

When the *Troades* opens, Troy has fallen to the Greeks and its men are dead. The women of Troy wait on the shore between the tents and ships of the Greeks to learn of their new fates. The play's female protagonists now exist in a liminal position both temporally and spatially: they reside on the beach between the city that has not yet been burned to the ground and the ships that wait to take them to their new lives as slaves. How is action possible from such an utterly debased position? What reversal can there ever be in the *Troades* for the play's protagonists? Does the play necessarily deny the women's agency? Euripides' *Troades* could be considered, in Aristotelian terms, a monster (*teras*) within the genus of tragedy, a creature devoid of some essential element of its species. The play's episodic structure has long been faulted by scholars for lacking the necessary unity of plot (e.g. Willamowitz 1906, 263; and A. and M. Croiset 1899, 300). And so the monstrosities of this play continue to be noted by modern scholars: since the cause of the women's sufferings is extrinsic, no real *hamartía* can be assigned; the *peripéteia* has occurred prior to the action of the play; the possibility of *anagnorēsis* and *katharsis* is then called into question (see Freeland in *Essays on Aristotle's Poetics*, and Nussbaum, *ibid.*). Indeed, the *Troades* may well represent the worst sort of tragedy of all, one that is *miaros*, chronicling as it does an unmitigated wave of disasters befalling good people (Nussbaum, 278). So debased, in fact, are the play's women, that it has become a scholarly "given" that they are incapable of any real agency at all (Freeland, 119; Nussbaum, 283–4; Saxonhouse, *Political Theory* 1980, 68, 76; et al.). It would certainly be neither interesting, rewarding, nor possible to attempt to force Euripides' square peg of a play into the round and essentialist hole of strict Aristotelean tragedy. Instead we will look at action (*práxis*) and agency within Aristotle's framework to see what sort of agency is and is not possible for the women. By expanding our investigation from the *Poetics* to include Aristotle's ethical works, we can find more room for the women to maneuver; at the same time the limitations of this framework for understanding the ways in which the oppressed can act will be suggested. Next, by turning to modern critical analysis of the variety of forms of resistance to domination, we can see how the Trojan women make use of speech acts, self-created personae, the discourse of interpretation, and, specifically, ritual to act in the face of domination. Finally we will examine what it means for Euripides to have removed from this specific play not only traditional action (*práxis*), but also traditional actors (*prattontes*) and how in the face of this the *Troades* must be understood.

I will argue that the women of the play have more agency than scholars have heretofore been willing to grant them. Additionally, by turning to sociological and anthropological works, such as Scott's *Domination and the Arts of Resistance*, we can better understand a framework in which the women can in fact act, employing what Scott refers to as "hidden transcripts." Euripides has created a locus for their action by keeping the powerful men who control them nearly absent from the stage. Scholars have argued that their absence highlights the women's impotence (Meridor, *Phoenix* 1984, 210), but on the contrary, this carefully-arranged absence allows us to view the women's resistance in its fullness and complexity. The absence of the men against whom the women might retaliate forces us to contemplate directly the agency of those whose powerlessness is everywhere underscored. We do not see the women's fall in the play, only its aftermath—even the direct workings of the machinery of power are for the most part absent, and so the audience is forced to contemplate solely this resistance. Because we do not often see the results of their agency, scholars have made the mistake of saying that none exists. But as Scodel has pointed out, "the results of the women's actions all lie outside the play" (*HSCP* 1998). The upended and debased women of this play find ways to act and to resist, and the fact that the results of their actions are not found in the play itself, but rather in some future that lies outside the play, yet with which the audience is familiar, highlights not their lack of agency, but rather the inexorable force of the slow-working and forward-looking agency of the oppressed resisting a dominant elite. The *Troades* is truly a tragedy of resistance.