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## Tragic Freedoms

Does Greek tragedy tell us anything about freedom? An obvious place to start is the scene in Euripides' *Suppliants*, where King Theseus of Athens engages in debate with a Theban herald. In the first place, Theseus promotes Athens as the home of political freedom. There is no tyrant in Athens, he says, "This city is free, and ruled by no one man" (Eur. *Supp.* 410-1). He also promotes personal freedoms, saying that democracy, unlike tyranny, poses no threat to private wealth or to the integrity of the family (442-63)<sup>1</sup>. The public-private dichotomy can be compared to the view Thucydides (2.37.2) ascribes to Pericles, that "we live as free citizens, both in public and when it comes to suspicion about each other's daily business". Pericles is speaking to an Athenian audience in a set-piece funeral speech. Theseus, by contrast, is conducting an unanticipated debate with an opponent of democracy. Both sides are heard.

Tragedy occasionally gives us examples of this kind, where freedom is presented as an idea, and where this idea can be contested<sup>2</sup>. In this paper, however, I want to look further under the surface of tragic action and discourse. By considering how characters on the tragic stage behave, we can consider what values are in play. This may, in turn, help us to understand the values shared by members of tragedy's original audience.

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<sup>1</sup> I have used English translations of Greek tragedy from the University of Chicago Press series, edited by David GRENE and Richmond LATTIMORE (1955-69).

<sup>2</sup> Other places where the idea of freedom appears in tragedy include: Aesch. *Pers.* 402-5; Eur. *Hclld.* 61-2, 111-3, 193-8, 234-6, 246-7.

One reason that we need to look under the surface of tragic discourse can be seen in the political landscape of the dramas. Very nearly all of the fully extant plays are set, not in the world of the original audience, but in a remote heroic past. Tragic poets are certainly not afraid to bring the politics of their plays up to date – as we have seen in *Suppliants* – but political anachronism in tragedy can take many forms<sup>3</sup>. A tragic play is as likely to be set against the background of tyranny as democracy. Even a play like *Suppliants* mixes the heroic with the contemporary: Theseus has given power to the people, but he did so from his position as king (Eur. *Supp.* 352-3). The precise political context is individual to each drama, and it must be understood on its own terms. We find out about the political context gradually, as the drama progresses<sup>4</sup>.

A more specific reason that we must look under the surface, relevant to the discussion that follows, is the domestic setting of many of the dramas. Since the 450s BC, at the latest, tragedy made use of a stage building that stood behind the performers, facing the audience. This stage building could represent a tent or military headquarters, a temple or shrine, but most often someone's house or palace. Within this house we should expect to find a family, and perhaps an extended household – male and female, young and old, slave and free. Tragedy is an unusual genre within Greek literature in its relatively balanced portrayal of these categories. In particular, tragic poets often give as much time and dramatic importance to female roles as to male ones. To this extent, tragedy gives us a more socially complete account of ancient Greek life than many other literary sources. This is one way in which tragedy makes itself useful as source material for the ancient historian.

Given the domestic context of so many of the dramas, tragic freedoms are just as likely to be personal freedoms as political ones. In this paper, I will focus on personal freedoms: how people speak and act on the tragic stage, how free they really are

<sup>3</sup> EASTERLING 1985.

<sup>4</sup> Cf. GIANGIULIO, this volume.

and how free they understand themselves to be. This in turn may shed light on ancient Greek social attitudes. However, we need to be careful if we want to make a Greek play available as source material for the social historian. None of the plays is an unfiltered piece of documentary evidence. To understand the plays, we have to understand their purpose, which was to entertain. Only when we have considered tragedy as drama can we consider tragedy as evidence.

Drama is a representation of speech and action. So how free is tragic speech and how free is tragic action? In part 1 of this paper, I draw on previous work to discuss ideas of free speech as they appear in tragedy. Parts 2-4 (at greater length) consider freedom of movement, taking a particular interest in the extent to which female characters move freely into the performance space. Part 5 draws conclusions about the usefulness of Greek tragedy as historical evidence.

### 1. *Free speech in Greek tragedy*

The ancient Athenians had a reputation for speaking freely, a reputation that is reflected differently in different literary sources. Plato in book 8 of the *Republic* (557B4-5) describes a democratic city as full of free speech and other forms of liberty. Plato's word for free speech, *parrhēsia*, is best understood in English as "frankness" or "unrestrained speech". It literally means: "saying everything". For this reason, ancient Greek *parrhēsia* is not an unqualified virtue. In some cases, *parrhēsia* can be presented as a troubling quality, a tendency to talk too much<sup>5</sup>.

In previous work I have considered examples in tragedy where the ability to speak has to be negotiated<sup>6</sup>. A good example comes from Euripides' *Bacchae*. A herdsman has returned to Thebes from Mt Cithaeron, where the women of the city have gone, driven mad by the god Dionysus. He is prepared to give a

<sup>5</sup> On these and other aspects of *parrhēsia*: CARTER 2004; SAXONHOUSE 2006, 86-9.

<sup>6</sup> CARTER 2018.

full account to King Pentheus of events on Mt Cithaeron – saying everything – but hesitates to do so. He says (Eur. *Ba.* 668-71):

θέλω δ' ἀκοῦσαι πότερά σοι παρρησία  
 φράσω τὰ κείθεν ἢ λόγον στείλωμεθα·  
 τὸ γὰρ τάχος σου τῶν φρενῶν δέδοικ', ἄναξ,  
 καὶ τοῦξύθυμον καὶ τὸ βασιλικὸν λίαν.

But may I speak **freely**  
 in my own way and words, or make it short?  
 I fear the harsh impatience of your nature, sire,  
 too kingly and too quick to anger.

Pentheus in reply (672) assures the herdsman that he will not be blamed or punished. Michel FOUCAULT (2001, 32) described this, alongside other mostly Euripidean examples, as a «parrhesiastic contract». This was a time-limited contract in which one (more powerful) figure allowed freedom of speech to another (less powerful) figure. In other words, there is a quasi-legal relationship between two characters in each scene. This is as close as we get in tragedy to free speech as a legal right. But it is a short-lived right, guaranteed by a temporary agreement. The underlying position is one of inequality, and the assumed inability of the socially inferior figure to say what they want. To be sure, not every encounter between figures of different social class in tragedy is governed in this way – in fact examples of the parrhesiastic contract are confined almost exclusively to Euripides. But there is evidence here to suggest that *parrhēsia* – the complete freedom to speak – can be associated with higher social status<sup>7</sup>.

This association of free speech with social status seems to apply in Athens too, certainly as described in Euripides' plays. When Ion wonders aloud who his birth parents might be, he says he hopes they are Athenian because this would guarantee him the ability to speak with *parrhēsia* (Eur. *Ion* 670-5). Similarly, Phaedra in *Hippolytus* is anxious that her personal shame – as the lover of her stepson –

<sup>7</sup> Other examples of the parrhesiastic contract in tragedy include: Soph. *El.* 552-7; Eur. *Hec.* 234-8, *El.* 1055-9, *Tro.* 903-13; and (as a contract between social equals) Soph. *Aj.* 1328-31.

may dent the reputation of her family back in Athens. Speaking to the chorus of local women, she says (Eur. *Hipp.* 419-23):

ἡμᾶς γὰρ αὐτὸ τοῦτ' ἀποκτείνει, φίλοι,  
ὡς μήποτ' ἄνδρα τὸν ἐμὸν αἰσχύνασ' ἄλῶ,  
μὴ παῖδας οὐς ἔτικτον· ἀλλ' ἐλεύθεροι  
παρρησίᾳ θάλλοντες οἰκοῖεν πόλιν  
κλεινῶν Ἀθηνῶν, μητρὸς οὐνεκ' εὐκλεεῖς.

This then, my friends, is my destruction:  
I cannot bear that I should be discovered  
a traitor to my husband and my children.  
God grant them rich and glorious life in Athens –  
famous Athens – freedom in word and deed,  
and from their mother an honourable name.

Phaedra understands free speech at Athens to be the property, not just of citizens, but of citizens in good standing. Personal reputation seems to matter as much as civic entitlement.

It is clear that Greek tragedy models free speech for its audience, in the fairly basic sense that it allows space for competing points of view. From the examples just discussed, we also find a certain self-consciousness, at times, among figures on the tragic stage about their ability to speak freely. Quite often, a Euripidean *agōn* cannot begin until the two speakers have made a contract between themselves, allowing them to speak on equal terms. In these and other examples, people in tragedy demonstrate an awareness of their own status and how this impacts on an ability to speak freely.

## 2. *Women's freedom of movement in Greek tragedy*

Does social status have the same effect on freedom of movement as it sometimes does on free speech? In answering this question, I will focus on the movement of women in tragedy. My reason for focussing on this category is that it presents a group of people whose movement might be assumed to be constrained by social status.

I am especially interested in the first entrance that a female character makes from the stage building, in dramas where that building represents a house, and how self-consciously this move is made. A classical Athenian woman's freedom of movement is often associated in scholarship with her position in relation to the house. Questions include: whether citizen women lived in seclusion or whether it was socially acceptable for them to move beyond the home; and the extent to which they moved outside the house at will or for particular purposes<sup>8</sup>.

Tragic drama ought to be useful as evidence because it gives roughly equal billing to female characters. But we cannot, for reasons already given, assume that tragedy presents scenes from everyday life. Instead, it helps to think about what assumptions might have been shared between the poet and the audience. Although movement in and out of the stage building occurs as a matter of dramatic necessity, and although we should not expect everything in tragedy to be a copy of real life, tragic action still had to occur in ways that were intelligible to the original audience<sup>9</sup>. For this reason, it is assumed that movement in and out of the stage building will also, to an extent, follow certain social rules.

My purpose here is not to draw conclusions with any certainty on the social and legal position of Athenian women<sup>10</sup>. Instead, I want to focus on the usefulness of tragedy as evidence for any enquiry that helps us to answer this question. It is a hard question to answer for a number of reasons. For one thing, the legal position of women (whether they could own property, enter

<sup>8</sup> On the history in classical scholarship of the concept of women's seclusion, see COHEN 1989 or (for a different critical perspective) WAGNER-HASEL 2003. On purposeful movement beyond the house, GOULD 1980, 11. VLASSOPOULOS 2007 usefully questions a tendency in scholarship to categorise the people of ancient Athens by social status and set rules for their freedom of movement.

<sup>9</sup> Cf. JUST 1989, 10-1.

<sup>10</sup> It is impossible to cite (let alone read) everything that has been written over the last half-century on the social position of classical Greek women. Among studies written in English from a social and legal perspective, GOULD 1980 and JUST 1989 remain useful. An impressive set of twentieth-century essays on this topic is collected together in Italian by ARRIGONI 1985. On women in tragedy, see DES BOUVRIE 1990, as well as essays collected in ZEITLIN 1996 and FOLEY 2001.

into contracts, participate in civic institutions, etc.) is a different, although related, question from their social position and how women actually behaved. For another, it cannot have been the case that all Athenian women were the same. Their behaviour would be conditioned by social class, relative wealth and individual circumstance, among other things. It does not make sense to take a section of free Athenian society and talk about their position in that society as if they were a small and clearly defined subset, rather than (one assumes) roughly half of that society. Equally, and as we shall see, there are variations in female behaviour in the tragic dramas that have come down to us.

There are several places where a woman's first entrance from the stage building seems to need explanation, as if walking out onto the street is not a usual thing to do. A good example is found in Euripides' *Medea*, where the title figure first appears from the house and addresses the chorus of Corinthian women. We have already heard a good deal about Medea in the prologue (and from Medea too, in offstage cries). It is a simple matter of tragic stagecraft that the audience cannot see for themselves anything that goes on in the building. So, if Medea wants to make a speech, she must come outside. There are two reasons that Medea leaves the house. The first concerns the audience in the theatre, who cannot see her if she remains indoors. The second concerns Medea's audience on stage, a group of Corinthian women to whom she seeks to appeal. The explanation she gives for leaving the house is the sense of shame she would feel if she kept herself apart (Eur. *Med.* 214-8):

Κορίνθιαι γυναῖκες, ἐξῆλθον δόμων  
 μή μοί τι μέμψησθ'· οἶδα γὰρ πολλοὺς βροτῶν  
 σεμνοὺς γεγῶτας, τοὺς μὲν ὀμμάτων ἄπο,  
 τοὺς δ' ἐν θυραίοις· οἱ δ' ἀφ' ἡσύχου ποδὸς  
 δύσκληϊαν ἐκτήσαντο καὶ ῥαθυμίαν.

Women of Corinth, I have come outside to you  
 lest you should be indignant with me; for I know  
 that many people are overproud, some when alone,  
 and others when in company. And those who live  
 quietly, as I do, get a bad reputation.

These lines give a plausible reason that Medea would want to come out of the house. They also begin to establish the relationship between Medea and the chorus. She wants to present herself as one of them in order to gain their trust. The first lines that she gives on stage do not only serve to cover her entrance but are closely woven into the drama. The scene is also interesting for the way in which Medea deploys the concept of shame. In other examples, discussed below, shame is an inhibiting factor, which might prevent a woman from going outdoors. In this example, shame is what draws Medea out of the house and into female company in the city<sup>11</sup>.

This trick, of creating a plausible reason to bring a female character out of the house and weaving it into the drama, is used in a different way by Euripides in his *Hippolytus*. When Phaedra, sick with love for Hippolytus, comes out of the house and onto stage, it is because she thinks the open air might make her feel better (Eur. *Hipp.* 178-82). But the dialogue that follows, between Phaedra and the nurse, might more naturally have taken place indoors. The Nurse herself knows that they might as well be indoors as outdoors, and fully expects to return inside soon (182). This is a more straightforwardly inside-outside scene than the example that we have already seen in *Medea*. It is really a domestic scene that has been translated to the outside for the convenience of the audience. Medea, by contrast, appears to be making a deliberate move into public space, in a way that anticipates the very public consequences of her actions later in the drama.

The outdoor setting for all tragic dialogue reflects the nature of the performance space. Modern dramas can be set indoors in a way that feels natural because, in most cases, the audience itself is indoors and under a roof. Ancient Greek drama, by contrast, was an open-air form of entertainment, staged in front of very big audiences. Audience members towards the back of the seating area may have looked down on the stage building. It would have been

<sup>11</sup> On the extent to which Euripidean women are motivated by shame, see CAIRNS 1993, 305-40.

hard, I would argue, to pretend to the audience that they were watching something indoors. Nor was there any need to make this pretence. There were two ways in which a skilled dramatist and talented actors could bring the indoors outdoors. The first was the use of messenger speeches, which could include vivid detail captured from within the house, taking the audience member inside each room in their mind's eye. The second, as we have begun to see, was to find plausible reasons to stage a scene outside that might normally have occurred inside. These scenes do not take place a long way outdoors, but in the immediate vicinity of the house. This use of the space in front of the house, as an extension of domestic space, reflects an obvious tension that runs through many of the more political plays. This is a tension, in other words, between public and private, between civic life and domestic life.

### 3. *A survey of first entrances in Greek tragedy*

So is there any pattern to the way in which female entrances are presented in tragedy? The performance space offered three routes onto stage. The first was through a door in the stage building. The second was through either of the *eisodoi* at the side of the performance space. In tragedies that are set in cities, these *eisodoi* can be imagined as leading further into further into town, or into the open countryside and beyond. And the third way into the action was above the stage building, either by climbing onto the roof or (if you are a god) by being suspended above it.

Appendix 1 to this paper gives a list of first entrances of female characters compared to males in tragedy, based on my own survey of the extant dramas. In compiling this list, I have had to make a number of assumptions and judgements. The conclusions come with a number of caveats:

- I have only looked at first entrances and not re-entrances.
- I have included speaking characters only. It is sometimes a matter of judgement how many speaking parts there are in a play.

- Any results that we have are conditioned by the availability of evidence: we only have thirty-one complete plays to consider and, within this sample, Euripides is disproportionately represented.
- I have accepted the view that no extant drama before the Oresteian trilogy makes use of a stage building with a door: for this reason, I have excluded the three earlier surviving plays of Aeschylus from my survey<sup>12</sup>.

Three other underlying issues need more lengthy discussion at this stage. In the first place, I have had to make a number of judgements about which characters to include and exclude in the survey. I can easily and justifiably exclude both gods and ghosts. Neither of these, it seems, are governed by the same social rules as humans. I have also, for the purposes of this survey, excluded choruses, although it is arguable that groups of women in ancient Greece might have moved in public with more freedom than individuals, especially if they were going somewhere with a particular purpose.

The much harder problem is which human characters to include. It would be unhelpful to include large numbers of minor characters about whose social and marital status we know little, and whose presence in the survey might therefore unhelpfully skew the results. The difficulty, however, is in defining what is meant by a 'minor character', and therefore who belongs in the survey. Perhaps the simplest way to make the distinction is between named and unnamed characters. But the principal figures are not always named (the Peasant in Euripides' *Electra* is an example) and some minor characters are named (for example, the slave Cilissa in *Choephoroi*).

Another way to make the distinction would be in terms of time on stage, or the number of lines spoken. The Doorkeeper

<sup>12</sup> TAPLIN 1977, 452-9, cf. SOMMERSTEIN 1996, 33-5. Some post-Oresteian tragedies, most obviously Sophocles' *Oedipus Coloneus*, do not use the stage building for entrances and exits: the stage building is just a backdrop. On the use of the stage building in fragmentary tragedy, see PERRIS 2012, 152, n. 8.

in Aeschylus' *Choephoroi* has just one line to deliver and (on one reading) does not enter from the stage building at all<sup>13</sup>. To include this figure in the survey would add, significantly but not meaningfully, to the small number of male characters who enter from the stage building in tragedy. However, length on time on stage is not always the best measure of dramatic importance. Eurydice, in Sophocles' *Antigone*, delivers just nine lines and is on stage for less time than the Messenger who addresses her. But, as an audience, we know enough about Eurydice to care about her death when it is announced. Differently from the Messenger, we know her name and where she lives. We also know her as the wife and mother of two of the principal figures in the drama. Equally, it would be odd to include a Talthybius or a Lichas in my survey because we know their names, but to exclude other heralds whose appearance in public space is conditioned by similar social and dramatic rules.

A third way would be through social status. The main players in Greek tragedy are typically representatives of royal or aristocratic families. Many, but by no means all, of the minor figures are slaves. But this is not always an easy distinction to make. Some figures of high social status are technically slaves: a Cassandra or a Hecabe. Other figures, especially in Euripides, can have diminished social status without actually being enslaved (the title figures in *Ion*, *Iphigeneia among the Taurians*, *Electra*, etc.). To take another example, the Corinthian Messenger in Sophocles' *Oedipus Tyrannus* is of low social status, having previously done seasonal work as a herdsman. But, unlike his Theban counterpart, he is probably not to be understood as a slave. It would be odd to include the Corinthian Messenger in my survey and not the Theban Shepherd, especially as there are no obvious differences in their freedom of movement.

The most useful way that I can find to distinguish between major and minor characters is not in terms of social status but in terms of social or dramatic *function*. The Corinthian Messenger

<sup>13</sup> TAPLIN 1977, 341.

and the Theban Shepherd have similar employment backgrounds to each other. They are also reasonably similar in their dramatic function. Both are on stage to contribute important information to Oedipus' enquiry into the death of Laius<sup>14</sup>. Similarly, most or all of the minor characters on my list have either specific dramatic jobs to do (typically as messengers), specific roles in society (as slaves, soldiers, heralds, priests or prophets) or frequently both. It remains a matter of judgment which figures to designate as minor characters. I have included lists of minor male and female characters in Appendix 1 so it can be seen where this judgement has been made.

A useful exception to define my rule is the Stranger who appears in the prologue of Sophocles' *Oedipus Coloneus*. We do not learn his name (both he and Oedipus address each other as *xenos*) and he is present just in this scene. However, he does not have any particular social function, and he has not been sent into the performance space to do a particular job. He is just passing by (Soph. *OC* 29), but clearly diverts his course towards Oedipus and Antigone so that he can warn them off standing on forbidden ground (36-7). For this reason I have included him in the list of not-minor characters, and assumed that he is a married free person living locally.

As for the second underlying issue, I have paid special attention to what Oliver TAPLIN calls «cancelled entrances»<sup>15</sup>. This is where some of the actors (either speaking or non-speaking or often both) take their places in the performance space before the action begins. In the absence of a curtain, the audience can clearly see this happening but they are not asked to assume that it is part of the performance. Therefore the actors are discovered (as it were) in the performance space as the action begins. It is

<sup>14</sup> The Corinthian Messenger admittedly takes on increased importance as the drama progresses, and therefore ceases to function simply as a messenger: MANUWALD 2012, 203-5, cf. DAWE, 2006, 153-4. He is arguably more than a minor character in the play. However, his first entrance is as a messenger so he belongs on a list of other characters for the purposes of my survey.

<sup>15</sup> TAPLIN 1977, 134-6.

as if their entrance did not take place at all. Most of the clear examples of cancelled entrances are in Euripidean plays where the actor (or actors) takes up the position of a suppliant: *Heraclidae*, *Andromache*, *Suppliants*, *Heracles* and *Helen*. There is also one Sophoclean example, *Oedipus Tyrannus*. Here the suppliant children and the Priest have taken their positions in the space in front of the palace of Oedipus at Thebes. It is logical to assume that Oedipus enters from the palace to greet them, and that the action therefore starts as the door opens. I can identify three examples of cancelled entrances that do not include suppliants: Aeschylus' *Agamemnon*, where the Watchman tells us he has been sitting on the palace roof for some time; Euripides' *Troades*, in which Poseidon indicates that Hecabe is already lying on the ground in the performance space (37); and Euripides' *Orestes*, where the title character is asleep on stage (34-6), and it is reasonable to assume that Electra (who says the first lines of the play) is already there with him<sup>16</sup>.

As for the third underlying issue, I have sometimes had to exercise judgement on whether an entrance is made from the stage building rather than from the side. Usually this is clear either as a matter of dramatic necessity or because it is clearly signalled in the text. Where it is not clear, and although it is up to the producer of each individual performance exactly how to deploy the actors, I have tried to make reasonable assumptions about the first performance of these plays. In the particular case of dramas where the stage building represents a house or palace, I have assumed that family members enter from their own homes. This, admittedly, has the potential to lead me into a circular argument: if I assume that a married women must enter from the stage building then I am assuming what is to be proved. For example, in Sophocles' *Trachiniae* there is no indication in the text that Deianeira enters from the stage building to deliver the first lines. At the same time, there is no obvious reason that this

<sup>16</sup> The opening speech at [Eur.] *Rh.* 1-11 gives enough time for Hector to be roused and summoned from the stage building, contrary to the view of PERRIS 2012, who argues that Hector begins the play asleep in the performance space.

should be a cancelled entrance or that she should appear from the side. Rather, it makes dramatic sense for her to enter from the house, since she has been waiting at home for Heracles' return. This an assumption, but a fair one.

I can see just three clear examples where an actor appears on the roof of the stage building. In two cases I have taken these to be entrances from the stage building: Evadne appearing above the temple at Eleusis in Euripides' *Suppliants* (987-9); and Antigone and the Old Man on the roof of the palace at Thebes in *Phoenissae*. The other example, the Watchman in Aeschylus' *Agamemnon*, is a cancelled entrance for reasons given above.

My conclusions, based on this survey and bearing in mind the caveats given above, are summarised in Figure 1:

Figure 1: First entrances from the stage building, extant tragedies from the *Oresteia* onwards.

	Male	Female
Married	12%	63%
Unmarried	9%	67%

I should be careful not to overclaim here. The neat mathematical ratios recorded above are not the result of a survey of real people by a social scientist, but a survey of literary texts with all of the limitations discussed above. One should not read too much, therefore, into the actual figures. Nevertheless, we can see a clear and unsurprising pattern. It suggests that popular assumptions about female and male behaviour were carried into a dramatic context, notwithstanding the heroic context of the dramas and the need to follow sage conventions. The pattern becomes even clearer if we consider only those plays where the stage building represents someone's house or palace. This can be seen in Figure 2:

Figure 2: First entrances from the stage building, extant tragedies from the *Oresteia* onwards where the stage building represents a house or palace.

	Male	Female
Married	14%	71%
Unmarried	-	80%

Two immediate observations can be made here. First, at least on my reading, there are no unmarried men or boys in speaking parts who make their first entrance from the stage building, where that stage building represents a house. They all come from elsewhere in the city (like Haemon in Sophocles' *Antigone*) or from abroad (like Orestes in various dramas). A partial exception can be made for Euripides' *Orestes*, in which the title character's cancelled entrance sees him semi-conscious on a couch in front of the house. Although Orestes does not technically enter from the stage building, this is clearly an inside-outside scene, similar to the position of Phaedra in the first episode of Euripides' *Hippolytus*. Orestes is bedridden and attended to by his sister.

Second, female characters are much more likely than male characters to enter from the house. I am aware of just seven places where the stage building represents a house and a female character makes her first entrance from the side and not from the stage building. These exceptions are telling in themselves. The Aeschylean Cassandra is a foreign captive who has been taken back to Greece by the victorious Agamemnon. Clytemnestra in Euripides' *Electra* is the co-tyrant of Argos, visiting her impoverished daughter from the city. And Agave in the *Bacchae* is one of the citizen women of Thebes who have been driven mad and sent out of doors by the god Dionysus. The other four examples are of Euripidean women whose cancelled entrances are discussed above: Andromache (in her play), Megara (in *Heracles*), Helen (in her play) and Electra (in *Orestes*).

#### 4. *Women leaving the house*

The appearance of married women from the house is explained differently in different plays. We have already considered the examples of Medea and Phaedra in Euripides. Electra, in Euripides' play of that name, comes from the house carrying a water jar so that she can visit the local well (Eur. *El.* 55-6). This

behaviour might easily be explained in terms of her diminished social status, although both Electra and her peasant husband find different ways to challenge this view. Electra says she is fetching water, not because she has to, but because she wants (58-9):

ἀλλ' ὡς ὕβριν δείξωμεν Αἰγίσθου θεοῖς,  
γόους τ' ἀφίημι αἰθέρ' ἐς μέγαν πατρί.

... to illuminate Aegisthus' arrogance for the gods —  
and cry my pain to Father in the great bright air.

As for the peasant, he tries to tell his wife that she need not fetch water, in view of her royal birth (64-6). Electra replies that she prefers to share the work. It becomes unclear what Electra's true motivation is for leaving the house. It could literally be true that someone else (perhaps her husband) could do this task, or it could be that she does have to fetch water herself and is too proud to say so. Taken at face value, her act of fetching water is *both* an effort to share work within the family *and* a sign of how far she has fallen in society, a position she resents. Electra's appearance from the house, therefore, is to a great extent conditioned by her diminished social status, but not in any straightforward way. Rather, her behaviour is examined from different angles by both her and her husband.

A very different example is Clytemnestra in Aeschylus' *Choephoroi*. When Orestes, pretending to be a stranger, knocks on her door, he expects to be answered either by the man or the woman of the house. He says he would prefer to speak to the man because the conversation would not be limited by the sense of shame that comes with meeting a strange woman (Aesch. *Cho.* 663-7):

ἐξελθέτω τις δωμάτων τελεσφόρος,  
γυνή γ' ἄπαρχος—ἄνδρα δ' εὐπρεπέστερον·  
αἰδῶς γὰρ ἐν λέσχαισιν οὐσ' ἐπαργέμους  
λόγους τίθησιν· εἶπε θαρσήσας ἄνηρ  
πρὸς ἄνδρα κἀσήμηεν ἐμφανὲς τέκμαρ.

Have someone of authority in the house come out,  
 the lady of the place or, more appropriately,  
 its lord, for then no delicacy in speaking blurs  
 the spoken word. A man takes courage and speaks out  
 to another man, and makes clear everything he says.

This sense of bashfulness – Greek *aidōs* – in conversation is, as we have seen, key to our understanding of ancient Greek free speech. Put simply, the less a person is inhibited by shame, the more likely he or she is to speak openly.

Turning now to the entrances of unmarried women from the house, I can find eight such cases in the surviving plays. One of these is a non-Greek example, the prophetess Theone who emerges from her brother Theoclymenus' house during the action of Euripides' *Helen*. The other seven examples, which I shall consider in turn, are spread across five plays, one by Aeschylus and two each by Sophocles and Euripides.

The first example is from Aeschylus' *Choephoroi* and it presents a plausible circumstance under which an unmarried woman would walk out of the house and into the public spaces of the city. On seeing the chorus members, Electra among them, Orestes guesses (rightly) that they are bringing drink offerings to the tomb of Agamemnon (Aesch. *Cho.* 10-8). Electra is going with a group of other women to participate in religious ritual<sup>17</sup>.

The second and third examples are the two sisters in Sophocles' *Antigone*. This is interesting for the way in which Sophocles deploys dramatic space at the very beginning of the play. No chorus has entered and the two women, Antigone and Ismene, are alone on stage. We assume that a conversation between two sisters would normally take place indoors. But, for reasons already given, indoor scenes could not be presented in the performance space of the Theatre of Dionysos. Therefore Sophocles manoeuvres the two women out of the house. The reason given is plausible dramatically: their two brothers have recently died fighting opposite sides in a civil war; the sisters have good rea-

<sup>17</sup> On the public role of ancient Greek women in ritual, see GOFF 2004.

son to suspect the new regime, and so what they have to say must be said in secret; in this climate of fear they step outside of the house and its courtyard so as not to be overheard (Soph. *Ant.* 18-9). Immediately following this scene, we see the entry of a chorus of Theban citizens, King Creon's senior advisors. The rest of the play takes place in the public spaces of the city and is dominated by male figures. The further entrances of Antigone and Ismene feel like intrusions into political space. It is only in the prologue that space is used differently, turning the audience into eavesdroppers on a private conversation<sup>18</sup>.

The fourth and fifth examples are the two sisters in Sophocles' *Electra*. Here we see a similar dynamic between two sisters to the one in *Antigone*. This time Electra is the one to question authority, and her sister Chrysothemis tries to persuade her to mind her own business. Chrysothemis says (Soph. *El.* 328-31):

τίν' αὖ σὺ τήνδε πρὸς θυρῶνος ἐξόδοις  
 ἔλθοῦσα φωνεῖς, ὦ κασιγνήτη, φάτιν,  
 κούδ' ἐν χρόνῳ μακρῷ διδαχθῆναι θέλεις  
 θυμῷ ματαίῳ μὴ χαρίζεσθαι κενά;

What have you come to say out of doors  
 sister? Will you never learn, in all this time,  
 not to give way to your empty anger?

Chrysothemis associates her sister's defiance with emergence from the house, just as their mother Clytemnestra does in a later scene (516-8). Chrysothemis herself has a more conventional reason to go outside: she is carrying offerings to place at the tomb of Agamemnon.

In the sixth example, from Euripides' *Phoenician Women*, a young Antigone is led by a slave onto the roof of the house in order to satisfy her curiosity and view the Argive army led by Polyneices. The striking feature of this passage is the degree of

<sup>18</sup> On one reading, Antigone's movement into and beyond the public spaces of the city signals an unfeminine challenge to political authority; the more conventional Ismene, by contrast, goes back into the house at the end of the prologue. See e.g. SOURVINOU-INWOOD 1989, 140.

caution showed by the slave, who fears that Antigone will be seen by strange men in public (Eur. *Phoen.* 89-95):

ἐπεὶ σε μήτηρ παρθενῶνας ἐκλιπεῖν  
 μεθῆκε μελάθρων ἐς διήρες ἔσχατον  
 στράτευμ' ἰδεῖν Ἀργεῖον ἱκεσίαισι σαῖς,  
 ἐπίσχες, ὡς ἂν προυξερευνήσω στίβον,  
 μή τις πολιτῶν ἐν τρίβῳ φαντάζεται,  
 κάμοι μὲν ἔλθῃ φαῦλος ὡς δούλω ψόγος,  
 σοὶ δ' ὡς ἀνάσση.

Your mother has said you may leave the maiden's room  
 to climb the very steepest of the roof  
 and see the Argive army, as you asked.  
 But wait, that I may track the road before you  
 in case some citizen is in the way.  
 If so, some blame would come on me the slave,  
 and on your highness.

This example is interesting for the sense of shame associated with contact with strangers, and the excessive care taken by the slave to avoid it. Of course, we do not know whether the slave is being overcautious in this example, and whether it would be the same, for example, if Antigone were led there by Jocasta herself. Certainly, the slave is naturally nervous about displeasing his superiors, and fears censure should things go even slightly wrong. We also know that Antigone is usually to be found in young women's quarters within the house, and that she has not been allowed to go on the roof unaccompanied. That she is accompanied by the slave is not only socially plausible but also dramatically necessary, since the slave will be on hand to answer Antigone's questions in the *teichoscopia* that follows.

In the seventh example, from the prologue of Euripides' *Orestes*, a young Hermione comes out of the house on the request of her mother Helen. Hermione's job is to take libations to the tomb of Clytemnestra. We have observed that this ought to be an unproblematic public duty for unmarried women in tragedy. However, this sense of duty competes with Helen's sense of shame around her daughter appearing outside. When Elec-

tra encourages Helen to send Hermione, Helen replies that it is inappropriate to send unmarried girls on public errands (Eur. *Or.* 108). Electra has her own reasons for winning this argument, but she persuades Helen that duty to the dead should come first. This scene is interesting for the way in which shared social rules can be negotiated and weighed up against other imperatives.

These seven examples reveal a fairly strong pattern, which is maintained across several different dramas by three different poets: in each case a plausible explanation must be given within the drama for the movement of young women out of the house and into public space<sup>19</sup>. This pattern seems less strong in the case of married women, some of whom enter from the house with no explanation, or even answer the door to strange men.

The movement of women out of the house and into public space appears to be governed by social rules. But, like all rules, they are open to negotiation and interpretation. One person's idea of respectable behaviour is not always the same as another's: witness the different views expressed in the prologues of Euripides *Electra* and *Orestes* as discussed above. It may appear normal for young women to stay indoors and away from strange men, but reasons can be found to break away from norms of behaviour. Some of these reasons, as I have said, are dramatic reasons. Tragic poets can show a lot of skill in manoeuvring female figures outside. One dramatic trick that we have seen is to manoeuvre a young woman outside the house, in defiance of social convention, and then to draw attention to this difficulty through dialogue. A potentially socially awkward act therefore becomes integral to the drama, and not a distraction from it.

Behind these dramatic tricks, perhaps we can pick up some shared assumptions. One of these, which is recurrent in the examples we have discussed, is a sense of shame felt on both sides

<sup>19</sup> This goes some way to rejecting the view of GOMME 1925, 10, that «in Attic tragedy women come and go from their houses at will and play an important and public part». For a critique of Gomme's position, see GOULD 1980, 40.

when the wife or daughter of a citizen meets a man from another family. This occurs, for example, in Euripides' *Iphigeneia at Aulis*, a play set in a military camp. Achilles chances upon Clytemnestra when visiting Agamemnon's tent and wants to avoid meeting her in the grounds that it creates shame on both sides (Eur. *IA* 830). Clytemnestra reassures him that shame should not apply in this case because Achilles is betrothed to her daughter (something which she believes to be true but comes as news to Achilles)<sup>20</sup>.

The close connection of free speech and free movement to social status comes together in my final example, which is from Euripides' *Andromache*. Hermione, in this play, is presented as a recently married woman with no obvious sense of personal shame. She emerges from her palace dressed as a queen and addresses Andromache, formerly a Trojan princess but now a slave in the house of Neoptolemus. Hermione says (Eur. *An.* 147-53):

κόσμον μὲν ἀμφὶ κρατὶ χρυσέας χλιδῆς  
στολμόν τε χρωτὸς τόνδε ποικίλων πέπλων  
οὐ τῶν Ἀχιλλέως οὐδὲ Πηλέως ἀπὸ  
δόμων ἀπαρχὰς δεῦρ' ἔχουσ' ἀφικόμην,  
ἀλλ' ἐκ Λακαίνης Σπαρτιάτιδος χθονὸς  
Μενέλαος ἡμῖν ταῦτα δωρεῖται πατὴρ  
πολλοῖς σὺν ἔδνοις, ὥστ' ἐλευθεροστομεῖν.

Wearing tiaras, notice, of pure gold,  
draped in garments brilliant and luxurious –  
neither presented to me, I hasten to add,  
from the homes of Achilles or Peleus – here I am.  
These wedding gifts are straight from my own Sparta.  
Menelaus gave me these – my father you know –  
with other gifts galore. I'm bound to no one  
and free to speak my mind.

Look at me, Hermione seems to say, and agree that I have complete freedom of speech in this place.

<sup>20</sup> A detailed discussion of this scene, and the different ways in which Achilles and Clytemnestra are motivated by shame, is given by CAIRNS 1993, 310-2.

## 5. *Tragedy and History*

The foregoing discussion is potentially interesting, but is it useful? What can drama tell us about the world of its original audience? And, therefore, how useful is tragedy as historical evidence? Christopher PELLING, in the Conclusion to *Greek Tragedy and the Historian*, remarks that «If we talk of a tragic text as “evidence” for the civic theatrical experience, it is ... like talking of a fragment of a pot as “evidence” for the original artefact: we begin from a part and reconstruct what we can of the whole»<sup>21</sup>. The application of Pelling’s analogy takes some imagination, and we have to accept that we may get some of the details wrong. However, it is worth reminding ourselves of three points.

1. The texts that we have were written for a specific purpose, for performance within a dramatic festival. One assumes that to be granted a chorus to present at the Dionysia was in one respect like accepting a commission: it concentrated the poet’s mind on a single occasion and the audience of a specific day. This audience was by any measure a large one and probably quite diverse, including a number of visitors from elsewhere in the Greek world. The festival was a religious occasion during which the normal business of the city was suspended. The original intended audience of these dramas was on holiday.
2. The subject matter of the plays was, in most cases, the heroic past. Tragic people are for the most part not only heroic but elevated in social status, usually royal or aristocratic. Mark GRIFFITH (1995) has described them, borrowing a phrase from Aeschylus, as «Brilliant Dynasts». To both ancient and modern audiences, they are not everyday figures. Their actions are frequently outlandish and gruesome.
3. The performers spoke and sang in verse. They needed to project their words to the back of a large, open-air viewing space. They wore masks and outsize costumes. One wonders wheth-

<sup>21</sup> PELLING 1997, 214.

er people sitting at the back of the audience picked out every word, and whether this really mattered. The plays were as much a spectacle as they were entertainment for the intellect.

So there was something special about tragic drama. Notwithstanding this specialness, one assumes that the performances had to be intelligible to their original audience. This audience was large enough to include a broad cross-section of Greek society<sup>22</sup>. We can, in my view, take Plato at face value when, in the *Gorgias* (502B-D), he describes tragedy as “a kind of rhetoric addressed to such a *demos* as is composed of children together with women and men, both slave and free”<sup>23</sup>. Although the majority in the audience were doubtless Athenian citizens, there is no evidence that other members of their households were prevented<sup>24</sup>.

There are two moves we can make in the consideration of tragic freedoms. First, while the political context of a drama was something that could be created and explained within each play, the underlying values were less changeable. This is because they had to be intelligible to a popular audience. Second, and notwithstanding the first point, issues of personal freedom are not always underlying in the drama. They sometimes rise to the surface. They are contestable and contested.

For this reason, I have been careful in this paper not to give a definitive position on the position of women in ancient Greek society, and especially their freedom of movement beyond their own home. Instead, I have suggested that the movement of women is subject to social rules, which in turn reflect underlying values. Greek tragedy reveals what some of these rules are and how they can be negotiated. More broadly, we have seen that tragic people are sometimes concerned about their status in society. Issues of personal freedom are mapped onto these issues of status.

<sup>22</sup> This point is demonstrated admirably, in a book-length study, by ROSELLI 2011.

<sup>23</sup> CARTER 2011*b*, cf. HENDERSON 1991, 138. A different interpretation is given by GOLDHILL 1994, 349.

<sup>24</sup> Cf. PODLECKI 1990, who demonstrates that there was no constraint on women’s attendance at the Dionysia.

Greek tragedy is a rich source of evidence for the historian as long as we remember to treat it, first and foremost, as drama. Consideration of the dramatic merits of any play – the deployment of entrances and exits, the character and motivation of each figure on stage – can help us to look under the surface and consider the deeper set of assumptions that may have been shared between poet and audience. I hope to have given some examples of how this might work.

### *Appendix 1*

A survey of first entrances in Greek tragedy from the *Oresteia* onwards (speaking characters excluding gods, ghosts and choruses)

(i) Married males from the stage building (7):

Soph. *Aj.* Ajax  
 Soph. *OT* Oedipus  
 Eur. *El.* Peasant  
 Eur. *Phoen.* Oedipus  
 Eur. *Ba.* Cadmus  
 Eur. *IA* Agamemnon  
 [Eur.] *Rh.* Hector

(ii) Married males not from the stage building (52):

Aesch. *Ag.* Agamemnon  
 Aesch. *Ag.* Aegisthus  
 Aesch. *Cho.* Aegisthus  
 Soph. *Aj.* Odysseus  
 Soph. *Aj.* Menelaus  
 Soph. *Aj.* Agamemnon  
 Soph. *Ant.* Creon  
 Soph. *Tr.* Heracles  
 Soph. *OT* Creon  
 Soph. *El.* Aegisthus

Soph. *Ph.* Odysseus  
Soph. *OC* Oedipus  
Soph. *OC* Stranger  
Soph. *OC* Theseus  
Soph. *OC* Creon  
Soph. *OC* Polyneices  
Eur. *Med.* Creon  
Eur. *Med.* Jason  
Eur. *Med.* Aegeus  
Eur. *Hcl.* Iolaus  
Eur. *Hcl.* Demophon  
Eur. *Hcl.* Eurystheus  
Eur. *Hipp.* Theseus  
Eur. *An.* Menelaus  
Eur. *An.* Peleus  
Eur. *Hec.* Odysseus  
Eur. *Hec.* Agamemnon  
Eur. *Hec.* Polymestor  
Eur. *Supp.* Theseus  
Eur. *Supp.* Adrastus  
Eur. *Supp.* Iphis  
Eur. *HF* Amphitryon  
Eur. *HF* Lycus  
Eur. *HF* Heracles  
Eur. *HF* Theseus  
Eur. *Tro.* Menelaus  
Eur. *IT* Thoas  
Eur. *Ion* Xuthus  
Eur. *Hel.* Menelaus  
Eur. *Phoen.* Polyneices  
Eur. *Phoen.* Eteocles  
Eur. *Phoen.* Creon  
Eur. *Or.* Menelaus  
Eur. *Or.* Tyndareus  
Eur. *Ba.* Pentheus  
Eur. *IA* Menelaus  
[Eur.] *Rh.* Aeneas  
[Eur.] *Rh.* Dolon  
[Eur.] *Rh.* Rhesus  
[Eur.] *Rh.* Odysseus  
[Eur.] *Rh.* Diomedes  
[Eur.] *Rh.* Alexander

## (iii) Unmarried males from the stage building (2):

Aesch. *Eum.* Orestes  
Eur. *Ion* Ion

## (iv) Unmarried males not from the stage building (20):

Aesch. *Cho.* Orestes  
Aesch. *Cho.* Pylades  
Soph. *Aj.* Teucer  
Soph. *Ant.* Haemon  
Soph. *Tr.* Hyllus  
Soph. *El.* Orestes  
Soph. *Ph.* Neoptolemus  
Soph. *Ph.* Philoctetes  
Eur. *Hipp.* Hippolytus  
Eur. *An.* Child  
Eur. *An.* Orestes  
Eur. *El.* Orestes  
Eur. *IT* Orestes  
Eur. *IT* Pylades  
Eur. *Hel.* Teucer  
Eur. *Hel.* Theoclymenus  
Eur. *Phoen.* Menoeceus  
Eur. *Or.* Orestes  
Eur. *Or.* Pylades  
Eur. *IA* Achilles

## (v) Males in minor roles from the stage building (9):

Aesch. *Cho.* Doorkeeper  
Aesch. *Cho.* Slave  
Soph. *OT* Messenger B  
Eur. *HF* Messenger  
Eur. *Hel.* Messenger B  
Eur. *Hel.* Slave  
Eur. *Phoen.* Old Slave  
Eur. *Or.* Phrygian Slave  
Eur. *IA* Old Man

## (vi) Males in minor roles not from the stage building (47):

Aesch. *Ag.* Watchman  
 Aesch. *Ag.* Herald  
 Soph. *Aj.* Messenger  
 Soph. *Ant.* Guard  
 Soph. *Ant.* Teiresias  
 Soph. *Ant.* Messenger  
 Soph. *Tr.* Messenger  
 Soph. *Tr.* Lichas  
 Soph. *Tr.* Doctor  
 Soph. *OT* Priest  
 Soph. *OT* Teiresias  
 Soph. *OT* Messenger A  
 Soph. *OT* Shepherd  
 Soph. *El.* Old Slave  
 Soph. *Ph.* False Merchant  
 Soph. *OC* Messenger  
 Eur. *Med.* Tutor  
 Eur. *Med.* Messenger  
 Eur. *Hcl.* Herald  
 Eur. *Hcl.* Slave  
 Eur. *Hcl.* Messenger  
 Eur. *Hipp.* Slave  
 Eur. *Hipp.* Messenger  
 Eur. *An.* Messenger  
 Eur. *Hec.* Talthybius  
 Eur. *Supp.* Herald  
 Eur. *Supp.* Messenger  
 Eur. *El.* Old Man  
 Eur. *El.* Messenger  
 Eur. *Tro.* Talthybius  
 Eur. *IT* Herdsman  
 Eur. *IT* Messenger  
 Eur. *Ion* Old Man  
 Eur. *Ion* Slave  
 Eur. *Hel.* Messenger A  
 Eur. *Phoen.* Teiresias  
 Eur. *Phoen.* Messenger A  
 Eur. *Phoen.* Messenger B  
 Eur. *Or.* Messenger  
 Eur. *Ba.* Teiresias  
 Eur. *Ba.* Slave

Eur. *Ba.* Messenger A  
 Eur. *Ba.* Messenger B  
 Eur. *IA* Messenger A  
 Eur. *IA* Messenger B  
 [Eur.] *Rh.* Shepherd  
 [Eur.] *Rh.* Charioteer

(vii) Married females from the stage building (17):

Aesch. *Ag.* Clytemnestra  
 Aesch. *Cho.* Clytemnestra  
 Soph. *Aj.* Tecmessa  
 Soph. *Ant.* Eurydice  
 Soph. *Tr.* Deianeira  
 Soph. *OT* Jocasta  
 Soph. *El.* Clytemnestra  
 Eur. *Med.* Medea  
 Eur. *Hcl.* Alcmene  
 Eur. *Hipp.* Phaedra  
 Eur. *An.* Hermione  
 Eur. *Hec.* Hecabe  
 Eur. *Supp.* Evadne  
 Eur. *El.* Electra  
 Eur. *Tro.* Helen  
 Eur. *Phoen.* Jocasta  
 Eur. *Or.* Helen

(viii) Married females not from the stage building (10):

Eur. *An.* Andromache  
 Eur. *Supp.* Aethra  
 Eur. *El.* Clytemnestra  
 Eur. *HF* Megara  
 Eur. *Tro.* Hecabe  
 Eur. *Tro.* Andromache  
 Eur. *Ion* Creusa  
 Eur. *Hel.* Helen  
 Eur. *Ba.* Agave  
 Eur. *IA* Clytemnestra

## (ix) Unmarried females from the stage building (12):

Aesch. *Cho.* Electra  
 Soph. *Ant.* Antigone  
 Soph. *Ant.* Ismene  
 Soph. *El.* Electra  
 Soph. *El.* Chrysothemis  
 Eur. *Hcl.* Daughter  
 Eur. *Hec.* Polyxena  
 Eur. *Tro.* Cassandra  
 Eur. *IT* Iphigeneia  
 Eur. *Hel.* Theonoe  
 Eur. *Phoen.* Antigone  
 Eur. *Or.* Hermione

## (x) Unmarried females not from the stage building (6):

Aesch. *Ag.* Cassandra  
 [Aesch.] *PV* Io  
 Soph. *OC* Antigone  
 Soph. *OC* Ismene  
 Eur. *Or.* Electra  
 Eur. *IA* Iphigeneia

## (xi) Females in minor roles from the stage building (8):

Aesch. *Cho.* Cilissa  
 Soph. *Tr.* Nurse  
 Eur. *Med.* Nurse  
 Eur. *Hipp.* Nurse  
 Eur. *An.* Slave  
 Eur. *An.* Nurse  
 Eur. *Ion* Priestess  
 Eur. *Hel.* Old Woman

## (xii) Females in minor roles not from the stage building (2):

Aesch. *Eum.* Pythia  
 Eur. *Hec.* Slave

*Appendix 2*

First entrances in extant tragedy, where the stage building represents a house or palace (speaking characters excluding gods, ghosts and choruses)

*M = male; F = female. The line number given is the line of each character's first speech. I have supplied an additional note where this is substantially different from the line of their first entry.*

## AESCHYLUS

**Agamemnon [stage building = the palace at Argos]**

Watchman (M) (line 1) on the stage building as the action starts<sup>25</sup>

Clytemnestra (F) (264) from the stage building (greeted by the Chorus at 258ff.)<sup>26</sup>

Herald (M) (503) from the side

κήρυκ' ἀπ' ἀκτῆς τόνδ' ὄρω, 493

Agamemnon (M) (810) from the side (greeted by the Chorus at 783ff.)

Cassandra (F, enslaved) (1072) from the side (enters with Agamemnon at 783)

Aegisthus (M) (1577) from the side

**Choephoroi [stage building = the palace at Argos]**

Orestes (M) (line 1) from the side

ἦκω γὰρ ἐς γῆν τήνδε καὶ κατέρομαι, 3

Pylades (M) (mute until 900) from the side with Orestes at line 1

Πυλάδῃ, σταθῶμεν ἐκποδῶν, 20

Electra (F) (84) from the stage building<sup>27</sup>

Ἥλέκτραν δοκῶ / στείχειν ἀδελφὴν τὴν ἐμὴν, 17-18

Doorkeeper (M, slave) (657) from the stage building

Clytemnestra (F) (668) from the stage building

Cilissa (F, slave) (734) from the stage building

ποῖ δὴ πατεῖς, Κίλισσα, δωματίων πύλας; 732

Aegisthus (M) (838) from the side (ὑπάγγελος, 838; advised to enter the house at 848-9)

Slave (M) (875) from the stage building

<sup>25</sup> TAPLIN 1977, 276-7.

<sup>26</sup> See TAPLIN 1977, 280-8 on the timing of Clytemnestra's entry.

<sup>27</sup> SCULLION 1994, 71-5, *contra* TAPLIN 1977, 336.

## SOPHOCLES

***Antigone* [stage building = the palace at Thebes]**

Antigone (F) (line 1) from the stage building

καί σ' ἐκτὸς ἀυλείων πυλῶν / ... ἐξέπεμπον, 18-19

Ismene (F) (11) from the stage building (addressed by Antigone in line 1)

Creon (M) (162) from the side<sup>28</sup>

καὶ δεῦρο νεῖσθαι, 33

Guard (M) (223) from the side (news of the burial outside the city walls)

Haemon (M) (635) from the side (news from the city, 692ff.)

Teiresias (M) (988) from the side

Messenger (M) (1155) from the side (news of events at the cave)

Eurydice (F) (1183) from the stage building

ἐκ δὲ δωμάτων, 1181; πρὸς ἔξοδον στείχουσα, 1184

***Trachiniae* [stage building = the house of Deianeira and Heracles at Trachis]**

Deianeira (F) (line 1) from the stage building

Nurse (F) (49) from the stage building<sup>29</sup>

Hyllus (M) (64) from the side

ἐγγυς δ' ὄδ' αὐτὸς ἀρτίπους θρώσκει δόμοις, 58

Messenger (M) (180) from the side (news from a nearby meadow, 188-9)

Lichas (M, herald) (229) from the side

Doctor (M) (974) from the side

Heracles (M) (983) from the side (enters with the Doctor just before 974)

***Oedipus Tyrannus* [stage building = the palace at Thebes]**

Oedipus (M) (line 1) from the stage building to meet the suppliant children

Priest (M) (14) in front of the stage building as the action starts

Creon (M) (87) from the side (gradually comes into hearing range, 78-84)

Teiresias (M) (316) from the side (seen on his way at 297-8)

Jocasta (F) (634) from the stage building

ὄρω / τήνδ' ἐκ δόμων στείχουσαν Ἰοκάστην, 631-2

Messenger A (M) (924) from the side (wanting to know where Oedipus' house is)

Shepherd (M) (1123) from the side (seen on his way at 1110ff.)

Messenger B (M, slave?) (1223) from the stage building

<sup>28</sup> Having already made his proclamation on the battlefield? GRIFFITH 1999, 123.

<sup>29</sup> The Nurse probably enters with Deianeira: EASTERLING 1982, 71. Another possibility is that she enters during Deianeira's long speech. The Nurse's opening lines imply that she has been listening.

***Electra* [stage building = the palace at Argos]**

Old Slave (M) (line 1) from the side

Orestes (M) (23) from the side (enters with the Old Slave at line 1)

Electra (F) (86) from the stage building (cries heard within at line 77)

Chrysothemis (F) (328) from the stage building

ὡς δόμων ὄρω / τὴν σὴν ὀμαιμιον ..., 324-5

Clytemnestra (F) (516) from the stage building<sup>30</sup>

Aegisthus (M) (1442) from the side (having been away: οὐ γὰρ πάρεσθ')

Αἰγισθος, 517)

## EURIPIDES

***Medea* [stage building = the house of Medea and Jason at Corinth]**

Nurse (F, slave) (line 1) from the stage building

Tutor (M, slave) (49) from the side

Medea (F) (214) from the stage building (ἐξῆλθον δόμων) but heard from within at 96ff.

Creon (M) (271) from the side

Jason (M) (446) from the side

Aegeus (M) (663) from the side

Messenger (M, slave) (1121) from the side (news from the palace of Creon)

***Hippolytus* [stage building = the palace at Trozen]**

*Lines 1-57 are delivered by the god Aphrodite.*

Hippolytus (M) (58) from the side

Slave (M) (88) from the side (enters with Hippolytus at 58)

Nurse (F, slave) (176) from the stage building (enters with Phaedra at 170)

Phaedra (F) (198) from the stage building (enters with the Nurse at 170)

ἀλλ' ἦδε τροφὸς γεραῖα πρὸ θυρῶν / τήνδε κομίζουσ' ἔξω μελάθρων,  
170-1

Theseus (M) (790) from the side

Messenger (M, slave?) (1153) from the side

πρὸς δόμους ὀρμώμενον, 1152

***Andromache* [stage building = the house of Neoptolemus in Thessaly]**

Andromache (F, enslaved) (line 1) in front of the stage building as the action starts

Slave (F) (56) from the stage building

<sup>30</sup> Clytemnestra's first words (ἀνεμμένη μὲν, ὡς ἔουκας, αὐτὸ στρέφει, *Soph. El.* 516) show disapproval that Electra is spending time outdoors. This makes sense if Clytemnestra herself has entered from the house.

Hermione (F) (147) from the stage building  
 Menelaus (M) (309) from the side  
 Child (M) (504) from the side (enters with Menelaus at 309)  
 Peleus (M) (547) from the side  
 Nurse (F, slave) (802) from the stage building  
 Orestes (M) (881) from the side  
 Messenger (M, slave) (1070) from the side (news from Delphi)

***Electra* [stage building = the house of Electra and her peasant husband]**

Peasant (M) (line 1) from the stage building  
 Electra (F) (54) from the stage building (fetching water)  
 Orestes (M) (82) from the side  
 Old man (M) (487) from the side  
 ὡς πρόσβασιν τῶνδ' ὀρθίαν οἰκῶν ἔχει / ῥυσῶ γέροντι τῶδε προσβῆναι  
 ποδί, 489-90  
 Messenger (M, slave) (761) from the side  
 Clytemnestra (F) (998) from the side (greeted by the Chorus at 988)

***Heracles* [stage building = the house of Heracles at Thebes]**

Amphitryon (M) (line 1) in front of the stage building as the action starts  
 Megara (F) (60) in front of the stage building as the action starts  
 Lycus (M) (140) from the side  
 εἰσορῶ ... / Λύκον περὼντα τῶνδε δωμάτων πέλας, 138-9  
 Heracles (M) (523) from the side (observed approaching at 514ff.)  
 Messenger (M, slave) (910) from the stage building  
 Theseus (M) (1163) from the side

***Helen* [stage building = the palace of Theoclymenus]**

Helen (F) (line 1) in front of the stage building as the action starts  
 Teucer (M) (68) from the side  
 Menelaus (M) (386) from the side  
 Old Woman (F, slave) (437) from the stage building  
 τίς ἄν πυλωρὸς ἐκ δόμων μόλοι, 435  
 Messenger A (M, slave) (597) from the side (news of the phantom Helen's disappearance)  
 Theonoe (F) (865) from the stage building  
 ἐκβαίνει δόμων / ἢ θεσπιωδὸς Θεονόη, 858-9  
 Theoclymenus (M) (1165) from the side  
 Messenger B (M, slave) (1512) from the stage building (news of Helen's escape)  
 Slave (M) (1627) from the stage building

***Phoenissae* [stage building = the palace at Thebes]**

Jocasta (F) (line 1) from the stage building

Old Slave (M) (88) on the stage building

Antigone (F) (103) on the stage building

Polyneices (M) (261) from the side

Eteocles (M) (446) from the side (having come from the city walls, 448-9)

Creon (M) (697) from the side

ὄρω γὰρ αὐτὸν πρὸς δόμους στείχοντ' ἔμούς, 696

Teiresias (M) (834) from the side

Menoceus (M) (977) from the side (enters with Teiresias at 834)

Messenger A (M) (1067) from the side (news from the battlefield)

τίς ἐν πύλαισι δωμαίων κυρεῖ; / ἀνοίγεται, 1067-8

Messenger B (1335) from the side (further news from the battlefield)

Oedipus (M) (1539) from the stage building

λείπε σούς / δόμους, 1530-1

***Orestes* [stage building = the palace at Argos]**

Electra (F) (line 1) in front of the stage building as the action starts<sup>31</sup>

Helen (F) (71) from the stage building

Hermione (F) (mute until 1323) from the stage building

ὦ τέκνον, ἔξελεθ' Ἑρμιόνη, δόμων πάρος, 112

Orestes (M) (211) in front of the stage building as the action starts

Menelaus (M) (356) from the side

Tyndareus (M) (470) from the side

Τυνδάρεως ὄδε / στείχει πρὸς ἡμᾶς, 459-60

Pylades (M) (729) from the side

εἰσορῶ γὰρ τόνδε φίλτατον βροτῶν / Πυλάδην δρόμῳ στείχοντα

Φωκέων ἄπο, 725-7

Messenger (M) (852) from the side (news from the Argive assembly)

Phrygian Slave (M) (1368) from the stage building

***Bacchae* [stage building = the palace at Thebes]**

*Lines 1-63 are delivered by the god Dionysus.*

Teiresias (M) (170) from the side

Cadmus (M) (178) from the stage building

τίς ἐν πύλαισι; Κάδμον ἐκκάλει δόμων, 170

Pentheus (M) (215) from the side

Πενθεὺς πρὸς οἶκους ὄδε διὰ σπουδῆς περᾶ, 212

Slave (M) (434) from the side

Messenger A (M) (660) from the side (news from Mt Cithaeron)

ἦκω Κιθαιρῶν' ἐκλιπῶν, 661

<sup>31</sup> WILLINK 1986, 77.

Messenger B (M, slave) (1024) from the side (further news from Mt Cithaeron)

Agave (F) (1168) from the side

εισορῶ γὰρ ἐς δόμους ὀρμωμένην / Πενθέως Ἀγαύην μητέρ', 1165-6

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#### ENGLISH TITLE

Tragic Freedoms

#### ABSTRACT

This paper considers the usefulness of tragedy as a historical source, specifically on the question of personal freedoms in fifth-century Athens. The underlying methodological principle is that we must consider tragedy as drama before we consider it as evidence. The paper looks first briefly at free speech and then, at greater length, at freedom of movement, with a specific focus on the movement of female characters. Through an examination of first entrances in the extant plays, I try to uncover what assumptions were shared between poet and audience about a woman's ability to leave the house and enter the public spaces of the city. Within the limitations of the evidence, it appears that (1) tragic women almost always make their first entrance from the stage building in plays where that building represents a house or palace, and (2) there are social constraints on the freedom of unmarried women in tragedy. However, there are frequent variations from this pattern. Tragic freedoms and unfreedoms emerge as contestable and subject to perceived social status.

#### KEYWORDS

Greek Tragedy — Aeschylus — Sophocles — Euripides — Freedom — Freedom of Speech — Athenian Women

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