does not portray the contest of wills that gives so much force to Sophocles’ version.¹⁸

Let me turn now to a discussion of the *Phoenician Women*, which appeared on the Attic stage in 409 BCE.

THE PHOENICIAN WOMEN

Even without all the distortions of the myths we are all so familiar with, the *Phoenician Women* would still be a strange play for us. It was described as “episodic and overstuffed” by an ancient critic (Conacher 1967, 230), included in Euripides’ “melodramas” by H. D. F. Kitto, and described by Kitto as “nothing like a normal play” (1950, 372). A modern reader, Francis Dunn, complains that “characters in the play are piled one upon the other, as are the various texts that report their stories. In a similar way, the larger forces that might have given coherence to the action are multiplied in a bewildering fashion” (1996, 192). Contemporary scholars, nourished by an Aristotelian theory of tragedy, often preface their studies of this play with some exculpatory remarks about why one would attend to a play that is so aesthetically and thematically unsatisfying—this despite the fact, as noted above, that Euripides’ *Phoenician Women* and his *Orestes* were the most commonly read and quoted classical works except for Homer throughout antiquity (Dunn 1996, 180). An effort at a brief plot summary may suggest why such excuses might be necessary.

The play builds on and revises substantially the Theban legend familiar from Aeschylus’ *Seven Against Thebes* and Sophocles’ *Oedipus, Antigone*, and *Oedipus at Colonus*, bringing all those plays with many peculiar twists and turns into one massive pageant. Polyneices, the son of Oedipus and Jocasta, has returned with an Argive host to claim his turn to rule over Thebes from his brother Eteocles who, too much in love with being a tyrant, has refused to yield his power. At first Jocasta, who has not committed suicide as in Sophocles’ play,¹⁹ tries to reconcile the sons. She fails, they fight, they kill one another, and Jocasta kills herself upon seeing their two bodies. Before the encounter between the two brothers, Eteocles tells Creon to rule in case he dies and informs him that he has sent Creon’s son Menoecus to bring Teiresias the seer to Thebes. Teiresias arrives accompanied by Menoecus and reveals that the city can be saved only by Menoecus’s sacrifice. Creon refuses to perform such a sacrifice and sends Menoecus away. Menoecus pretends to be ready to depart, but once Creon has left the stage, he prepares to kill himself for the sake of the city. Meanwhile, Antigone rushes to the corpses of the brothers and plans the burial, until Creon on earlier orders from Eteocles denies burial to Polyneices and decides it is time to expel Oedipus. Antigone defies Creon, Oedipus appears, and off father and daughter go into exile.

I have not recounted all the characters and episodes in the play. It is indeed an “overstuffed” tragedy, and the themes are multiple and often hard to tease out from the variety of action and speeches. Yet, if we focus on the appearances of Antigone throughout the play, I believe that we can distill certain of Euripides’ democratic themes, as well as his concerns about and critiques of democracy. These critiques do not derive from the aristocratic perspective that an Aristophanic Aeschylus might offer but from an epistemological perspective. Through Eteocles’ speech, Euripides offers a portrait of a world in which the equality of the democracy translates into one where all opinions are given equal weight, where hierarchy dissolves among opinions as it does among individuals.

The play begins with Jocasta’s soliloquy; she recites the story of Laius, the Sphinx, Oedipus (who still lives in darkness inside the palace), and her two sons Eteocles and Polyneices, the latter of whom has arrived at the gates of Thebes with an Argive army to claim his turn to rule over the city. This prologue is followed by a scene in which the Pedagogus (slave/servant) leads the girlish Antigone out of her maiden room (*parthenônas*,²⁰ 89) to observe the invading Argive host. The Pedagogus urges Antigone to hold back briefly so that he can make sure that the way is clear lest any one of the citizens (*tis politôn*) appear and there arise for him as a slave and her as a princess (*anassêi*), i.e., a young female, “paltry censure (*phaulos* . . . *psogos*)” (94-95).

Women and slaves do not reveal themselves to the city. For Antigone, the movement of this play will be marked by the disclosure of herself before the city, the casting off of any shame or respect for the norms of the city and the hierarchy that has kept her—along with her slave—hidden within her maiden room. The events and speeches of the play develop so that she can by the end of the play rise above the gender distinctions that mark her status and make her a concealed creature at the beginning. At this early moment of the play, though, since no one of the city dwellers (*outis astôn*, 99) is in evidence, Antigone led by the Pedagogus secretly ascends the wall.

Antigone learns from the Pedagogus the names and stories of the Argive warriors who lead the attack on Thebes. The scene recalls a scene in Book 3 of the *Iliad* when Priam and Helen look down from the Trojan wall at the leaders of the Greek army. In the scene in the *Iliad*, though, Helen identifies the Greek heroes for Priam. In Euripides' play, a slave identifies the warriors and explains the significance of their armor for the innocent Antigone. She in her turn sees in the arms of the soldiers below initially only the glittering blaze of their armor (110-111), not the destruction they will cause. By the end of the play, she will tragically have more experience with the meaning and tools of battle. In this early scene, though, she simply calls down upon the Argive host the nemesis of Zeus's thunder so that she may never have to suffer enslavement. "I would not endure being a slave" (192), she asserts—she who at this point can barely appear outside her maiden room before the city dwellers. The Pedagogus ends the instruction from the wall by sending Antigone back into her maiden room because a mob (*ochlos*) of women approaches. Women are by nature (*ephu*), according to the Pedagogus, "lovers of censure" (198). The Pedagogus concludes the scene having this to say about women in general: "There is a certain pleasure (*hêdonê*) for women not to speak what is sound (*hugêis*) about one another" (200-201). Into the mouth of a slave Euripides has put a speech condemning the free speech of women. As noted above, a central feature of Athenian democracy was the practice of *parrhêsia*, the freedom to speak all things. The Pedagogus, appropriating the mores of his masters, denies speech to women as well as to the young charge under his care. It is precisely from such limits that Antigone breaks away at the end.

With this language the Pedagogus may simply be expressing conventional wisdom with idiomatic phrases as some have suggested (Mastronarde 1994, 206; Craik 1988, 181), but playwrights who put such speeches into the mouths of slaves undermine the truths of the conventions;²¹ Jocasta's powerful prologue introduces the play showing her to be neither "a lover of censure" nor one who speaks what is "unsound" of others. We will look further into the speeches that Antigone (so protected at the beginning of the tragedy)

gives and the role she will play by the end of the tragedy. Then she will act against all expectations, even going so far as to pick up the sword (1677) on which she swears to follow through with what she warned Creon she would do—not wait quietly for her wedding to Haemon but lead her father off to Athens and Colonus. Indeed, even the chorus that appears after the misogynist speech of the Pedagogus is comprised of the Phoenician women of the play's title who, far from looking for gossip or speaking ill of other women, sing in lofty phrases of their travels from the Phoenician to the Cadmean land and presciently lament the imminent bloodshed. They are the ones who announce the arrival of Polyneices and remark that he comes "not unjustly armed into the contest" (258-259). Though foreigners in Thebes, these women know the circumstances of the city, and they speak the language of justice, which is so strikingly absent from the speech of the current ruler of Thebes, Eteocles.²²

The chorus of the Phoenician women prepare for the arrival of Polyneices and they call forth Jocasta to welcome Polyneices to Thebes. In her welcome she describes the life of her husband/son and his father/brother, the old man bereft of his eyes, longing for death (327). She then turns to the major part of her speech, expressing her concern about the foreignness of Polyneices' bride and family, an alliance which causes her great grief. Polyneices' kin did not participate in the creation of the marriage ties with a foreign family. She expresses here the attitude of the Athenians as well who have insulated themselves from the intrusion of the foreigner through citizenship laws that exclude the foreign-born and their children from a direct role in the political life of the city. The xenophobic standpoint articulated by Jocasta in her interchange with Polyneices reflects the inclinations of the audience to whom Euripides speaks. But the audience, knowing well the myth of Oedipus or at least having just heard Jocasta recall it in her prologue, must also be aware that the insularity she craves for her city underscores the insularity of her own family's impieties and the offenses against the gods it expresses. Insensitive to the too-narrow frame of the familial relations that mark her own incestuous family, she bemoans the foreignness of Polyneices' marriage alliance. The Athenians' self-conception as a community of citizens that excludes the foreigner faces the same potential impieties that in the familial version haunt the house of Laius.

It is this issue of "foreignness" and thus exclusion that Jocasta explores in her interrogation of her just-returned son. Polyneices expresses his anguish that his return home to the familiar halls and the gymnasium where he had been nurtured is marked by the sense of being among enemies and the fear of his own kin. He lives in a foreign city (*xenên polin*, 369), he laments, leading Jocasta to inquire (after some hesitation lest it cause Polyneices pain): "How

is it to be deprived of one's fatherland? Is it a great evil (*kakon mega*)?" (387). Polyneices responds without hesitation: "*Megiston*. It is the greatest. But greater in deed (*erga*) than in word (*logoi*)" (389). Persistent in her inquiry, Jocasta wants to know what is so harsh for one living in exile. "The one greatest thing," Polyneices replies, "I do not have freedom of speech (*parrhêsia*)" (391). Not the distance from kin, not the absence of loved ones, but the loss of public freedom captured by the ability to speak openly what one thinks weighs heavily on Polyneices as the "greatest" cruelty of exile. Jocasta, his mother, not noting his callousness toward his family (and especially toward her), equates the denial of *parrhêsia* to the life of one who is not free: "You have spoken of that which belongs to a slave, not to say what one is thinking" (392). Polyneices agreeing finds the lack of *parrhêsia* the greatest evil because "one must bear the folly (*amathias*) of those who are powerful" (393). Jocasta concurs, judging it as grievous "to share in the lack of wisdom with those are not wise (*sunasophein tois mê sophois*)" (394).

Beyond exposing the self-pitying character of Euripides' Polyneices, his (and his mother's) attitude toward *parrhêsia* is revealing. It is practiced only by those who are not foreigners within the city, only by those with power and not by those who are subordinate, i.e., it captures the hierarchical and exclusionary relationships of the city. The sense of disempowerment is not even so much the silence that is imposed on foreigners and slaves—and, as the Pedagogus has revealed, women—who cannot participate in the self-rule of the assembly, but the necessity of hiding one's thoughts, of having to cover or veil what one believes or knows to be true before another who is less wise. Indeed, the misery comes not only from covering oneself, but even more from being forced to agree with what one recognizes as foolish, to be denied the opportunity to criticize the absence of wisdom in others. Polyneices' life as a foreigner in a foreign land is that of a woman who is silenced. It is the life of the well-spoken Tecmessa, Ajax's wife, in Sophocles' play *Ajax*, who is unable to speak to her husband of his folly. It is, indeed, the life Antigone "enjoys" at the beginning of the play. Yet, the foreshadowing here to the Antigone who will speak freely to Creon of his folly at the end of the play gives this work some of the unity scholars tend to deny it.

I do not want to suggest that Euripides here is suggesting the political empowerment of women who are silenced like Polyneices when he lives among the Argives married to an Argive princess. Nevertheless, this interchange about silencing the foreigner extends the discussion beyond the simple exclusion practiced by the Athenian democracy to the enslaving implications of that exclusion through silence. Had we not heard the speech of Jocasta or the derogatory comments of the Pedagogus, we might not reflect on how this discussion relates to the silenced members of the community at

Athens. But with those as part of the dramatic action of the play, we are prepared for the implications that extend beyond Polyneices' unhappiness about his life in Argos to the practices that divide those who can enjoy *parrhêsia* and those denied it. Those without that opportunity to speak freely to others of their follies, whether they are actual slaves or princesses like Antigone, live the very lives of slaves.

The elevation of *parrhêsia* to the point of demarcation between those who are within the city and those who are exiles itself points to the longing for a freedom that allows for a self-exposure connected to the resistance to hierarchy. To be free within a city is to share in the critique of others without the fear of reprisals. Polyneices rebels against a shame that forces him to cover and restrain himself before others. As Polyneices explains, he must play the slave in Argos—unseen and unspeaking. This, he tells his mother, is against (his) nature (*para phusin*, 395). Not to speak freely to those who pretend to have a knowledge they do not have is to be unseen and unheard, to not be. To be a slave or a young woman (like the Pedagogus and Antigone in the first scene of the play) is to hide not only one's body from the sight of city dwellers, but also—far more powerfully and tragically—one's thoughts. Unable to express oneself, the foreigner, the slave, and the woman all become invisible. Along with the freedom to speak lies, the freedom to criticize. This Euripides' Antigone will find she can do by the end of the play.

Sophocles' Antigone's initial interchange with Ismene in the first lines of the play finds her eager to criticize the male power of the city. She attacks Ismene first for holding back and then expresses hatred for her sister when Ismene says that she will not proclaim Antigone's deed boldly before the city (69-87). There is no dramatic development that brings Antigone forward into the public sphere; she is there from the start and demands that Ismene join her in this open proclamation. In the *Phoenician Women*, before we can have Antigone play this open role on the stage and within the polity as presented on stage, we must hear the great debate between Polyneices and his brother Eteocles as they prepare to set forth to battle and to engage in mutual slaughter.

At the end of the interchange between Polyneices and Jocasta, Polyneices appeals to his mother to play mediator and dissolve the evils that divide the brothers, thereby releasing him from his pain and the city of Thebes from its own suffering. It is at this point that the chorus announces the arrival of Eteocles. At once, the stark contrast between Eteocles and Polyneices emerges. Polyneices, defending his decision to come home in order to take his turn ruling in Thebes for a year and then yield that rule when the year has passed, longs for a world grounded in justice, in reciprocity, in natural truths and natural hierarchies, where oaths have meaning and compacts have strength. "The tale of truth (*ho muthos tês alêtheias*)," he tells his brother, "is

(by nature, *ephu*) simple and that which is just does not need many-colored (*ou poikilôn*) interpretations" (469-470). The truth is obvious, not complex, Polyneices affirms. It is the sick "unjust speech (*adikos logos*)" that complicates and requires a "clever medicine (*pharmakôn sophôn*)" (471-472). Polyneices concludes his lengthy speech directed toward his brother by noting that he himself has not used the "multi-colored (*periplokas*) [techniques] of unjust speech" (494).²³ Polyneices trusts in a world where speech unadorned and on its own has the power to order the world, where even the absurd language of an agreement that the brothers make to take turns ruling ought to hold sway. Words are the tools of justice for him, not power.

Eteocles, in contrast, envisions a world without the simplicity and uniformity of absolutes that Polyneices assumes; he begins his response: "If the beautiful (*kalon*) and wisdom (*sophon*) were by nature (*ephu*, again) the same for all, there would not be strife (*eris*) of uncertain words (*aphilektos*)" (500). Rather, Eteocles continues, "for mortals equality/fairness (*ison*) is not at all the same except in name; the deed (*ergon*) does not exist" (501-502). Words provide no certainty, no strength, only ambiguity. Thus conflict; thus debate. According to Eteocles, neither good nor bad are grounded in a permanent nature waiting to be revealed. There is no natural hierarchy of the well-born such as the one that Polyneices imagines in his conversation with his mother when he complains that someone of his "nature" must not suffer the indignities of poverty (400-405). Eteocles, practicing the free speech for which Polyneices longs, sees only the uncertainty and impermanence of words and respects neither traditions nor oaths nor family. He affirms simply and without qualification that truth comes from power, not from knowledge, not from birth, not from hierarchy.

Eteocles sets the challenge forcefully. To his mother he says that he will speak all openly, enjoying just what Polyneices claims is most difficult to lose when one is in exile: "I speak, mother, hiding nothing (*ouden. . . apokrupsas*)" (503). No shame, no deference deters him. So, shamelessly he tells her that he would go up to the stars or down into the earth (presumably to Hades) to have the greatest of divine things, which he tells her is power in the city, tyranny (506). "This, mother, is the best and I am not willing to hand it over to another and not preserve it for myself" (507-508). This he says, despite oaths sworn with his brother before his father. The shame (510) would be, he tells her, for him to yield to his brother for fear of the arms he brings with him. Thus, he will not hand over the scepter despite his mother's pleas and despite the oaths he has sworn. If no equality, no fairness lives beyond speech, as Eteocles asserts, then those who possess power, in Eteocles exposition, affirm the meaning of words. Eteocles as the ruler in Thebes, openly and shamelessly, we can perhaps say, expounds without hid-

ing his praise and desire for tyranny. He speaks from a position of power and is uninhibited by the fear of reprisals or the castigating looks that restrain Antigone and her Pedagogus as they softly venture forth to ascend the city's walls. Nor is Eteocles awed by a world of supposed justice. He would do anything, he tells his mother, to preserve the power he currently has. It is to Polyneices, Eteocles claims, coming to lay waste to his father's land, that shame (*aischunê*) belongs (510), not to the one who shamelessly expresses his ambition to rule. All men have that desire and he does not want to lose the power he has.

Eteocles concludes his startling speech with a powerful oxymoron that matches the outrageousness of what has preceded. He says, "If it is necessary to be unjust, to be unjust for the sake of tyranny is most beautiful (*kalliston adikein*)" (522-523). The English translation does not capture the proximity of "most beautiful" and "to be unjust." No shame inhibits this expression of what he believes. His truth is uncovered, as ugly as it may be. Indeed, the chorus reacts with the affirmation of the conventional in response to this shocking proclamation: "It is necessary not to speak well upon deeds not well done; for this is not beautiful (*kalon*), but harsh (*pikron*) towards justice (*dikê*)" (526-527). In deference to their sense of what is right, the chorus urges that Eteocles' speech not reveal, but hide, the shocking expression of Eteocles' own truth. They advise him to show respect for the noble and the just, to be controlled by shame and hide his thoughts. They wish him not to be himself—as Polyneices had been forced to be as a foreigner among the Argives.

Eteocles' speech in all its ugliness is a serious challenge to the aristocratic vision offered by Polyneices. Polyneices had spoken of his "nature" that had recoiled at the poverty he experienced during his exile from Thebes and had complained of the loss of *parrhêsia* when he was a foreigner in Argos. He had insisted on excluding the multiple, the many-colored, in his verbal battle with Eteocles. In contrast, Eteocles acknowledged the multiple and in doing so acted against the aristocratic hierarchy of individuals and values to which Polyneices subscribes. All that matters to him is the exercise of power. He does not feel the need to justify his rule, nor could he since equality and justice are just words and not deeds.²⁴ The democratic challenge posed here by Eteocles is itself multiple. Eteocles uncovers himself by speaking freely, enjoying *parrhêsia*.

For Eteocles, birth—noble birth even—means nothing. Inherited rule is subject to control by those who have acquired power, not by those to whom it is due. Nothing in the individual dependent on his ancestry justifies the transfer of political authority to him. No earlier oaths hold sway. The differences that matter come not from one's parents or one's earlier speeches, but from the "deed," how one acts. Eteocles opens up a world that escapes the

patriarchalism of Thebes and familial impieties that weigh down the other characters. The portrait he paints of this world with its most beautiful injustice is not pretty. But it also welcomes those who have been excluded from the realm of public participation by rejecting the inherited assumptions of certainty to include those who have been excluded. By denying the existence of any measure beyond the speech of the ruler, he allows for a previously unimagined equality, but he does so just as he loses any reference to a beautiful justice by extolling the beauty of injustice. It is in the context of Eteocles' speech that we must see Euripides' questioning of an egalitarian democracy that sees all difference as arbitrary, as resting on constructed boundaries.²⁵ And it is in the context of this speech that we must also understand the emergence of Antigone as a political actor. The transition from a world controlled by the language of justice and injustice, of good and bad, to a world where such language is dismissed and replaced with the desire for power and the primacy of the individual's passions allows her to enter the political realm, just as it also allows for the ugliness of Eteocles' "beautiful injustice." Subjective needs and desires trump the mores grounded on notions of justice and injustice. The pretense of a hierarchical order of better and worse, of noble and ignoble, explodes with Eteocles' affirmation of the deed over the word.

Let me skip over the Teiresias-Creon exchange and the self-sacrifice of Menoecus which fill up this "overstuffed" play and turn to the next scene with Jocasta. Jocasta has been told by the messenger that her two sons still live, but also that they are about to engage in a single combat with one another ensuring that one if not both will die. She at once entreats Antigone to go with her to try to stop the duel. "Now," she tells her daughter, "it is not fitting for you to enjoy dancing nor the amusements of maidens (*choreiais*. . . *partheneumasi*)" (1265). This is the point where Antigone is about to be transformed. The crisis posed by the impending combat puts her into Eteocles' world of deed, not word, where old traditions slide away before current necessities.²⁶

When Jocasta tells Antigone to follow her, Antigone at first resists: "Where? Shall I abandon (*eklipousa*) my maiden room (*parthenas*)" (1275). Jocasta bluntly says in response in half a line: "To the army" (1275). Antigone still resists: "I am ashamed before the mob (*ochloi*)" (1276). Jocasta, ignoring all the conventional restraints imposed and reported by the Pedagogus at the beginning of the play, responds: "There is no shame in it for you" (1276). Antigone now must transcend the traditional language. Conventional words of censure do not limit her; now she acts openly. Antigone leaves behind her maiden room and shuns any worries about public exposure on the field of battle. Shedding the worries of evoking castigating speech, she now urges her mother to lead her to the midst of the army which she had earlier only viewed

from a discreet distance, gazing down from the city's walls under the guidance of the Pedagogus. As she heads to the field she now says, "There must be no delay" (1279).

Eteocles' speech had shown us a world where the old boundaries between good and bad, beautiful and ugly, just and unjust faded with the melting power of words. Antigone's exposure depends on the elimination of those boundaries, on the subordination of nature to the power of those who control language. The hesitation that marked her first scene with Pedagogus expressing the conventional limits on the behavior of girls and slaves dissolves. Those boundaries have now been shown by Eteocles' speech to be meaningless in themselves, and so she dashes forward to the battlefield and does not simply observe that world of swords and conflict, hidden from the view of all, looking down from the city's wall on the blazing arms.

Despite the haste of the aged mother and the young daughter, as the messenger subsequently reports, they arrive too late and find Polyneices and Eteocles both dying as the result of the single combat. Jocasta then takes the sword and kills herself. Antigone returns to the stage (and public space) from the battlefield, chanting of the suffering of her family. No longer is she unheard or hidden. She takes her place at the center of the stage, rejecting the enclosure of her maiden chamber to which she had fled with the Pedagogus when the chorus arrived in the early scene of the play. That was the space the Pedagogus saw as suitable for a princess in the early lines of the play. What we have now heard from Eteocles allows for the escape from defined roles, from the external limits on what one says and what one does.²⁷ Words are meaningless; only the deed matters, he had argued. Antigone abandons her maiden room and all restraint for the public space of the city, for the action and deeds rather than the words and conventions. As she sings in her song, there will be no covering, no hiding (*prokaluptomena*) of the delicate curls hanging over her cheeks; nor will there be any reddening on behalf of a maidenly (*parthenias*) modesty. There will be no blush (*eruthema*) on her cheeks, nor will she feel shame (*aidomena*, 1485-1487) as she follows the death procession through the city. No more surreptitiously climbing the walls of the city, escaping the notice of the citizens, Antigone now plunges—without shame, as she herself says—into the middle of the city's events. She sings her dirge, displays herself without respect for the city (or even, perhaps, for the gods). The conventional power of speech does not restrain her—that power dissolved as Eteocles articulated the praise of a most beautiful tyranny.

Antigone even drags forth, against his wishes, her blind father into the light out of the house to which he had been banished by his sons. Polyneices and Eteocles had been eager to hide their father thinking that he might be forgotten if he were no longer seen. Hidden within, like the women of the city, he

and his impieties might be ignored. Antigone insists that he come into the light, out of the house just as she had done, and escape that banishment (1540). Now, the impiety of his deed no longer need be hidden, now that there is a beautiful injustice. And when Creon tells her to leave aside the triple corpses and “take yourself, Antigone, inside the house / and wait there a maiden (*parthenou*) until the coming day when a marriage with Haemon waits for you” (1636-1638), Antigone first mourns for her father, but then immediately confronts Creon: “Why do you pass decrees about miserable corpses?” (1635). She proceeds to debate forcefully with Creon, speaking freely as she criticizes him for following Eteocles’ wishes, calling them “foolish” (*aphrona*) and Creon a stupid moron (*môron*) for obeying them (1647). When Creon insists that it is just (*dikaion*, 1648) to follow through on Eteocles’ decrees, Antigone introduces the importance of individual judgment and insists that it is not just if such decrees are “bad” and spoken evilly (*kakôs*, 1649). Here she relies on her own judgment as to what is just and unjust. Unlike Sophocles’ Antigone, she does not appeal to the unwritten laws of Zeus as a guide to her actions. It is Creon who appeals to a divine being (*ho daimôn*, 1602), not Antigone, who only responds to Creon’s appeal. It is Creon who uses the language of justice (*tên dikên*, 1654, also 1648 above), not Antigone. When she describes the refusal to bury Polyneices as not just, it is simply her voice that affirms the injustice, not the voice of the gods. She relies on herself. And as Creon tries to defend the justice of not burying Polyneices, Antigone remains adamant in her refusal to allow Creon to control the language of justice. Finally she defies Creon with her words: “I shall bury him even if the city speaks against it” (1657).

Creon responds with the command to his servants to take her into the house, and when she resists he calls her again a young girl (*parthen'*, 1663) and remarks on how the judgments of the gods do not seem to be best to her. In response, she—who has refused to go back into the house and quietly await her bridal day—passes her own decree to stand against Creon’s: “Let there be no insult to corpses,” she affirms (1664). She competes with Creon for rule over the city’s actions through speech since, for sure, she does not have the strength to compete with him with arms. Creon remarks to Oedipus (not without a certain irony): “Do you see (*eides*) how daringly she scorns and upbraids me?” (1676). From the silence imposed upon her at the beginning of the play, she moves on to a confrontation of the boldest sort, speaking fearlessly without deference before the male ruler in the city about the injustice of denying burial to Polyneices, refusing to wed the man chosen for her according to the customs of the city, and finally insisting on leaving her proper place in the palace and in marriage in order to follow her father into exile. She rejects her father’s concern that attending a blind father in exile

would be shameful for the daughter (1691). She, not others, determines what is shameful; it is the deed, as Eteocles had said, not the word that determines what is shameful. Eteocles’ speech has released Antigone to define for herself the shameful and the just. In contrast to Polyneices, speech is not simple, but multiple. The dissolution of the earlier certainties enable and empower the female political actor. For Sophocles’ Antigone, it was the affirmation of certainties decreed by Zeus that brought her into open confrontation with Creon.

CONCLUSION

Antigone wanders off with her father at the conclusion of the *Phoenician Women*. She has abandoned her maiden room for the space outside the city, but she does this because she herself chooses to do so against the commands of the ruler and the wishes of her father. She defies the authority of others to make her choices, unrestrained by traditions or the ancient understandings of nature. Oedipus tries to depart alone, warning Antigone: “Exile is shameful for a daughter with her blind father” (1691). But she resists his warning and leaves, she says, to her maiden friends (*philoisi parthenois*, 1737) tears of longing. She seeks instead the renown that will come to her from tending to the banished and suffering Oedipus. Of course, nowhere in this play do we see the democracy of the Athenian assembly, of the juries, of the lottery for office, but we do see the rejection of prescribed categories and the affirmation of an individual, male or female, making choices, speaking freely without deference to authority or societal expectations. Antigone emerges as a political actor with this shattering of prescribed boundaries. Sophocles’ Antigone with her appeals to a higher law depends on Polyneices’ view of the world with its natural justice and natural hierarchy. For the Antigone of Euripides, there is simply an affirmation that she herself can make the decisions about how she will act—how she will speak to Creon, whether she will go into exile taking her father with her. She enjoys the *parrhêsia* that Polyneices longs for, but more importantly she follows through on the implications of Eteocles’ speech, its dismissal of a hierarchy that restrains speech and action. Eteocles, though, had shown how this independence can lead to the horror of calling injustice beautiful. Thus, while Euripides presents the maturing and release of an Antigone who exercises what we today would call autonomy, he also warns us that autonomy may find its seeds in the nihilism of Eteocles’ speech.

Eteocles’ speech portrays a world that is all too familiar in our contemporary discourse, a discourse that is eager to escape the tyrannizing effects of absolutes that define the good and the noble, the just and the unjust, absolutes

that affirm the existence of identities rather than allowing them to be self-constructed. The denial of the absolutes for which Polyneices yearns leads to the questioning of nature as a normative guide. Polyneices knew who he was “by nature,” someone who should live above the motley many, who was of a noble stock. Eteocles dismisses such a nature and finds the hierarchy which he espouses affirmed by his own will. Denying nature as Eteocles does has been critical in breaking down the hierarchies that inhibit the expansion of democratic regimes. But the challenge that emerges from opening the space as Eteocles does is manifest in the loss of identity, of purpose, of principle; it is manifest in the opportunity to speak of beautiful injustice without shame or inhibition. The injustice of exclusion in a democracy like Athens—or in the democracies of our own times—may only fade with the loss of the capacity to define justice itself. This may be why Sophocles’ *Antigone*’s captures our imagination more than Euripides’ *Antigone*. Sophocles’ heroine offers us a powerful exemplar of resistance to injustice. She is in some ways Euripides’ Polyneices, while Sophocles’ Creon takes on Eteocles’ role affirming the power of whatever issues from his mouth. Sophocles’ *Antigone* calls grandly to us, makes us exult in our ability to declare and defend right and wrong, good and bad. Her appearance on the public stage before Creon affirms a human power and energy that exist free from political constraints, that reveals our humanity and capacity to commit to causes beyond ourselves. Her stance has served as a model for us—all the more powerful since that resource lies in the heart of a woman. All Euripides’ *Antigone*’s emergence on the public stage leaves us with is the emptiness and terror of a world where we can speak of beautiful injustice. No wonder it is “our” *Antigone* who has resonated throughout our history. Yet, Euripides, the defender and advocate of Athenian democracy (much to the Aristophanic Aeschylus’s dismay), can stand outside the democracy he praises and use his *Antigone* to reveal for his audience (and for us) the potentially frightening conditions on which democracy may build its openness.

NOTES

1. See also Steiner (1985, chap. 2.1) for a theoretical and analytical discussion of how these varied myths get transformed into a singular or prominent story line. See also p. 112 for evidence that Euripides wrote a play entitled *Antigone*, but we can only speculate as to the content of the play.

2. Steiner (1985, 209) appropriately calls the language here “concretely hyperbolic.” See also Benardete (1974, 148).

3. Elshtain (1982) and Dietz (1985) engaged in a significant debate over the degree to which *Antigone* in Sophocles’ version can be associated with the defense of the family. Put simply, Elshtain argues for *Antigone* as motivated by the defense of the family and the city’s role as a defender of the family and Dietz portrays *Antigone* as stepping outside the family to defend the welfare of the political community to become the model political actor. See Holland (1998) for a discussion of these authors and Zerilli’s 1991 piece “Machiavelli’s Sisters.” Euben questions efforts to see either Creon or *Antigone* as simply representatives of one realm or the other (1997, chap. 6). See also Butler (2000) for a critique of the Hegelian legacy that has dominated so much of the reading of this play. Markell (2003) does a striking job of refocusing attention from “character” to action and story line in his study of “recognition” in his analysis of the play. He is thus more similar in effect to my concern with the sequencing of the action as revelatory of the importance of the tragedies, but neither he nor any of the above-cited readings finds in Sophocles’ play the issues that surface in Euripides’ version concerning the conditions that *allow* for *Antigone*’s entrance onto the public stage in the first place, outside the character of *Antigone* herself. Euripides’ version looks to the epistemological grounds for *Antigone*’s opportunity to step upon the public stage, irrespective of her agenda.

4. Steiner’s book *Antigones* (1985) is a superb resource for the many takes on the Sophoclean play, especially in the tradition of German philosophy and literature of the nineteenth century. It is impossible to identify all the important readings and interpretive debates of this play and Steiner’s book gives a fine sense of its resilience through the ages.

5. I develop such an interpretation in Saxonhouse 1992, 64–76.

6. It was not surprising to hear, as I did in the early 1970s, a distinguished classicist (Gerald Else) begin a public lecture on the *Antigone* with the admission that he was in love with *Antigone*. Steiner quotes Shelley: “how sublime a picture of woman” (1984, 4).

7. For another discussion of the significance of “dissolution” of traditional boundaries of inclusion and exclusion for democratic practices, see Euben on Euripides’ *Orestes*—another play that “corrupts” traditional myths (1986).

8. The debate recalls Thucydides’ description of the status of value terms during the stasis at Corcyra (3.82). Euripides and Thucydides, of course, are writing within the same intellectual milieu dominated by the appearance of the Sophists.

9. Others have found in the corpus of ancient Athenian tragedies resources for reflection on democratic principles. The literature is large, but see most prominently the essays in Euben’s edited volume (1986a) and his books and articles (e.g., 1982; 1986b; 1990; 1997); as well as Nussbaum (1986); Saxonhouse (1980, 1984; 1986a; 1986b; 1988; 1992, chap. 3) and the references in above in notes 3 and 4. Euripides’ *Phoenician Women*, despite its melodrama and lack of the appealing unity and cohesion of a Sophoclean tragedy, deserves its place as yet another indication that the ancients speak powerfully in our language to both our hopes and our fears.

10. On the comic stage, of course, we find women meddling in political affairs in both the *Lysistrata* and the *Ecclesiazusae*, as we do in Plato’s perplexing dialogue *Menexenus* where Aspasia seems to have considerable control over Pericles. On a more serious note, there has been considerable work suggesting women’s participation in the religious life of the city (which in discussion of the ancient city-state cannot be fully separated from its political life). See, for example, Cohen (1989).

11. See especially Vlastos (1953) on this, as well as Sealey (1964) and Saxonhouse (1996, 32–36) for the history of the use of *isonomia* rather than *dēmokratia* to describe the Athenian regime before the last third of the fifth century.

12. On this see especially Manville (1990).

13. I discuss Euripides' critique of the practice of racial exclusion at Athens in Saxonhouse (1986a).

14. I use the translation of the *Frogs* by Gilbert Murray from *The Complete Greek Drama*, Volume 2 (line numbers are followed by page numbers in that edition).

15. In thinking of Euripides in his democratic mode, we do need to recall that Euripides did spend time enjoying the personal delights of life at the court of the tyrant King Archelaus II where he died in 406 BCE. Why he left for the tyrant's court is unclear. One can certainly find a number of examples where Euripides' characters express anti-democratic sentiments, e.g., *Orestes* 902-930, but these all need to be read in the dramatic context of the plays.

16. In Aeschylus and Sophocles, there are certainly the heralds and the watchmen and the messengers, but they do not take critical roles in the action of the play.

17. See my forthcoming *Shame, Free Speech, and Democratic Theory: The Unbridled Tongue in Ancient Athens*. The study of *parhêsia* has spawned a small industry of late. See Foucault (2001), Monson (1994, 2000), and Balot (forthcoming) in a forthcoming volume dedicated entirely to studies of the practice of *parhêsia*.

18. Steiner interestingly reads this interchange between Creon and Antigone as marked by an "utter weariness" and "exhaustion," thus lacking any of the power of the early interchanges in Sophocles' *Antigone* (1985, 180).

19. See Loraux (1987, 15) for a discussion of how surprising this must have been.

20. Versions of the word *parthen*—maiden or girl—recur consistently throughout this play with reference to Antigone. The *Thesaurus Linguae Graecae* notes twenty-six appearances in *Phoenician Women* and only one in Sophocles' *Antigone*. In Sophocles, the term is used by the messenger and not by Antigone about herself. In Euripides' play, Antigone repeatedly refers to herself with such language.

21. Other examples of such speeches denigrating women by questionable characters occur when Aeschylus has Eteocles offer a misogynist screed in the *Seven Against Thebes* just as he is preparing to meet in battle and kill his brother (lines 181-186; see further Saxonhouse 1986b) and in Sophocles' *Ajax* when an insane Ajax says to his wife Tecmessa, who has just spoken to him wisely in an effort to deter him from his mad plan: "Silence is beautiful in women" (293).

22. As Foley remarks, "The chorus of Phoenician virgins confounds any expectation that they will reflect [the] dangerous side of womanhood . . . they are calm and sympathetic observers of Thebes' dangers" (2001, 280).

23. In Book 8 of the *Republic*, Socrates associates democracy with the many-colored cloak that Polyneices so denigrates here. In the *Republic* it is the women and the young who delight in this multicolored frock (557c), but its variety also captures the openness of democracy as Socrates portrays it in his description of the regime marked by freedom (see further Saxonhouse 1998).

24. Later in the play, a messenger reports on the battle that takes place between the two brothers. In what may be a textual interpolation, Polyneices prays for victory over his brother but acknowledges that such a victory would be most shameful (*aischrota*, 1369). Eteocles does not worry about such shamefulness; he only asks Zeus for victory over his brother who has laid waste to his fatherland (*patrida*, 1376).

25. For a further discussion of this issue, see Saxonhouse (1998).

26. Foley (1985, 140) writes about this point in the play: "From this moment on Antigone explicitly dances to the tune of Ares, not that of Apollo or the benign Dionysius."

27. We could see here also the grounds for the liberties that Euripides takes with the traditional myths of which he must have been so aware given the stature of Aeschylus' *Seven Against Thebes* and Sophocles' *Antigone*.

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