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Arlene W. Saxonhouse

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## Free Speech and Democracy in Ancient Athens

This book illuminates the distinctive character of our modern understanding of the basis and value of free speech by contrasting it with the very different form of free speech that was practiced by the ancient Athenians in their democratic regime. Free speech in the ancient democracy was not a protected right but an expression of the freedom from hierarchy, awe, reverence, and shame. It was thus an essential ingredient of the egalitarianism of that regime. That freedom was challenged by the consequences of the rejection of shame (*aidôs*), which had served as a cohesive force within the polity. Socrates' "shameless" free speech at his trial captures the paradoxical consequences of democracy's theoretical grounding on the unbridled speech in which the Athenians expressed great pride and the polity's dependence on traditions that evoke shame. Through readings of Socrates' trial, Greek tragedy and comedy, Thucydides' *History*, and Plato's *Protagoras*, this volume explores the paradoxical connections between free speech, democracy, shame, and Socratic philosophy and Thucydidean history as practices of uncovering.

Arlene W. Saxonhouse is the Caroline Robbins Collegiate Professor of Political Science and Women's Studies at the University of Michigan. She is the author of *Athenian Democracy: Modern Mythmakers and Ancient Theorists* (1996), *Fear of Diversity: The Birth of Political Science in Ancient Greek Thought* (1992), and *Women in the History of Political Thought: Ancient Greece to Machiavelli* (1985) and is editor with Noel B. Reynolds of *Hobbes's Three Discourses: A Modern, Critical Edition of Newly Identified Works by the Young Thomas Hobbes* (1995). She has been a Fellow at the Center for Advanced Study in the Behavioral Sciences at Stanford and the University Center for Human Values at Princeton University. She has received fellowships from the National Endowment for the Humanities. She served as a Phi Beta Kappa Visiting Scholar during the 2001–2 academic year and is a Fellow of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences. In 1998 she received the Distinguished Faculty Achievement Award from the University of Michigan. She was Chair of the Political Science Department at the University of Michigan from 1990 to 1993.

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*University of Michigan*



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*For my children – Lilly, Noam, and Elena – with love.*

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Now fear no more shall bridle speech;  
Uncurbed, the common tongue shall prate  
Of freedom; for the yoke of State  
Lies broken on the bloody beach.

Aeschylus, *The Persians* 584–94  
(Vellacott translation)

For as I detest the doorways of Death, I detest that man, who  
hides one thing in the depths of his heart, and speaks of another.

Homer, *Iliad* 9.312–13 (Lattimore translation)

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