FROMA I. ZEITLIN

Playing the Other: Theater, Theatricality, and the Feminine in Greek Drama

FOR A SPECIMEN OF SHEER theatrical power, it would be difficult to match the climactic scene of Euripides' *Bacchae* (788–861) where Pentheus at last comes under the spell of his adversary, the god Dionysus, and acknowledges his secret desire to spy upon the women of Thebes who have left the city to go as maenads to the mountain. His violent antagonism toward the women who, in abandoning their homes, children, and domestic tasks, have challenged the civic, masculine authority of the king gives way to a sudden softening of will—a yielding to the cunning wiles of the god disguised on stage as the Asiatic stranger, the leader of his own troops of maenads. This first surrender is followed by another. Giving up now his original intention to marshal his forces for an open combat of men against women, Pentheus gives up his stubborn claim to an unequivocal masculine identity. To see what the women are doing without himself being seen, Pentheus must trade his hoplite military tactics for an undercover operation that involves adopting a devious stratagem and assuming a remarkable disguise. He must let the god take him inside the palace and dress him as a woman in a flowing wig and headdress, a long pleated robe and belt, to which he adds the typical insignia of the maenads—the dappled fawnskin and ritual thyrsus. When the god completes this elaborate toilette, Pentheus will also resemble Dionysus himself, whose effeminate appearance the king had earlier mocked.[1] But as much as they might seem doublets of one another, the power relations between them have been decisively reversed. Now Dionysus will turn Pentheus from the one who acts to the one who is acted upon, from the one who would inflict pain and suffering, even death, on the other, to the one who will undergo those experiences himself. For now, however, the preliminary sign of Pentheus' total defeat, first at the hands of Dionysus and then at the hands of the women, is given to us on stage in the visual feminization of Pentheus when he is induced against all inhibitions of shame to adopt the costume and gestures of the woman.

But if feminization is the emblem of Pentheus' defeat, Dionysus' effeminacy is a sign of his hidden power. Here are two males, cousins in fact through their genealogical ties, both engaged in a masculine contest for supremacy. One, however, gains mastery by manipulating a feminized identity and the other is van-

quished when he finally succumbs to it. What we might perceive in their ensemble at the moment when the two males appear together on stage in similar dress is an instructive spectacle of the inclusive functions of the feminine in the drama—one on the side of femininity as power and the other on the side of femininity as weakness.

Pentheus, first ashamed of wearing women's clothing, and terrified that he make a ridiculous spectacle of himself for all the city to see, now has a fleeting intimation of the new force he has acquired, exulting in the surge of unnatural physical strength that suffuses him and dreaming of uprooting mountains with his bare hands. But under the god's gentle prodding, he just as eagerly abandons his desire for violence to acquiesce with pleasure in the contrary tactics of hiding and deception that will confront the women on their own terms (953–56). The moment of triumph and confidence, however, is brief. We know already in advance what the fate of Pentheus will be once the feminized god Dionysus, who plays *his* role to perfection, delivers over his disguised victim, his man clumsily concealed in women's dress, to the "real" women who will tear the imposter apart in a terrible ritual *sparagmos,* while the god reverts to his function of divine spectator at the drama he himself has arranged on stage.

I have chosen to begin with the robing of Pentheus, for beyond its dramatic impact within the context of the play, the mechanics of this scene also suggests in its details a wider and more emblematic set of significations. These refer both to the conditions of Dionysiac ritual itself as a deadly version of initiation into the mysteries of the god's worship and to the conditions of the theater of Dionysus and the accepted terms of its artistic representations.[2] For the first, Pentheus must be dressed as a woman for consecration to the god as the surrogate beast-victim he will become in the ritual on the mountain; for the second, the costuming of Pentheus reminds us that the theater requires mimetic disguise by which it creates and maintains its status as dramatic festival.[3] Thus through this scene we arrive at the dynamic basis of Greek drama, catching a momentary glimpse of the secrets of its ritual prehistory as it merges with and is imitated by the techniques of the theater. In particular, the fact that Pentheus dons a feminine costume and rehearses in it before our eyes exposes perhaps one of the most marked features of Greek theatrical mimesis, namely that men are the only actors in this civic theater; in order to represent women on stage, men must *always* put on a feminine costume and mask.[4] What this means is that it is not a woman who speaks or acts for herself and in herself on stage; it is always a man who impersonates her.[5]

Still further, if we also consider that in order to direct the proceedings of the drama, to manipulate its theatrical effects, contrive its plots, set its stage, and control its mimetic play of illusion and reality, Dionysus, the god of the theater, must also take on womanish traits, then perhaps we may venture yet further: can there be some intrinsic connections linking the phenomenon of Athenian trag-

edy, invented and developed in a historical context as a civic art form, and what the society culturally defines as feminine in its sex/gender system?[6]

There is nothing new in stressing the associations of Dionysus and the feminine for the Greek theater. After all, madness, the irrational, and the emotional aspects of life are associated in the culture more with women than with men. The boundaries of women's bodies are perceived as more fluid, more permeable, more open to affect and entry from the outside, less easily controlled by intellectual and rational means. This perceived physical and cultural instability renders them weaker than men; it is also all the more a source of disturbing power over them, as reflected in the fact that in the divine world it is feminine agents, for the most part, who, in addition to Dionysus, inflict men with madness—whether Hera, Aphrodite, the Erinyes, or even Athena as in Sophocles' *Ajax*.

On the other hand, we might want to view the androgyny of Dionysus, already in Aeschylus called a *gunnis* (womanish man) and *pseudanor* (counterfeit man, frag. 61 Nauck, 2nd ed.), as a true mixture of masculine and feminine. This mixture, it can be argued, is one of the emblems of his paradoxical role as disrupter of the normal social categories; in his own person he attests to the *coincidentia oppositorum* that challenges the hierarchies and rules of the public masculine world, reintroducing into it confusions, conflicts, tensions, and ambiguities, insisting always on the more complex nature of life than masculine aspirations would allow.[7] Such a view would stress male and female aspects alike; it would regard the god as embodying a dynamic process or as configuring in his person an alternate mode of reality. Convincing as this view may be, it runs the risk of underrating the fact that it is precisely Dionysus' identification with the feminine that gives him and his theater their power.

Along the same lines, in the quest for equivalence between the genders, one could remark, not without justice, that although all the actors are male in tragedy, we find that within the plays feminized males are countered by masculinized women: for example, Aeschylus' Clytemnestra of the "man-counseling mind" (*Agamemnon*), Euripides' Medea, and, of course, the maenadic Agave herself, who in the *Bacchae* boasts of her warrior prowess over the body of Pentheus, as yet unrecognized as the son whom she has killed. This notion of a balanced, symmetrical inversion finds support in Greek festivals outside Athens where men and women change their costumes for a day, each imitating the appearance and behavior of the other.[8] Better yet, there is evidence that in initiation rites at puberty or sometimes in nuptial arrangements, young men and women in their own spheres temporarily adopt the dress and behavior of the other sex.[9] Such reversals are usually explained according to a ritual logic that insists that each gender must for the last time, as it were, act the part of the other before assuming the unequivocal masculine and feminine identities that cultural ideology requires.[10]

As a theoretical concept, this proposition makes eminent sense. On the level of practice, however, these symmetries are often more apparent than real; the

notion conforms better with our habits of binary thinking than with recorded evidence as these rites are far better and more numerously attested for men than for women, not least because their performance, aimed at creating men for the city, is of greater concern to the culture at large.

Second, and more to the point, critics treat inversion of roles as a sufficient explanation in itself, that is, a temporary reversal before its decisive correction. They do not extend their analysis to consider what the various aspects of the actual experience might imply for achieving male identity. What more specifically might these actions and attitudes teach him? How might the processes of imitating the feminine prepare him for access to adult status, other than to teach him the behaviors he must later scrupulously avoid? Unless there were something to learn and something necessary to repeat, we would not need the genre of tragedy at all to call these different roles into question and, most of all, to challenge the masculine civic and rational view of the universe.

Finally, the pairing of feminized men and masculinized women, a useful notion in many respects, runs the risk of assuming mutually inverted categories without looking to the internal dynamics of tragic conventions that shape and predict the conditions of this exchange. Even more, such a concept tends to reduce the scope of the feminine in the drama. It is too limited to encompass her double dimensions—a model of both weakness and strength, endowed with traits and capacities that have negative and positive implications for self and society.

Thus my emphasis falls not upon the equal interchange or reversal of male and female roles but upon the predominance of the feminine in the theater, a phenomenon that used to (and may still) puzzle some commentators, who perceived a serious discrepancy between the mutedness of women in Athenian social and political life and their expressive claims to be heard and seen on stage.[11] And my focus on imbalances rather than on equivalences between the genders is aimed here not so much at the content and themes of the various dramas in their political and social dimensions but on the implications of theater and theatricality as these are integrally related to and reflective of the thematic preoccupations of drama. If tragedy can be viewed as a species of recurrent masculine initiations, for adults as well as for the young,[12] and if drama, more broadly, is designed as an education for its male citizens in the democratic city, then the aspects of the play world I wish to bring into sharper relief may well merit the speculations I am about to offer on theater, representation, plot and action, experience and identity—all linked in some radical way with the feminine.

From the outset, it is essential to understand that in Greek theater, as in fact in Shakespearean theater, the self that is really at stake is to be identified with the male, while the woman is assigned the role of the radical other.[13] It seems unfair perhaps that, given the numbers and importance of female protagonists in Greek tragedy (by contrast, it should be said, to the case of Shakespeare),[14]

theoretical critics from Aristotle on never consider anyone but the male hero as the central feature of the genre; they devote their attention to outlining *his* traits, configurations, and dilemmas. Yet despite Clytemnestra, Antigone, Phaedra, Medea, and many others, it must be acknowledged that this critical blindness is also insight. Even when female characters struggle with the conflicts generated by the particularities of their subordinate social position, their demands for identity and self-esteem are nevertheless designed primarily for exploring the male project of selfhood in the larger world as these impinge upon men's claims to knowledge, power, freedom, and self-sufficiency—not for some greater entitlement or privilege, as some have thought, that the female might gain for herself, not even for revising notions of what femininity might be or mean. Women as individuals or chorus may give their names as titles to plays; female characters may occupy the center stage and leave a far more indelible emotional impression on their spectators than their male counterparts (as Antigone, for example, over Creon). But *functionally* women are never an end in themselves, and nothing changes for them once they have lived out their drama on stage. Rather, they play the roles of catalysts, agents, instruments, blockers, spoilers, destroyers, and sometimes helpers or saviors for the male characters. When elaborately represented, they may serve as anti-models as well as hidden models for that masculine self, as we will see, and, concomitantly, their experience of suffering or their acts that lead them to disaster regularly occur before and precipitate those of men.[15]

An excellent case in point is Sophocles' *Trachiniae,* a play that will serve us well throughout this essay. Although the distress and despair of Deianeira, the innocent, virtuous wife, commands our attention for most of the play, and although she loses none of our sympathy when unwittingly destroying her husband Heracles for love of him, we come to realize that her entire experience, her actions and reactions, are in truth a route for achieving another goal, the real *telos* or end of the drama. She is the agent designated to fulfill the deceptive, riddling oracles which predict the tragic destiny of Heracles rather than a well-earned respite from his labors here on earth. She kills herself offstage in remorse, but his are the sufferings we witness publicly on stage, and it is he who, in his first and last appearance before us, provides the climax and resolution of the drama.

Moreover, if we consider more generally that the tragic universe is one that the specifically male self (actor and/or spectator) must discover for himself as other than he originally imagined it to be, then the example of Deianeira is particularly instructive for articulating the complex position occupied by that feminine other. For in the course of the action, Deianeira indeed does come to that discovery for herself, realizing too late that she had been duped. The love charm the centaur had bequeathed to her was in fact a deadly poison, whose fiery potential had been concealed within the recesses of the house until exposed to the warming heat of the sun. But her education into the treacherous opacity

of the tragic world holds no interest for Heracles, preoccupied as he is with unraveling the riddle of his own story. The ensemble of her life and death seems to have nothing to teach Heracles that he can acknowledge openly on his deathbed, and, even more telling, neither will he allow it to have meaning for their son Hyllus when he prescribes for the boy's future in terms that define him only as his father's son.

Medea in Euripides' play comes closest to the demand for an equivalence of that feminine self to the male, preferring, as she says, to stand three times in the van of battle than to bear one child (*Medea* 250–51). Yet although she has a defined geographical destination to which she will go once she leaves Corinth in exile, having obtained in advance from its king the promise of sanctuary in Athens, her spectacular departure from the city on the dragon chariot of her immortal ancestor, the Sun, suggests that there can be no place for her in the social structure down here on earth. A woman who insists on the binding nature of the compact she made on her own with a man, who defends her right to honor and self-esteem in terms suspiciously resembling those of the male heroic code, and finally who would reverse the cultural flow in founding a new genre of poetry that celebrates now the exploits of women rather than those of men (as the chorus sings, 410–45) is meant not for human but superhuman status.[16] Accordingly, it is only logical that she disappear once the drama is over—upward and out of sight. Yet even in this revolutionary play the typology still holds. Medea's formal function in the plot is to punish Jason for breaking his sacred oath to her, through an exacting retribution of tragic justice, and she is the typical and appropriate agent, even if embodied in exotic form, for accomplishing that crucial end.

Let us return now to the central topic—to identify those features that are most particular to drama, serving to differentiate it from all other art forms that precede it: narrative (epic), choral lyric and dance, solo songs, and perhaps even stylized exchanges of dialogue. Though profoundly indebted, to be sure, to ritual representations and reenactments, to ritual costumes and masks, drama develops along the deeper lines of character and plot and establishes its own conventions and entitlements in the more secular sphere.[17]

At the risk of drastic (I repeat, drastic) oversimplification, I propose four principal elements as indispensable traits of the theatrical experience, all interlinked in various ways with one another and to the sum total of the tragic spectacle. And I will assume another more dangerous risk by boldly proposing in advance that each of these traits can find not its only, to be sure, but its more radical cultural referent in the traits and aspects that the society most associates with the feminine domain.

First, the representation of the body itself on stage as such—its somatic dimensions and the sense of its physical reality. Second, the arrangement of architectural space on stage that continually suggests a relational tension between inside and outside. Third, the plot itself, that is, the strategies by which theater

best represents a tragic story on stage and contrives to bring that story through often surprising means to the conclusion that the terms of its myth demand. In this sense, plot as shape of the story often coincides in fact, as we will see, with the other connotation of plot as intrigue and deception. And finally, the most extensive category—the condition of theatrical mimetism itself, limited in this discussion to the question of role playing and disguise—or more generally, the representation of a self as other than it seems or knows itself to be, a self with inner and outer dimensions.

The Body

The emphasis in theater must inevitably fall upon the body—the performing body of the actor as it embodies its role, figures its actions, and is shown to us in stylized poses, gestures, and attitudes. We see this body before us in the *theatron,* the viewing place, in rest and in movement. We observe how it occupies different areas at different times on stage, how it makes its entrances and exits, how it is situated at times alone or, more often, in relation with others. This performing body engages at every moment its sensory faculties—to hear, see, touch, and move; above all, it is the actor as body or body as actor who projects the human voice in all its inflections.

Theater has been defined as "the adventure of the human body,"[18] but for Greek tragedy it would be more accurate to call it "the misadventure of the human body." What interests the audience most in the somatics of the stage is the body in an unnatural state of *pathos* (suffering)—when it falls farthest from its ideal of strength and integrity. We notice it most when it is reduced to a helpless or passive condition—seated, bound, or constrained in some other way; when it is in the grip of madness or disease, undergoing intermittent and spasmodic pain, alternating between spells of dangerous calm before the stormy symptoms assail the body again. Tragedy insists most often on exhibiting this body, even typically bringing back corpses killed offstage so as to expose them to public view. When characters are still alive, some demand us to witness the spectacle of their suffering so we may pity them. Others call for a covering to hide their shame or wish to be hidden inside the house—or in some supernatural way to vanish from the eyes of the beholders. More to the point, it is at those moments when the male finds himself in a condition of weakness that he too becomes acutely aware that he has a body—and then perceives himself, at the limits of pain, to be most like a woman.

Heracles, at the end of Sophocles' *Trachiniae,* when his flesh is being devoured by the poison of the fateful robe, appeals to his son: "Pity me, / for I seem pitiful to many others, crying / and sobbing like a girl, and no one could ever say / that he had seen this man act like that before. / Always without a groan I followed a

painful course. / Now in my misery I am discovered a woman" (*Trachiniae* 1070–75; cf. Euripides *Heracles* 1353–56). Sophocles' Ajax, in despair after the madness that the goddess Athena had sent upon him has abated and determined now to die a manly death that will restore his heroic image to himself, considers the temptation to yield through pity to his wife's entreaties. If he tempers his will, his tongue that is hard and firm like a sword, he has blunted its sharp edge; he has in effect feminized it, as he says (*ethēlunthēn,* for the sake of a woman [*Ajax* 650–52]). A warrior man often likens himself to a sword; his mind is obdurate, his will and words are whetted like iron (cf. Aeschylus *Seven Against Thebes* 529–30, 715). His is the instrument of power that wounds others, while his body remains impenetrable to outside forces. Ajax will harden his will; he will have his heroic death by the sword of iron. But how? By burying that sword in the earth and falling upon it, breaking through the flesh of his side (*pleuran diarrexanta,* 834). As he violates the boundaries of his body, he also violates tragic convention by staging his death as a public act. Yet paradoxically, there is yet another anomaly in the method he chooses. Suicide is a solution in tragedy normally reserved only for women—and what we are given to witness is this convention borrowed for a man's version of it. A heroic death then in the woman's way, a whetted will penetrated by a whetted weapon, befitting (as we will discuss further in another context) the curious ambiguities of this most masculine hero.[19]

My last example here is Hippolytus in Euripides' play. Refusing eros, refusing the touch, even the sight of a woman, he is brought back on stage in mortal agony after his horses had stampeded in fright before the apparition of the bull from the sea. Then he cries out that pains dart through his head and spasms leap up in his brain, while his desire is now all for a sword to cleave himself in two and "put his life at last to bed" (*Hippolytus* 1351–52, 1371–77). His symptoms are those of a woman, racked with the pain of childbirth or the torment of sexual desire.[20] We remember then Phaedra's last words, which prophesied that he would "share in her disease" (*Hippolytus* 730–31)—the deadly pangs of unrequited eros that earlier had reduced her to a sick and suffering body. Yet in that first scene, when no one on stage yet knows the cause of her malady, the chorus speaks in generic terms about the body of a woman. They call it a *dustropos harmonia,* an ill-tuned harmony; it suffers the misery of helplessness (*amechania*), and is open to the breeze that darts through the womb in pregnancy as well as to the torments of eros.[21] This body is permanently at odds with itself, subject to a congenital dissonance between inside and outside. Woman can never forget her body, as she experiences its inward pain, nor is she permitted to ignore the fact of its outward appearance in that finely tuned consciousness she acquires with respect to how she might seem to the eyes of others. Bodiliness is what most defines her in the cultural system that associates her with physical processes of birth and death and stresses the material dimensions of her existence, as exemplified, above all, in Hesiod's canonical myth of how the first woman, Pandora, was created.[22] Men

have bodies, to be sure, but in the gender system the role of representing the corporeal side of life in its helplessness and submission to constraints is primarily assigned to women.

Thus, it is women who most often tend the bodies of others, washing the surface of the body or laying it out for its funeral. Theirs is the task to supply the clothing that covers the body, and they have a storehouse of robes that may encircle the male victim in its textured folds. When men suffer or die in the theatrical space, it is the female who most typically is the cause. She seems to know, whether consciously or not, how vulnerable, how open—how mortal, in fact—is the human body. These figures may be goddesses like Aphrodite and Hera or, above all, the Erinyes, avenging ministers of retributive justice. But these are also women like Clytemnestra, Deianeira, Hecuba, and, of course, Agave, the mother of Pentheus.[23]

On the other hand, dressed as a woman, Pentheus makes the first discovery of his corporeal self. Before this he defends himself militantly against any touch of the other. But now he allows Dionysus to make contact with his body and, in a grotesque parody of female coquetry, is eager for the god to adjust the fine details of his costume and to arrange the stray locks of hair peeping out from beneath its snood (*Bacchae* 925–38). With this laying on of hands, Dionysus breaches that physical integrity so dear to the male and prepares Pentheus for the terrible sequel, when the voyeur, coming to see as a spectator what he imagines are the women's illicit physical contacts with others, is himself exposed to view, *his* body becoming instead the focus of their ministering hands. Then they indeed touch his body, and in the strength induced by their maenadic state easily tear it apart in the literal act of *sparagmos*.

In this primitive regression, women undo the body; its structures cannot hold, its limbs are unbound, and the masculine self, originally so intent on opposing himself to anything feminine, is fragmented and flies apart. Female violence may be viewed through the lens of role reversal, but in the Greek imagination the maenadic woman is regularly endowed with this power, especially over the masculine body, and is the model herself for the male who, when he too is seized like Euripides' Heracles in the grip of this madness, can only be described as "playing the Bacchant" and imitating the part of the woman.[24]

Theatrical Space

Second is the space itself on stage in the Greek theater, where the human actors situate themselves and the theatrical action takes place before the spectator. By convention this space is constructed as an outside in front of a façade of a building, most often a house or palace, and there is a door that leads to an inside that is hidden from view. What happens inside must always in some way be brought outside—for example, through use of the wheeled platform

called the *ekkyklema,* most often used to display the corpses of those bodies who have met their fatal doom within the house—visual proof of the violence that must also by convention take place offstage. But the very business of entrances and exits, of comings and goings through the door of the house, continually establishes a symbolic dialectic between public and private, seen and unseen, open and secret, even known and unknown.[25]

In this simple mapping of spatial relations, the stage conventions not only chart the bounded areas of social relations between the genders, which assign men to the outside and women to the inside, but they also suggest an analogy to the tragic world itself, which in the course of its plot and actions inevitably reveals its hidden and unknown dimensions.[26]

Earlier I defined the tragic universe as one that is other than the self originally imagined it to be. Going one step further, we may add that tragedy is the epistemological form par excellence. What it does best through the resources of the theater is to chart a path from ignorance to knowledge, deception to revelation, misunderstanding to recognition. The characters act out and live through the consequences of having clung to a partial single view of the world and themselves.[27] In the process, in the conflicts and tensions that mark the relations between the opposing characters, all come in some way to experience the complexities of the world—its multiple dimensions, its deceptions and illusions. Inside and outside organize the dramatic action of the drama, and they refer not only to the shifting planes of reality (the known and the unknown) but to the tragic self—both mind and body—and find their material referent in the house and the façade it presents to the outside world.

The house, let us now observe, is the property of the male and his family line. The *oikos* is the visual symbol of paternal heredity that entitles sons to succeed their fathers as proprietor of its wealth and movable goods and as ruler over its inhabitants. As the male in tragedy is often conflated with king, the house extends further as a locus of masculine power to include the sign of sovereignty over the city as a whole, and the solidity of its architectural structure symbolically guarantees the enduring stability of the social order. Yet the house, as we know, is more primarily the proper domain of the woman, to which the social rules of the culture assign her, while its men go forth into the outside world to pursue manly accomplishments in war and politics.

Thus, in conflicts between house and city or between domestic and political concerns that are the recurrent preoccupations of tragic plots, the woman, whether wife or daughter, is shown as best representing the positive values and structures of the house, and she typically defends its interests in response to some masculine violation of its integrity. As a result, however, of the stand she takes, the woman also represents a subversive threat to male authority as an adversary in a power struggle for control that resonates throughout the entire social and political

system, raising the terrifying specter of rule by women. Here we might note how strongly alien is the presence of this feminine other who, in asserting legitimate values most associated with her social role, is also perceived as illegitimately asserting the rights reserved for the masculine project of self. She never achieves these in any permanent way. But in the contest over rights to control domestic space that the stage conventions exploit, it is the woman and not the man who, by reason of her close identification with the house as her intimate scene, consistently rules the relations between inside and outside and shows herself as standing on the threshold betwixt and between.

Men find out in tragedy that they are likely to enter that interior domain mostly to their peril, whether Agamemnon as he walks upon the crimson carpets his wife has spread to lead him to his death at her hands within the house, or Hippolytus confronted inside with the nurse's revelation to him of Phaedra's guilty secret that is the beginning of his doom, or Polymestor in Euripides' *Hecuba* whom the Trojan queen lures into the tent to take a woman's revenge on the perfidious Thracian king who has killed her child.

As a general principle, the absent hero returns to his house either never to enter through its doors again, as for the extreme case of Heracles in the *Trachiniae,* or to meet with his own destruction within, as in the cases cited above, or finally, like the Heracles in Euripides' play, to go mad once inside the house, slaying his wife and children and literally insuring the fall of the house by toppling its columns. On the other hand, if the male would successfully penetrate the interior of the house and reclaim it for his own, he typically requires feminine assistance, best exemplified in the fact that, as we will discuss further in a different context, all the extant versions of Orestes' story insist upon pairing him with his sister, Electra.

Men imagine they can control that interior space by attempting to control the women within it, and they object, often violently as Pentheus does in the *Bacchae,* when in the most dramatic reversal they leave the stifling environment of the house to venture forth to the open (although equally uncivic world) of forest and mountains. But the king's authority lapses on all fronts. He is unable to bring back his Theban women from the mountains to put them in their rightful place, ultimately going out to meet them on their new terrain with the results we already know. But he fails too on domestic territory when he would lock up the other maenads (and their leader Dionysus) and imprison them within the house. Literally binding them with fetters, he discovers all too soon the futility of applying coercive force as they easily—magically—loosen themselves from his restraints, while his larger demands for mastery over the house literally collapse when Dionysus sends the earthquake to shake the *oikos* to its very foundations.

The situation of Pentheus leads to a further point. The king erects barriers around himself (and his psyche) against the invasion of Dionysus even as he

struggles to maintain the integrity of the house and the walled city of Thebes.[28] If tragedy, as I have suggested, is the epistemological genre par excellence, which continually calls into question what we know and how we think we know it, it does so often by confronting the assumptions of rational thought with those psychological necessities that may not be denied.

The master example of Pentheus therefore gives another turn to the dialectic of inside and outside that focuses on the woman and the house as containers for the emotional energies of the self and the society. The house has its many kinds of secrets that men do not know, and the challenge to male authority over it therefore takes place on several levels—the social, cognitive, and psychological. If men enter this domain, assuming their legitimate rights to its custody, only to meet with a welcome they had not foreseen, at the same time they also inevitably fail to lock up, to repress those powerful forces hidden in the recesses of the house. Quite the contrary—tragic process, for the most part, conveyed through the catalyzing person and actions of the feminine, puts insistent pressure on the façade of the masculine self in order to bring outside that which resides unacknowledged and unrecognized within. Here in the *Bacchae,* where the inversion of roles is expressly posed in spatial terms that send the women outside and situate the man within, the stage conventions are used to their best effect as Pentheus leaves the interior space now for the last time—for his liberation and for his destruction—dressed, as we might now expect, like a woman.

The Plot

Third, the plot itself—that which brings about the recognition, the *anagnorisis*—the plot whose process Aristotle describes as a combination of *desis,* binding, and *lusis,* unbinding, dénouement, and which in its complex form he calls by the corresponding Greek term, a *sumploke,* an interweaving as that which describes the fabric, the texture of the play (*Poetics* 1455b).

At a higher level, these terms are even more suggestive as they might remind us how the tragic world works its ruinous effects through modes of entrapment and entanglement that causes its characters first to stumble through ignorance and error and then to fall. In the elaborate tragic game, the metaphoric patterns of binding and unbinding continually operate in a reciprocal tension as signs of constraint and necessity, on the one hand, and of dissolution and death, on the other, defining the parameters between which characters are caught in the "double bind."[29]

In the cognitive psychology of tragic man, inner choice and external necessity (or *ethos,* character, and *daimon,* divine power) finally converge to sanction whatever form of tragic justice the plot demands for its satisfying fulfillment. Thus the "nature of tragic action appears to be defined by the simultaneous presence

of a 'self' and something greater at work that is divine."[30] In this sense, the gods finally may be said to direct the energy of the action and to be understood retrospectively as supporting and advancing the outcome of the myth.

Gods sometimes appear on stage (and I have already remarked how frequently these figures are goddesses), although most often they operate from afar as inhabiting that other unknown dimension of existence which mortals may only grasp dimly and, of course, too late. But it is remarkable how often that energy is channeled through the feminine other, who serves as their instrument even when she acts or seems to act on her own terrain and for her own reasons and even when she acts out of ignorance or of only partial knowledge of the tragic world she inhabits. Thus women frequently control the plot and the activity of plotting and manipulate the duplicities and illusions of the tragic world.

On the one hand, women's exclusion from the central area of masculine public life seems to be matched by their special access to those powers beyond men's control, to those outside forces that make sudden forays into human lives, unsettling all their typical assumptions. On the other hand, that same exclusion which relegates them to the inside as mistresses of the interior space equips them for deviousness and duplicity, gives them a talent, or at least a reputation, for weaving wiles and fabricating plots, marks of their double consciousness with regard to the world of men.

Tragedy is the art form, above all, that makes the most of what is called discrepant awareness—what one character knows and the other doesn't or what none of the characters know but that the audience does. Thus it is that irony is tragedy's characteristic trope, that several levels of meaning operate at the same time. Characters speak without knowing what they say, and misreading is the typical and predictable response to the various cues that others give.

This pervasive irony may manifest itself in many ways, and it owes its effectiveness to a strong conviction about the ambiguous, even opaque nature of verbal communication that is reflected in the belief in oracles. These riddling, divine utterances invite interpretation and/or evasion and, at the same time, suggest, when the outcome proves disastrous, how misguided and ignorant these human attempts may be. Apollo and his oracle often serve as a primary source, as Oedipus, his most famous client, confirms. But other factors make for dramatic irony, particularly in connection with the deceptive powers of the feminine and the special verbal skills that accompany these.

Clytemnestra in Aeschylus' *Agamemnon* is the most powerful paradigm of the woman who plots, who through the riddling doubleness of the language to which she resorts builds the play to its climax in the murder of her husband within the house where she entangles him in the nets of the robe, and only Cassandra, another woman of second sight, perceives but cannot convey what lies behind the guileful persuasion. The case of Phaedra, the virtuous wife in Euripides' *Hippolytus,* is also instructive. Caught in the conflict between desire and honor

and determined to preserve her integrity at any cost, Theseus' queen, despite herself or rather in defense of that apparently indefensible feminine self, fabricates the lying message that will implicate Hippolytus as the cause of her death and lead to his literal entanglement in the reins of his own chariot.

The pattern holds too even at the other end of the dramatic spectrum where in the late romantic plays of Euripides, which shift to exotic locales, the feminine other takes on a different configuration as the remote object of a mythic quest. Now men are sent forth, albeit unknowing, in search of the absent, forgotten woman who longs to return to the home and loved ones she has lost; in the process of rescuing the feminine, they find out they have redeemed and refound a version of male heroic identity. But still it is the woman who plots and now openly devises a plan on stage before us—this time for the best of reasons—her own rescue and that of her menfolk, as does Iphigenia in the *Iphigenia in Tauris* or Helen in the play of the same name. The men here are only adjuncts of the women; they offer prior schemes of their own but inevitably yield to and cooperate in the woman's superior plans that all involve elaborate dramas of deception.

If we take a rapid inventory of the plot as intrigue in the extant plays of the tragic corpus, some interesting principles emerge.[31] First, it is the women whose plots are more generally successful.[32] If men succeed, however, it is precisely because they have allied themselves with women—for example, in the Euripidean plays just cited, and more broadly in the various treatments of the Orestes story where Orestes succeeds in avenging his father through the murder of his mother because he has joined forces with his sister, Electra. Thus the recognition between them must necessarily precede the *praxis* of vengeance. In the *Choephoroi* of Aeschylus (the second play of the *Oresteia*), for example, it is only after the long interchange between himself, Electra, and the female chorus of libation bearers that Orestes is able at last to interpret the dream of Clytemnestra, and thus, psychologically equipped, is ready to assume a stranger's disguise that will gain him successful entry into the feminine domain of the house.[33]

Second, whereas deceit and intrigue are condemned in woman, they are also seen as natural to her sphere of operations and the dictates of her nature.[34] For the male, however, resort to *dolos,* trickery, is what most undermines masculine integrity and puts him under the gravest of suspicions. These are best mitigated when the one to be deceived is a cruel, barbarian king of another land (as in the late Euripidean plays) whose adversary status comes closer to the role of melodramatic villain.[35] The case of Orestes at home in Argos is even more informative in this regard. His success, it is true, depends on reunion with his sister, but his resort to trickery and disguise (*dolos, mechane*) entails a further risk to his masculine stature, no matter how urgent and obligatory is his task of vengeance. Appeal to the authority of Apollo the god is therefore needed to justify this mode of action. The god (in both Aeschylus and Sophocles) must explicitly decree a

retribution that exactly matches the original crime: as she (Clytemnestra) killed, so must she be killed in turn—by guile (Aeschylus *Choephoroi* 556–59; Sophocles *Electra* 32–37).

Sophocles' *Trachiniae,* that schematic model of gender relations, again supplies an excellent version of the norm. Heracles too practices deception, first to conquer the girl Iole, the current object of his erotic desire and the immediate cause of all his woe, and then to introduce her secretly into the house. But in his case, deception returns quite literally (and most dramatically) against him. His deception, revealed by others to his wife, activates the Centaur's ruse, plotted long ago as the deadly poison entrusted as a secret love charm to Deianeira's safekeeping inside the house. The point is that innocent as Deianeira may be of conscious intent to harm her husband, she still easily proves a better and more successful plotter than he. Masculine guile is repaid in full—even when retaliation does not openly bear the name of revenge.

If this Heracles conforms so well to the normative pattern, Ajax, that other great hero, does not. His is a curious case, but one whose anomaly might just prove the point. At the crucial moment of Sophocles' play, having determined to die an honorable death, he delivers a deceptive speech that suggests he has changed his mind and has learned to bend with the vicissitudes of time and change. With this speech he puts off those who would guard him and leaves himself alone to stage that elaborate suicide to which I have earlier referred. Critics have energetically contested the status of this speech as truth or lie. For while the outcome of the plot tells us that Ajax has not undergone any fundamental conversion of spirit, he also seems to have arrived at the kind of tragic knowledge we recognize as intrinsically true to the genre.

How then can we read the enigma of this speech? Better still, how can we read Ajax, the traditional epic hero, who would resort to a deceptive plot that goes against the grain of strict masculine values in which Ajax puts too much store? This is the man, after all, we might note with respect to spatial relations, who could not endure, as the oracle riddlingly suggests for his salvation, to remain *inside* the tent even for the space of one single day. But it is precisely the ambiguities of this hero who in his madness has not acted the part of the hero and precisely the question of dishonor converted finally to honor that account for the interesting ambiguities of his subsequent actions, which rewrite the theatrical conventions associated with gender. Thus the deceptive speech makes sense as a feminine strategy enlisted in the service of restoring an unequivocal manliness that he can only achieve, as I suggested before, by dying the manly death—heroically and publicly on stage—yet in the woman's way.

Now when other male characters, those not designated as tragic figures in the dramatic action, seek to deceive, their devices flounder, and men as these are dismissed out of hand.[36] Agamemnon, so easily duped by his wife in Aeschylus'

play, miserably fails, for his part, when in Euripides' *Iphigenia in Aulis* he and Menelaus plot to bring Iphigenia as a sacrifice for the expedition to Troy under the pretext of a marriage with Achilles. Clytemnestra finds them out—by a fortuitous accident—and the sacrifice only takes place through Iphigenia's voluntary and open choice of the role assigned to her by her father and the myth. Most telling of all perhaps, Odysseus, the master plotter on his own epic territory (and a familiar trickster figure in the plots of mischievous satyr plays), only sees his plans go awry on the tragic stage—for example, in Sophocles' *Philoctetes* when Neoptolemus, son of Achilles, rejects finally the man and his plans, he of whom his father had said in the *Iliad,* "I hate like the gates of Hades a man who hides one thing in his heart and speaks another" (9.312–13).

The *Bacchae* finally, as we might expect, furnishes the most remarkable example of the uses of plotting and exposes the conventions of its theatrical deployment as the pivotal point around which the entire play revolves and the peripeteia depends. All the operative terms come into play—secrecy, guilefulness, entrapment, and femininity—as Dionysus and Pentheus engage in their power struggle for control over the other, the city, the women, and ultimately, over the outcome of the plot itself. Pentheus aligns himself, of course, with physical force as the masculine means to victory, trying and failing to bind his adversary (and his followers), and ready to dress as a soldier and deploy an army for a military battle against the women. What Dionysus does is to retaliate against threats of force at this critical moment with a devious plot—to entice Pentheus to go alone to the mountains in secrecy.

What this means is that he persuades Pentheus to trade his ready reliance on physical combat for that other, diametrically opposite mode of action—resort to a cunning plot of self-concealment. In other words, Dionysus' strategy for victory over his opponent is first to lure him into embracing the same kind of strategy. They are co-conspirators now, plotting together but for ultimately divergent results, as for one the intrigue will succeed in every respect and for the other it will disastrously fail.

But the first conquest of Pentheus already lies in the fact that he agrees to shift his tactics from open force to the secret deception of hiding, and the second, which follows upon the first, is the change in dress from male to female that, as Dionysus argues, is essential for the success of the project. These two steps, however, imply one another—it is the woman who has recourse to devious plotting, the very charges Pentheus has laid against both Dionysus and the maenads (e.g., 475, 487, 805–6), and the costume Pentheus dons therefore matches and visually represents the feminine nature of the strategy he has already chosen. But in the ways of women Pentheus is only an imposter, easily betrayed by the other superior plotter, and hence the scheme he contrives and carries out can only recoil against him for his own doom.

Mimesis

I come now very briefly to my fourth and most inclusive element—that of mimesis itself, the art of imitation through which characters are rendered lifelike and plot and action offer an adequate representation of reality. Yet mimesis also focuses attention on the status of theater as illusion, disguise, double dealing, and pretense. There is a serious and wonderful paradox here. For while theater resorts continually to artifice, as it must, to techniques of make-believe that can only resemble the real, it can also better represent the larger world outside as it more nearly is, subject to the deceptions, the gaps in knowledge, the tangled necessities, and all the tensions and conflicts of a complex existence.

Role playing is what actors must literally do in the theater as they don their costumes and masks to impersonate an other—whether king or servant, mortal or god, Greek or barbarian, man or woman. But the reverse side of the coin is to be dubbed an actor, a *hypokrites,* who is only playing a role, offering only a *persona* (a *prosopon*) to the other that does not match what lies behind the mask.

Recognition, *anagnorisis* of persons whose identities were unknown or mistaken is, of course, a typical and even focal device of tragic action. But this kind of recognition is the overtly theatrical event that condenses the epistemological bias of the entire phenomenon of drama. Thus recognition extends along a far wider spectrum, embracing the world, the other, and the self. The problem of accurately reading the other is a continuing, obsessive concern in Greek tragedy that increases in urgency as the genre displays a greater self-consciousness with regard to its own theatrical resources. But recognition of the unknown self, as for Oedipus, or of the hidden self, as for Pentheus or even for Deianeira, is perhaps the most elusive but also the most psychologically significant result on the tragic stage, suggesting what the invention of theater for and in the city might imply about an emerging image of the private individual and the growing pains of masculine identity.[37]

This double dimension of role playing is a feature that Greek society would perceive as not exclusively but yet fundamentally feminine.[38] Woman is the mimetic creature par excellence, ever since Hesiod's Zeus created her as an imitation with the aid of the other artisan gods and adorned her with a deceptive allure.[39] Woman is perennially under suspicion as the one who acts a part—that of the virtuous wife—but hides other thoughts and feelings, dangerous to men, within herself and the house. "Counterfeit evil" is the charge that Hippolytus is not alone in bringing against the *genos,* the race of women, for she has the best capacity, by her nature and origin, to say one thing and hide another in her heart, to sow the doubt in her husband's mind, to cite perhaps the radical cause, that the child she bears may be his but again may not be.[40]

Woman speaks on the tragic stage, transgressing the social rules if she speaks on her own behalf. In this role, her speech and action involve her in the ensemble of tragic experience and thereby earn her the right to tragic suffering. But by virtue of the conflicts generated by her social position and ambiguously defined between inside and outside, interior self and exterior identity, the woman is already more of a "character" than the man, who is far more limited as an actor to his public social and political roles. Woman comes equipped with a "natural" awareness of those very complexities men would resist, if they could. Situated in her more restrictive and sedentary position in the world, she is permitted, she is asked, we might say, to reflect more deeply, like Phaedra, on the paradoxes of herself. Through these she can arrive better at the paradoxes of the world that she, much better than men, seems to know is subject to irreconcilable conflict, subject as well to time, flux, and change (the very themes I might add of Ajax's great deceptive speech). Hence the final paradox may be that theater uses the feminine for the purposes of imagining a fuller model for the masculine self, and "playing the other" opens that self to those often banned emotions of fear and pity.

Woman may be thought to speak double, and sometimes she does. But she also sees double; the culture has taught her that too, and it is perhaps not an accident that only when Pentheus dresses as a woman does he see double for the first time—two suns, two Thebes. This is a symptom of madness, to be sure, attributed by the ancient commentators to inebriation, but madness is the emblem of the feminine, and seeing double is also the emblem of a double consciousness that a man acquires by dressing like a woman and entering into the theatrical illusion. The very fact of that dressing up already demonstrates the premise in unequivocal and theatrical terms.

The feminine is a tragic figure on the stage; she is also the mistress of mimesis, the heart and soul of the theater. The feminine instructs the other through her own example—that is, in her own name and under her own experience—but also through her ability to teach the other to impersonate her—whether Pentheus or Dionysus.

This brief discussion can suggest only in outline how closely the tragic genre in its theatrical form, representation, and content is linked to Greek notions of gender, and how for the most part man is undone (or at times redeemed) by feminine forces or himself undergoes some species of "feminine" experience. On the simplest level, this experience involves a shift at the crucial moment of the peripeteia from active to passive, from mastery over the self and others to surrender. Sometimes there is madness, always suffering and pathos, which lead in turn to expressions of lamentation and pity from the chorus and/or the characters. In a more complex view, tragedy, understood as the worship of Dionysus,

expands an awareness of the world and the self through the drama of "playing the other" whose mythic and cultic affinities with the god logically connects the god of women to the lord of the theater.

If drama, however, tests masculine values only to find that these alone are inadequate to the complexity of the new situation, it also, as Linda Bamber remarks, "does not dismiss them" but rather most often shows that manliness and self-assertion need no longer compete with pity and even forgiveness.[41] Moreover, the male characters whose sufferings are the most stringent and reductive of self are also allowed to discover the internal strength for transcending them.[42] In the end, tragedy arrives at closures that generally reassert male, often paternal, structures of authority, but before that the work of the drama is to open up the masculine view of the universe. It typically does so, as we have seen, through energizing the theatrical resources of the female and concomitantly enervating the male as the price of initiating actor and spectator into new and unsettling modes of feeling, seeing, and knowing.

We can trace the persistence of this "initiatory" process from the work of the first tragic poet to the third.[43] History has cunningly arranged it that Euripides' last play, the *Bacchae,* should also refer back to the archaic scenario that underlies the ritual conditions of the theater.[44] Yet viewed in its metatheatrical aspects, the *Bacchae* also makes claims to be considered in a diachronic perspective as a belated examplar of the genre that by now has developed a keen awareness of its own properties and conventions. As a result, the play is in a position to exemplify and reflect back what was always implicit in the theater, and at the same time, by the very admission of that theatrical awareness, to transform its object of reflection and reorient it in new and different directions.

If my basic hypothesis is valid, then the distinctive features of Euripidean theater (which are more obvious, in fact, in plays other than the *Bacchae*) may well lend support to what I have been suggesting about the intimate relations between the feminine and the theater. Thus I see all the following traits of Euripidean drama as various and interlocking functions of one another, starting with Euripides' greater interest in and skill at subtly portraying the psychology of female characters, and continuing to his general emphasis on interior states of mind as well as on the private emotional life of the individual, most often located in the feminine situation. We may add to these his particular fondness for plots of complex intrigue (usually suggested by women) that use *dolos, apatē, technē,* and *mechanē,* which with their resort to disguise and role playing are an explicit sign of an enhanced theatricality. Finally, we may include more generally Euripides' thematic concern with metaphysical questions of reality and illusion in the world.

The *Helen* is the most splendid example, as it is a drama that allows itself the fullest play with the resources of theater and uses these to direct the most elab-

orate inquiry into the complexities of being and seeming and the paradoxical crossings of illusion and reality.[45] The source of the confusion is the ontological status of the feminine itself. There are two Helens, the real, chaste version who was left in Egypt and never went to Troy, and the more traditional adulterous wife whom Menelaus thinks he has recovered at Troy but is really a phantom, an *eidolon,* impersonating Helen's true self. I alluded earlier to the symbolic implications we might infer from Pentheus dressing as a woman and seeing double for the first time. Here in the *Helen,* where double vision rules the play in every respect, the woman is both a character who to her irremediable sorrow learns first hand about the most fundamental problems of the self's identity and, at the same time, serves as an objective referent through which the man must question all his previous perceptions of the world. What is more, the essential strategy for insuring the success of the intrigue she invents for their rescue requires that he too adopt a disguise and pretend to be another than himself, allowing her to recount the most dangerous fiction that the real Menelaus has died.

The uses of the play, to be sure, have their deadly serious side for all concerned, and the unhappy residue of spoiled lives persists behind the successful outcome of the play. But for love of this woman, whether in her imagined or real *persona,* the man willingly enters into the theatrical game and shows a capacity now to act a part and enter into a stage illusion. The *Helen* is a rare play that pushes its original improbable (and theatrical) premises as far as they can go, but the uxorious Menelaus is also a novelty, and the erotic element already diverts the play away from the more typical tragic mode to that of romance. In this new kind of play world Euripides invents, the uses to which he puts the feminine and the theater may be seen as the logical result of the premises of tragedy. On the other hand, by disclosing those premises too well, he also alters them and subverts the genre that was so firmly bound up with the context of the masculine civic world.

Thus, in this sense, Euripides may be said to have "feminized" tragedy and, like his Dionysus in the *Bacchae,* to have laid himself open to the scorn that accrues to those men who consort with women. Aristophanic comedy, which loves to lampoon Euripides and all his new-fangled ideas, continually presses the scandal of his erotic dramas, especially those that let women speak more boldly (and hence more shamefully) upon the stage until Aristophanes, in his own late play, the *Frogs,* evaluates on a full-fledged scale the development of the tragic genre by staging an open contest between the old poet, Aeschylus, and the new, Euripides (755–1853).

At stake is the choice of which poet Dionysus should bring back from the underworld to the city and theater of Athens. Which one is more worthy to save the city, which seems to link its loss of political potency to the absence of a fertile, potent poet in the tragic theater? Broadly stated, the contest develops into one between masculine and feminine sides, with Aeschylus espousing a manly, virile

art that exhorts its citizens to military valor and Euripides representing a feminine, slender Muse who is weaker and more insubstantial, leaning toward the sensual and the pathetic. Not surprisingly, when these two are tested in the scales, Aeschylean tragedy outweighs the Euripidean by its superior mass and weight. Dionysus therefore abandons his original desire for Euripides, to whose seductive allure he had earlier succumbed, in favor of resurrecting the heroic warrior energies of the earlier poet and, by extension, of the past.[46] Aristophanes not untypically assumes that when things go badly for men and masculine interests the cause lies in a decay of moral and aesthetic values that slides easily into hints of effeminacy and all that that implies.

In any case, the solution of the *Frogs* in bringing back the archaic spirit of Aeschylus as a solution to the city's problems is also a formal, generic one. It is predicated on the controlling convention of Old Comedy that fulfills its festive function of social renewal by consistently choosing the idealized past over the distressing, chaotic present, even as it prefers to rejuvenate the old (father) rather than, as in New Comedy, to promote the young (son). Moreover, the comic poet paints with a broad, satirical brush, and whatever the justice or truth of the cause he thinks he is advancing (and *his* play, of course, is what he imagines will save the city), he has the generic right to misrepresent, and how he does it here affects Aeschylus even more perhaps than Euripides.

Leaving aside the fact that Euripides too has his military and patriotic plays, Aristophanes would have us believe that the essence of the *Seven Against Thebes,* that drama "full of Ares" invoked to support Aeschylus' case, was some conventional treatment of military prowess. It was rather a tragedy concerning the sons of Oedipus and the dangers they posed to the safety of the city by their resort to armed combat in the style of the old heroic duel, while the function of the avenging Erinys returning to fulfill the father's curse conforms precisely, even schematically, to the rules of the feminine in the theater as I have earlier outlined them.

Nevertheless, Aristophanes is a witness we cannot afford to ignore. He speaks about the theater from within the theater. Skewed as his caricature of Euripides (and his drama) may be, his strategy of clustering the poet's theatrical, psychological, and noetic innovations around a particular affinity for the feminine is valuable testimony to a popular contemporary perception of Euripidean theater, even if it is bought at the price of suppressing the continuities with earlier drama.

Along the same lines, we may even be able to swallow Aristophanes' parting shot that implies Euripides' loss of the tragic art is due to "sitting at the feet of Socrates" (1491–95), another favorite target for comic misrepresentation. Yet however justified Aristophanic comedy may be to single out both Euripides and Socrates as spokesmen for the new intellectual trends that confuse and unsettle the older, simpler (hence more manly) values of the city, philosophy would never consort with tragedy, which it comes to see as its implacable rival in laying claim

to teach the truth, impart knowledge, improve its fellow citizens, and without doubt—to save the city.

Socrates, as Plato in the next generation has him argue, makes no distinction whatsoever among any of the tragic poets when he comes to discuss the theatrical arts. Indeed, he founds his critique of drama on Homer, whom he characterizes as the first teacher and guide of tragedy.[47] That same Aeschylean play is invoked again when Socrates' interlocutor in the *Republic* first quotes a famous verse from it in a proper context only at the next moment to turn around the meaning of the lines that follow it so as to apply it to the unjust man rather than to the just.[48] The argument in Plato between tragedy and philosophy is well known, and it is not my intention to air all the old questions or to solve the old dilemmas. But I want to suggest that Plato, standing outside the drama, can be called in as a last witness to support my claims about the intrinsic links between femininity and theater, viewed now from a wholly negative perspective. Plato's insistence on banishing tragedy from his ideal state and his consistent distaste throughout his career for the tragic poets, whom he sometimes associates quite closely with sophists and rhetoricians, are based, to be sure, on a number of complex and disparate factors. But in addition to the explicitly philosophical issues, I want to argue that Plato's position on theater can also be illuminated by considering its relation to his notions of gender and his attitudes toward the feminine.[49]

Strange as it may seem, Plato's aim is not all that remote from what Aristophanes wants in the *Frogs*. The project is more far-reaching, to be sure, in every respect, and the means are those which will forever change the shape of Western thought. But, like Aristophanes, Plato is concerned with restoring men and their morals in the city, and, like the comic poet, he insists on the relevance of aesthetic style and form. Briefly put, for the purposes of this discussion, Plato's larger concerns may also be translated into his general desire to remake man in a masculine society and through philosophical training to purify and enhance the traditional heroic notion of manliness (*andreia*) in a new, revised version in which courage, vigilance, and strength may be better utilized for the improvement of self and society.

Certainly, Plato comes closest to codifying under the name of philosophy the dream of the Greek male for a world that is constituted as his alone, where he might give birth to himself and aspire finally to an immortality he has always craved. In tragedy, this desire leads to disaster, most often, as we have seen, through the resistance of the gods—and of the women. Philosophy, on the other hand, offers the promise of success in this endeavor, providing one follows the blueprints that are carefully designed to retrain the masculine self.

It may be objected that Plato breaks with the old stereotypes of gender when he insists that women may be just like men with the exception of a natural inferiority in physical strength, which does not disqualify them from participating as guardians (and even warriors) in his vision of the ideal city in the *Republic*.

This is a revolutionary proposal whose significance we ought not minimize.[50] But we should note that this reevaluation of women does not really upgrade the feminine in its differences from the masculine. Quite the contrary—Plato defuses the power and specificity of the feminine when he would abolish the family and the domestic sphere in which that influence operated. If he includes the participation of certain women who may prove to possess masculine abilities, it is precisely because in the *Republic* he believes that they may be successfully taught to imitate the masculine model. Even here, the principle of equality falters when Plato would reward with special breeding privileges men who have distinguished themselves in battle but does not suggest granting the same opportunities to their female counterparts. This may or may not be a trivial slip. What is striking, however, is that elsewhere femininity plays for Plato throughout his work its usual role of negative foil to the masculine as it heads the long list of undesirable models for men that descends to the servile, the buffoonish, the bestial, and the nonhuman (*Republic* 3.395d–396b).

Plato's attack on tragedy and its traditional repertory operates on several fronts: he objects to the deceptiveness of theatricality as a misleading and deficient imitation of reality, deplores the often unworthy quality of what or who is being imitated, and insists upon the damaging effects such imitations are liable to produce on the actors and spectators in the theater.[51]

For the first case, I would not go so far as to claim that Plato explicitly refers the art of making illusions to the feminine per se, even if women, like children, are most susceptible to its charms (e.g., *Laws* 658d, 817c) and most likely, in fact, to tell those lying stories about the gods to their young (*Republic* 377c). But Plato's interest never focuses for long on women as such but rather on the inferior type of man, who deceptively passes off appearances for truth and who appeals to the inferior parts of the self (and the citizenry) that will yield to the emotions and pleasures (not lessons) of make-believe. Thus, although he confirms the conventional dictum that woman is inclined by nature to be secretive (*lathraioteron*) and crafty (*epiklopoteron*) because of her intrinsic weakness (*to asthenes*)—and concomitantly, her natural potential for virtue is inferior to a man's (*Laws* 781a-b)—Plato hardly sees her (or her representation) as a powerful acting force in the world of men.[52]

But by a whole series of innuendos and juxtapositions, poets (and artists) are enrolled in the ranks of male trickster figures who fall furthest from the ideal of manliness and seek only to cajole, seduce, and pander to the tastes of their audience. Imitators (artists and musicians) and poets and their entourage of actors, dancers, and producers join the multitude of callings that are signs of the luxury that corrupts the primitive city, and these directly precede those "makers of all sorts of goods, especially those that have to do with women's adornment"; the sequence then continues with those servants like "beauty-shop ladies, barbers, cooks, and confectioners" (*Republic* 373b–c).

Once assimilated to the larger category of sophists, dramatic art, reduced finally to prose rhetoric on a par with oratory, shares in the same field of reference that likens their false imitations of justice to those activities practiced by and for women: cookery (especially confectionery), which "puts on the mask of medicine and pretends to know what foods are best for the body" (*Gorgias* 464c–d), and beauty-culture, "the counterfeit to physical training . . . a mischievous, swindling, base, servile trade, which creates an illusion by the use of artificial adjuncts and make-up and depilatories and costume" (*Gorgias* 465b–c). All these arts traffic in deceptive appearances, and their effect on others is to pander to appetites and pleasurable gratification.

The *Gorgias* stresses a certain sensual, effeminate pleasure. But the *Republic*, in which Plato specifically addresses the emotional power of the tragic, emphasizes the experience of pain and suffering, and evaluates its effects on those who act in and attend the tragic spectacles. Here the association with the feminine is clear and explicit, reiterated each time Plato returns to the topic: when heroes are shown to weep and lament their misfortunes, they are not only endorsing a false theology about the justice of the gods but are weakening themselves and others by their indulgence in womanish grief (*Republic* 387e—388a, 605d–e). Such a man does not remain steadfast to himself, exercising self-control and rationally pondering the events that have happened to him. Rather he gives way to cowardice, terror, and a host of conflicting, changeful emotions that ill suit the model of a brave and noble manliness that the state (and the soul) requires. Worst of all, he entices the spectators into the pleasures of vicariously identifying with his pitiable state, and ends by setting them the example they unfortunately will learn to imitate for themselves.[53]

For Plato, who so often strives to efface or remove all mixture, confusion, and changeability, his theory of drama is simple because, stripped down to essences, his categories are also simple. The mobility of temporary reversals and dialectical play with opposites already introduces a cognitive complexity that is the sign itself of a dangerous indeterminacy; it undermines the principle of like to like that regulates his thought and is designed, by its literalness, to reinforce a simple stability. At the most inclusive level is the dictum that no man can play more than one part, in life or in the theater (e.g., *Republic* 3.394e–395b).

The other is always weaker and inferior to the self, whose idealization requires that, once perfectly established, it cannot change and still be itself. As such, that lack of strength (attributable to the lack of mastery by the rational faculty and hence equatable finally to a lack of wisdom) can be most easily codified according to the conventional terms of the society under the name of the feminine other, to include the cognate negative traits of cowardice, fearfulness, and emotional lability. Hence, in Plato's reductive view of drama and of gender, playing the other is a species of wrongful imitation that threatens to infect reality and degrade the aspiring, virile self. It is therefore forbidden, above all, "for a man, being a

man—in training, in fact to become a good/brave man," to imitate a woman in any way whatsoever: "whether old or young, whether railing against her husband, or boasting of a happiness which she imagines can rival the gods, or overwhelmed with grief and misfortune; much less a woman in love, or sick, or in labor" (*Republic* 3.395d–e). Men are neither permitted to impersonate a woman nor to show themselves in a male *persona* as undergoing the experiences of a woman, precisely the routes I have proposed as leading to masculine initiation into the lessons (and benefits) of the tragic world.

Limited as his discussion of theater may be, Plato, as a spectator who fails to come under the spell of tragic mimesis (or who perhaps once did and was cured), nonetheless darkly confirms the inextricable relationship between theater and the feminine. Tragedy cannot control the ambiguities of role playing, as most particularly when the male actor is called upon to represent the woman who is not under control either because she is actively unruly or because she succumbs to the pressures of her body. More generally, tragedy by its very nature and intention can make no solid provision for controlling the ambiguities of a world view that theater is expressly designed to represent. Thus Plato, from his point of view, is entitled to deny to "the solemn and marvelous *poiesis* of tragedy" the very task we might agree it is well equipped to accomplish, namely that of imparting "beneficial if unpleasing truths," and to claim instead that it gives its uncritical and vulgar audience what it desires to see and hear (*Gorgias* 502b).

Plato goes still further into the matter of gender and drama in the playful contest he stages between theater and philosophy in the *Symposium*, where the party to celebrate the recent victory of the tragic poet, Agathon, at the City Dionysia ends with the crowning of Socrates instead of Agathon. In mounting his own rival drama to explore the subject of eros, Plato excludes the presence of the feminine at the banquet but subtly and significantly uses the categories of effeminacy and femininity to enhance the philosophical position that is meant to include and supersede the appeal of the theater.

The *Symposium* is one of Plato's most artful and complex dialogues and deserves, of course, much fuller discussion.[54] It is established early on that love of women is an inferior sort of eros (181a–d). This is not the crucial point. But we may note in our context the persuasive if unfair value of using Agathon as the representative of all tragic art. Agathon speaks last, just before Socrates, and in his flowery speech on eros, which parodies perhaps the very play that earned him the tragic victory (*anthos* = flower), he demonstrates the soft and effeminate nature for which he was known and which Aristophanes wickedly lampoons in his comedies (e.g., *Thesmophoriazousae*).[55] Although Aristophanes in the *Symposium* is made at the end to fall asleep before Agathon, thus establishing his rank in the hierarchy that leads from comedy to tragedy and then to philosophy, the comic poet is represented as a far more robust character than the tragic poet, and his contribution to the theme of eros is more memorable and more substan-

tial.[56] The contrast, to be sure, is even more striking between the lovelorn Agathon and Socrates, whose physical endurance and resistance to pederastic temptation attest to the remarkable self-control of this soldier/philosopher/lover/hero.

On the other side, however, philosophy appropriates for its own use the one kind of feminine authority that the culture acknowledges as legitimate when Socrates names the prophetic priestess, Diotima, as the source of his initiation long ago into the sacred mysteries of Eros and as the original author of the inspiring discourse on eros he now is about to deliver. The feminine retains here her more instinctive alliance with the erotic as well as her mysterious connection with that other world and its secrets whose power we have come to recognize when manifested in the theater. And the woman, armed with the prestige of her sacred vocation, is called upon to instruct men as to how they might transcend feminine influence and, through the sublimations of pederastic love, even give birth to themselves.

In Plato's counter-drama the female as benevolent priestess has no cause of her own to protect and no conflictual interests to distract her. She is then free to lend whole-hearted support to the cause of men and to transmit to them a wisdom without tragic pain that may become entirely theirs. She imparts a myth about the genealogy of Eros that makes the erotic principle a male child and explains his nature by assigning potency and presence to his father, Poros (Ways and Means), and a famished emptiness to his mother, Penia (Poverty), who deceitfully (and characteristically) tricks the one who is endowed to consort with the one who is not.

In suborning theater as well as the feminine, Plato's drama puts the former to sleep in the presence of the wakeful philosopher and transfers feminine oracular power to Socrates—the midwife—who also incorporates the Dionysiac into his satyr-like image of Silenus. In the process Plato obviates the tragic necessity that requires the feminine presence upon the stage and whose complicated and essential functions in the theater of Dionysus we have followed throughout the course of this essay.

Notes

An earlier, reduced version of this paper was presented at a conference, "After *The Second Sex*," held at the University of Pennsylvania, and at a symposium honoring Professor Helen Bacon at Barnard College in New York, both in April 1984. I wish to thank the commentators on these two occasions, Carolyn Heilbrun and Marylin Arthur, respectively, as well as others who participated in the discussion. Thanks also to the members of the Women's Studies Colloquium at Princeton University, who offered acute and thoughtful comments at the presentation of this paper, in partic-

ular, Natalie Davis, Suzanne Keller, and Elaine Showalter. Finally, I am grateful to Jack Winkler, Simon Goldhill, and Jean-Pierre Vernant, who read the manuscript and from whose incisive and valuable criticism I have greatly profited.

1. E.g., *Bacchae* 451–59; Dionysus is called *thelymorphos,* 351 (cf. Pentheus' description as *gynaikomorphos* [his costume as imitating a woman's, *gynaikomimoi;* 981]).
2. For the fullest account of this hypothesis, see Richard Seaford, "Dionysiac Drama and Dionysiac Mysteries," *Classical Quarterly* 31 (1981): 252–75.
3. For the metatheatrical aspects of this scene in particular (and the play as a whole), see Helene Foley, "The Masque of Dionysus," *Transactions of the American Philological Association* 110 (1981): 107–33; and Charles Segal, *Dionysiac Poetics and Euripides' Bacchae* (Princeton, 1982), 215–71.
4. See further F. I. Zeitlin, "Travesties of Gender and Genre in Aristophanes' *Thesmophoriazousae,*" in *Reflections of Women in Antiquity,* ed. Helene P. Foley (New York and London, 1981), 169–217 (a shorter version appears in *Critical Inquiry* 8 [1981]: 301–28, and is collected in *Writing and Difference,* ed. E. Abel [Chicago, 1982], 131–58).
5. It should be noted that, unlike other public Dionysiac festivals in Attica (and elsewhere) where both men and women participate, the City Dionysia seems to belong to men only (with the sole exception of a girl assigned to carry the ritual basket in the preliminary procession).
6. The question I raise here about the development of drama in Athens and its political and social motivations is obviously too complex for this limited discussion. I would suggest merely that the historical conditions of drama, interestingly enough, coincide with a period that sharply polarizes definitions and distinctions of masculine and feminine roles. Drama, like the woman, we might say, is useful for its society, and at the same time potentially subversive and destructive. It is also worth remarking that as theater reaches its full flowering in the fifth century, the iconography of Dionysus undergoes a shift in the vase paintings from a masculine, bearded figure to one, more youthful, who displays effeminate and more androgynous features.
7. For the bisexual consciousness of Dionysus, see especially James Hillman, *The Myth of Analysis* (Evanston, Ill., 1972), 258–66. For the more general paradoxes of Dionysus' role, see the synthesis of Segal, *Dionysiac Poetics,* 10–19.
8. These festivals are occasions for riotous carnival (e.g., the Cretan Ekdysia, the Argive Hybristika). Dionysiac merriment also lends itself to such behavior, at least as Philostratus, a late source, describes a painting of a Dionysiac revel: "Dionysus is accompanied by a numerous train in which girls mingle with men, for the revel (*komos*) allows women to act the part of men, and men to put on women's clothing and play the woman" (*Imagines* 1.2).
9. On the various forms of transvestism in Greek rite and myth, see Marie Delcourt, *Hermaphrodite: Myths and Rites of the Bisexual Figure in Classical Antiquity,* trans. J. Nicholson (London, 1956), 1–16; Clara Gallini, "Il travestismo rituale di Penteo," *Studi e materiali per la storia delle religioni* 34 (1968): 211–18, esp. 215, n. 6; and Walter Burkert, *Structure and History in Greek Mythology and Ritual* (Berkeley, 1979), 29–30.
10. "For both sexes the initiation through which a young man or woman is confirmed in his or her specific nature may entail, through a ritual exchange of clothing, temporary participation in the nature of the opposite sex whose complement he or she will become by being separated from it" (Jean-Pierre Vernant, "City-State Warfare," in *Myth and Society in Ancient Greece,* trans. J. Lloyd [Sussex, 1980], 24). Cf. also Henri Jeanmaire, *Couroi et Courètes* (Lille, 1939), 153, 321. See further Pierre Vidal-Naquet, "The Black Hunter and the Origin of the Athenian Ephebeia" and "Recipes for Greek

Adolescence," in R. L. Gordon, ed., *Myth, Religion, and Society* (Cambridge, 1981), 147–85. I borrow his term, "law of symmetrical inversion."

11. The best recent discussion of the question is Helene P. Foley, "The Conception of Women in Athenian Drama," in *Reflections of Women in Antiquity,* 127–68, who offers a judicious and nuanced analysis that, however, leans too far perhaps in seeking a matched symmetry and reciprocity between masculine and feminine roles.
12. On tragedy as initiation, related both to the mysteries and to puberty rites, see the discussion of Seaford, "Dionysiac Drama" (drawing upon the early pioneering work of George Thomson, *Aeschylus and Athens,* 2nd ed. [London, 1946]). For aspects of puberty ritual reflected imaginatively in the various dramas see, for Aeschylus' *Oresteia,* Pierre Vidal-Naquet, "Hunting and Sacrifice in Aeschylus' *Oresteia,*" in Jean-Pierre Vernant and Pierre Vidal-Naquet, *Tragedy and Myth in Ancient Greece,* trans. J. Lloyd (Sussex, 1981), 150, and F. I. Zeitlin, "The Dynamics of Misogyny: Myth and Mythmaking in the *Oresteia,*" *Arethusa* 11 (1978): 149–84 (now in *Women and the Ancient World: The Arethusa Papers,* ed. John Peradotto and J. P. Sullivan [Albany, 1984]); for Sophocles' *Philoctetes,* Pierre Vidal-Naquet, "Sophocles' *Philoctetes* and the Ephebeia," in *Tragedy and Myth,* 175–99; for Euripides' *Hippolytus,* see especially Charles Segal, "Pentheus and Hippolytus on the Couch and on the Grid: Psychoanalytic and Structuralist Readings of Greek Tragedy," *Classical World* 72 (1978–79): 129–48, and F. I. Zeitlin, "The Power of Aphrodite: Eros and the Boundaries of the Self in Euripides' *Hippolytus,*" in *Directions in Euripidean Criticism,* ed. Peter Burian (Durham, N.C., 1985), 52–111, 187–206; and for the *Bacchae,* in addition to Seaford, see Segal, *Dionysiac Poetics,* chap. 6, "Arms and the Man: Sex Roles and Rites of Passage," 158–214. Also relevant to these speculations is Louis Montrose, "The Purpose of Playing: Reflections on a Shakespearean Anthropology," *Helios* [n.s.] 7.2 (1980): 51–74, who discusses the public functions of Shakespearean theater as a secularized means of confronting the transitions of life that had earlier been framed in the milieu of Catholic ritual.
13. I am indebted here to the stimulating discussion of Linda Bamber, *Comic Women, Tragic Men: A Study of Gender and Genre in Shakespeare* (Stanford, 1982), as much for its provocative arguments as for its use in confronting some fundamental differences between the feminine in Greek and Elizabethan tragedy. There are other "others," to be sure, on the Athenian stage (e.g., barbarians, servants, enemy antagonists, and even gods), but the dialectic of self and other is consistently and insistently predicated on the distinctions between masculine and feminine, far more even than in Shakespeare. Even the plays with more strictly military and political themes (excepting only Sophocles' *Philoctetes*) arrange their plots around critical confrontations between masculine and feminine.
14. No Shakespearean tragedy has a woman as its main character, although sometimes she shares double billing—Juliet, Cleopatra. By contrast, in extant Greek drama women often lend their individual names or collective functions to the titles (Antigone, Electra, Medea; Choephoroi, Trachiniae, Bacchae, etc.). Moreover, women play far more extensive roles in Greek tragedy, which increase in subtlety and variety as the genre develops.
15. The functional argument is even more obviously true in the case of those plays which I will not discuss in this essay, in which the plot revolves around the demand made upon an army for a virgin sacrifice (such as Iphigenia and Polyxena) and where female heroic nobility in dying is used most often to offer an ironic counterpoint to masculine *Realpolitik.*

16. See especially B. M. W. Knox, "The *Medea* of Euripides," *Yale Classical Studies* 25 (1977): 198–225, for the discussion of Medea's "imitation" of male heroic traits.
17. It should be stressed that I equate drama here with serious drama rather than with comic types such as satyr play and comedy itself, whose primitive elements may well have preceded the growth of the strange mutant that is tragedy. For even if we renounce any hopes of reconstructing a plausible story of origins, there seems no doubt that the tragic play is the first to achieve the status of art and that the other forms only follow subsequently in its wake and under its influence. To speak of theater then is to speak first of tragedy.
18. Y. Belaval, "Ouverture sur le spectacle," in *Histoire des spectacles,* ed. R. Queneau (Paris, 1965), 3–16, esp. 8.
19. I have profited from the discussion in the unpublished paper of Nicole Loraux, "Ways of Killing Women in Greek Tragedy," who views Ajax' suicide as an unequivocal warrior's death. It is true, of course, that the sword is a man's weapon and that if women resort to it, it is they who are violating the rules of gender. Yet it is also true that Ajax' death, by whatever means and in whatever mood, is still a suicide, an act the culture regards in itself as inherently shameful and therefore imagined far more as a feminine solution.
20. On the general question of the female body as the model of male suffering, see the superb study of Nicole Loraux, "Le Lit, la guerre," *L'Homme* 21 (1981): 36–67. For these symptoms in the *Hippolytus,* see respectively Loraux, "Le Lit," 58–59, and Charles Segal, "The Tragedy of the *Hippolytus:* The Waters of Ocean and the Untouched Meadow," *Harvard Studies in Classical Philology* 70 (1965): 117–69, esp. 122.
21. See the discussion of this remarkable passage and its key function in the play in Zeitlin, "The Power of Aphrodite," 68–74.
22. On Pandora in the Hesiodic text, see especially the fine analyses by Jean-Pierre Vernant, "The Myth of Prometheus in Hesiod," in *Myth and Society,* 168–85; and Nicole Loraux, "Sur la race des femmes et quelques-unes de ses tribus," *Arethusa* 11 (1978): 43–88 (collected in her *Les Enfants d'Athéna: Idées athéniennes sur la citoyenneté et la division des sexes* [Paris, 1981], 75–117).
23. It is worth noting too that the details of the sacrifice of the virgin's body holds particular fascination for the messenger speeches of the relevant tragedies.
24. See further Ruth Padel, "Women: Model for Possession by Greek Daemons," in *Images of Women in Antiquity,* ed. Averil Cameron and Amélie Kuhrt (London, 1983), 3–19. It is remarkable that in Euripides' *Heracles,* where the great Heracles goes mad and kills his wife and children, the chorus in response compares him only with women: the Danaids (who slew their husbands on their wedding night) and Procne (who slew her child in revenge for her husband's rape and mutilation of her sister, Philomela; *Heracles* 1016–27).
25. On the uses of these stage conventions and their relations of the inside/outside, see especially A. M. Dale, "Seen and Unseen on the Greek Stage," in *Collected Papers* (Cambridge, 1969), 119–29; the discussion of Padel, "Women"; and Zeitlin, "The Power of Aphrodite," 74–79.
26. The *locus classicus* is Xenophon's *Oeconomicus.* The best discussion is Jean-Pierre Vernant, "Hestia-Hermès: Sur l'expression religieuse de l'espace et du mouvement chez les Grecs," in *Mythe et pensée chez les Grecs* (Paris, 1965), 6–27.
27. See, for example, the incisive remarks of Jean-Pierre Vernant, "Tensions and Ambiguities in Greek Tragedy," in Vernant and Vidal-Naquet, *Myth and Tragedy,* 6–27. This

epistemological emphasis therefore both exploits and is conditioned by the special capacity of theater to represent and embody the interaction between other points of view, attitudes, gestures, and language.

28. On the symbolic value of the house, see J. Wohlberg, "The Palace-Hero Equation in Euripides," *Acta Antiqua Academiae Scientiarum Hungaricae* 16 (1968): 149–55; and the much fuller discussion in Segal, *Dionysiac Poetics,* 86–94 and passim.
29. For fuller discussion of these terms and their relation to the structures and structuring capacities of plots, see Zeitlin, "The Power of Aphrodite," 58–64.
30. Jean-Pierre Vernant, "Intimations of the Will in Greek Tragedy," in *Myth and Society,* 51. His is the most nuanced discussion of this double determination that is often misnamed as a conflict between fate and free will.
31. For discussions of intrigue plots in general, see especially Friedrich Solmsen, "Zur Gestaltung des Intriguenmotivs in den Tragödien des Sophokles und Euripides," *Philologus* 84 (1932): 1–17; and Hans Strohm, "Trug und Taüschung in der euripideischen Dramatik," *Würzburger Jahrbücher für die Altertumswissenschaft* 4 (1949/50): 140–56, collected in *Euripides*, ed. E. Schwinge, Wege der Forschung, no. 89 (Darmstadt, 1968) as 326–44 and 345–72, respectively. See now also the wider-ranging discussion of Frances Muecke, " 'I Know You—By Your Rags': Costume and Disguise in Fifth-Century Drama," *Antichthon* 16 (1982): 17–34.
32. The *Ion* of Euripides, a play in many ways a precursor of New Comedy, foils the woman's plot against her unrecognized son (not without some fancy help from the gods) so as to bring about the joyful reunion. The play, I might add, is careful not to credit the woman Creusa as the one who first initiates the intrigue.
33. Euripides' *Electra* is still more complex, as the play separates the two acts of vengeance against Clytemnestra and her lover, Aegisthus. The old servant suggests the plot against Aegisthus (to take place outside far away from the house), while Electra contrives the elaborate and doubly deceitful intrigue against Clytemnestra.
34. This is a commonplace in tragic texts (as elsewhere): e.g., *Iphigenia in Tauris* 1032; *Medea* 834–35; *Andromache* 85; *Hippolytus* 480–81; *Ion* 483.
35. Even in these plays, masculine honor is protected, as it were, in that each man (Orestes, Menelaus) first proposes force before he accedes to the woman's practical, clever schemes (Iphigenia, Helen), and each, just before the end, is permitted a display of manly strength against the forces of the barbarian king in question.
36. The one exception that comes to mind is Euripides' strange play, *Andromache,* where Orestes, not a major character, successfully plots to have Neoptolemus killed at Delphi so as to reclaim the latter's wife, Hermione, for his own.
37. "The covert theme of all drama," Michael Goldman suggests, "is identificaton, the establishment of a self that in some way transcends the confusions of self"; *The Actor's Freedom: Toward a Theory of Drama* (New York, 1975), 123. In general, I have learned much from this stimulating study of the workings of theater.
38. Odysseus is the exemplar in the masculine sphere, but he neither generically represents "the race of men" nor, let me repeat, is this adaptable survivor (with strong affinities, in fact, to the feminine) a candidate for tragedy in the dramatic milieu.
39. Earlier I alluded to the creation of Pandora as exemplifying the physical, "creaturely" side of life. I emphasize now the other aspect of woman's creation as an object cunningly wrought; she is a deceptive gift in return for Prometheus' deception of Zeus, herself endowed with a crafty intelligence. Woman therefore embodies both extremes of nature and culture that together conspire to waste a man's substance and dry him up before his time.

40. For a similar idea, see Ann Bergren, "Language and the Female in Early Greek Thought," *Arethusa* 16 (1983): 74, 77.
41. This is a combined quote and paraphrase (with one small alteration) of Bamber, *Comic Women, Tragic Men,* 15.
42. In this respect, there are strong continuities with the earlier epic tradition. See the interesting conclusions of Hélène Monsacré's fine, nuanced study, *Les Larmes d'Achille: Le Héros, la femme et la souffrance dans la poésie d'Homère* (Paris, 1984), 199–204.
43. We might note that initiation into the "real" Eleusinian mysteries involved some forms of imitating the specifically feminine experiences of Demeter and Kore.
44. More accurately, it is one of the very last, produced posthumously in Athens as was the *Iphigenia in Aulis.*
45. For the interplay of illusion and reality, see Friedrich Solmsen, *"Onoma* and *Pragma* in Euripides' *Helen," Classical Review* 48 (1934): 119–21; Ann Pippin (Burnett), "Euripides' *Helen:* A Comedy of Ideas," *Classical Philology* 55 (1960): 151–63; Charles Segal, "The Two Worlds of Euripides' *Helen," Transactions of the American Philological Association* 102 (1971): 553–614; and see now George Walsh, *The Varieties of Enchantment: Early Greek Views on the Nature and Function of Poetry* (Chapel Hill, N.C., 1984), 96–106. On the connections with theater and femininity in the context of comic parody, see Zeitlin, "Gender and Genre," 186–89.
46. I simplify here the terms of the debate. Both sides are thoroughly satirized in this brilliant parody. For an excellent discussion, see Walsh, *Varieties of Enchantment,* 80–97.
47. See especally *Republic* 595c, 598d, 605c–d, 607a, 602b.
48. *Republic* 2.366a–b; cf. 361b–c. Strictly speaking, the Aeschylean quotes precede the discussion of the mimetic arts in book 3, but their misuse may not be fortuitous.
49. I include in the discussion the relevant portions of *Republic, Gorgias,* and *Laws,* to be followed by the *Symposium.*
50. This issue deserves far more attention than space permits here.
51. Tragedy is the real target, despite the remarks about epic poetry and comedy. See especially *Laws* 816d–e, 935d–936b for comedy, and 817a–d for tragedy, where Plato expressly sets up the legislators as authors of their own true tragedies as "rivals . . . artists and actors of the fairest drama."
52. One single exception is the woman (wife and mother) as instigating in her son the slide toward timocratic behavior by her nagging and greed (*Republic* 549c–e). We will take up the function in the *Symposium* of the priestess, Diotima, in the appropriate context.
53. The ostensible motive for banning poets in book 3 is the education of the young guardians to protect the city. Courage in battle is the model for control over warring forces within the self, as is emphasized in the second discussion of imitation in book 10. Cowardice is the radically feminine trait, despite Plato's willingness to train selected women as guardians. (The *locus classicus* is *Timaeus* 90e–91a, in which Plato describes the first creation of women as due to "creatures generated as men who proved themselves cowardly and spent their lives in wrongdoing and were transformed at their second incarnation into women.") I simplify Plato's intricate argument, as he further sees this lack of control over the emotions, engendered by tragedy, as leading to an unruliness and violence he does not specify as feminine. Yet the tyrannical man, the most "theatrical" in Plato's view, whose exterior pomp and costume does not at all match his inner self (*Republic* 577b), is seen ultimately as a slave to his passions who becomes so fearful that he "lives for the most part cowering in the house like a woman" (*Republic* 579b–c).

54. In particular, the discussion would benefit from including the important contribution made by Alcibiades, the disruptive latecomer and party crasher, but it would not in any case substantially alter my argument.
55. In this comedy, which satirizes Euripidean tragedy through the women's indignation at the poet for his unflattering (and oversexed) portraits of them, Agathon comes off as the truly effeminate male by contrast to the trickster but more manly figure of Euripides. Agathon appears in feminine accessories, claiming that to write female parts for the theater one must dress as a woman. He refuses to infiltrate the women's festival on the grounds that he would provide unfair competition for the "real" women, and finally supplies the feminine costume for Euripides' kinsman, who has been persuaded to go instead.
56. Aristophanes presents the famous myth of the spherical human beings who, separated by Zeus for their hybris toward the gods, are forever searching for reunion with their other halves. These may be of the same or opposite sex, depending on the original composition of each.