land of the dead of her own free will (*autonomos*).[59] As for the sacrificed virgins, enough has been said to show that glory was bestowed on them without reserve. Macaria had glory, and Polyxena, and so did Iphigenia at Aulis, for whom the chorus women would sing a paean,[60] as though virile grandeur left the male side and moved to these girls whose virginity was taken with their lives. In her sudden resolve, which has astonished more than one commentator, the daughter of Agamemnon, the paradigmatic *parthenos,* won for herself and for her sisters in glorious misfortune an excellence (*aretē*) greater than that of Achilles.[61]

Thus, around the sacrifice of virgins, tragedy develops a reflection on the problematic condition of the *parthenos.* This reflection subverts the processes of marriage by looking at them through the prism of sacrificial rites and showing how little, in many respects, they are distorted by that; but it also creates, within the limits of an imaginative construction, a version of glory that is peculiarly virginal. As a goddess Artemis can well identify with her title *Eukleia,* for she is the "Glorious One." But what can be said about the glory of those mortal girls who die for it, except that it is stolen, as it were, from the warriors who will not die since virgin's blood has flowed on their behalf? Within the imaginary world of tragedy, there still remains an impossibility through which reality reclaims its rights: when young girls die, or when, as we have seen, wives die, there are no words available to denote the glory of a woman that do not belong to the language of male renown.[62]

And glory always makes the blood of women flow.[63]

· III ·

Regions of the Body

THERE are, after all, benefits to be had from the world of the imagination. The woman in tragedy is better served than the ordinary wife and the young girl, departed before their time, who appear in epitaphs—pale wraiths of discourse whose beauty is never mentioned. The woman in tragedy, in the interplay of glory and death, acquires a body. It is, to be sure, a body through which death will come to her—but, with the imaginary, the rule of the game is that what you win you instantly lose.

There is a body, then; but it is poorly known. An anthropological approach to tragedy is generally more concerned with institutional practices than with corporeal schemata, and it has not always paid enough attention to this topography of the body, which in tragedy, from Aeschylus to Euripides, is structured around the places of death. To end this study, I should like to try to draw up a list of those places through which death comes to women. It must come from a word-by-word study of the texts, for here, again, one has to back the precision of the signifier in tragedy. This precision is determinedly clinical: thus, contrary to what may be suggested by translators who are keener to transpose the texts than to leave them with the specific sense of the Greek, the "liver" in tragedy is indeed always the liver, and not something like the heart.[1] It is not trivial that when Deianira is pierced to the liver, death

comes to her in the same way that it comes to men. But let us not anticipate.

Women's Weak Point

Creon and his men were horrified by the sudden sight—brutal and irrevocable—of Antigone's corpse "hanged by the neck," *kremastēn auchenos* (Sophocles, *Antigone* 1221). But the word most used by Euripides to describe those hapless women, hanging with their neck in a noose, is *derē*.[2] A richer word, no doubt, because it carries a much stronger affective charge. What the daughter of Oedipus, silent and abandoned, has imprisoned in the knot of her veil, *auchēn,* is the neck seen from the nape. *Derē,* on the contrary, is "the front of the neck, the throat," a strong point of feminine beauty—whether one thinks of the "splendid throat" of Aphrodite by which, in the third book of the *Iliad,* Helen recognizes the goddess; or the "delicate throat" that Sappho's lover delighted in covering with flowers; or again the "neck of startling whiteness" that Medea, under her nurse's gaze, turns to hide her tears. But *derē* is also what, in an ecstasy of mourning, virgins and women delight in tearing, sharp nail on soft throat.[3]

Derē is all these things, and, for a woman, it is above all the point of greatest vulnerability. It is by that part that one hangs, and by that part also that death comes to young girls chosen for sacrifice. For in accounts of immolation *derē* means the exact spot where the officiating priests apply the knife at the moment of execution.[4] So Iphigenia remembers in Tauris: "Ah, when my poor father brought his sword near to my throat . . ." So Achilles warns the daughter of Agamemnon: "When you see the sword very near to your throat . . ." Iphigenia's throat, the throat of Polyxena covered in gold, which will soon be stained purple with blood.

There is no point in multiplying examples of *derē* in a sacrificial context.[5] All that one need say is that, where there is *derē,* there is still breath and life. At this word, more than once, the description of an immolation pauses as the menace is for a moment held back, and the virgin, with the knife at her throat, still breathes. But where a throat has already been cut or is being penetrated by the sword, *derē* gives way to *laimos,* the word for the throat considered as the gullet;[6] for once the fair surface of the neck has been pierced, death starts to slip into the interior of the body. So the language of tragedy is again, as always, precise, and so too are the descriptions. At the moment of striking Iphigenia, the priest examines the throat (*laimos*) of the victim with the sharp eye of an anatomist, to pick out the point where the knife will sink in best (*Iphigenia in Aulis* 1579). In the *Orestes,* just as he thinks he can at last slay Helen as an expiatory victim, the hero forces her neck (*derē*) against her left shoulder and prepares to "drive his black sword into her throat [*laimos*]." More than one commentator has rightly recognized in this the exact picture of a sacrificer in action.[7]

All, then, is in order—the order prescribed for a killing. However, there may also be, hidden away, some secret order that governs the female body. It is as though, quite apart from ritual practice and its requirements, the throats of women invited death: to kill Clytemnestra, Orestes strikes her in the throat—a way no doubt for Euripides to make a comment on the word *sphagē*.[8] It is through the neck (*dia mesou auchenos*) that Jocasta in the *Phoenissae* sinks her sword as she kills herself (1457). If we recall that the Jocasta of Sophocles, more conventionally, put her neck in a noose, we can see in this detail a hint from Euripides, who is deliberately emphasizing the way in which the heroine's soldierlike suicide departs from a well-established tradition.

Similarly, with regard to the cutting of Clytemnestra's throat, one may call to mind again the lying speech in the *Agamemnon* in which she maintains that she has more than once passed a rope round her neck (*derē,* 875). Jocasta, Clytemnestra—two ways for a woman to be killed, at the place where she ought to have tied a noose. In each case, someone will invoke overdetermination. But it is a remarkable overdetermination that, whether it be hanging or *sphagē,* suicide,[9] murder, or sacrifice, requires women to die by the throat, and only by the throat.

At this point the reader will no doubt ask what happens in tragedy with the death of men. The answer is that in fact they seldom die from being struck in the throat, whether they are murdered or fall in battle.[10] If Clytemnestra's death is meant to avenge Agamemnon's "by the same ways" (*tropōn tōn autōn*), it is a reference to parricide that should be heard in this expression, not to the exact method of the murder. For if we are to believe Sophocles, the betrayed king was struck down by the blow of an ax full on the brow.[11] In Homer the neck is one of the warrior's most vulnerable points, for it is there, *di' auchenos,* that Achilles drives his javelin into Hector's body, and in the *Iliad* there are many warriors who die with their throats cut.[12] But there is nothing of this sort to be found in the world of tragedy. The most we can do is to quote a chorus of the *Phoenissae* on the single combat of the two sons of Oedipus, which will make "the blood flow from the brother's throat [*homogenē deran*]."[13] However, apart from the fact that death came to Eteocles and Polynices by quite other means, it will be readily agreed that the duel of two brothers, the ultimate expression of a civil war at the family level, partakes more of *sphagē* than of war.

There is a conclusion of this analysis that we cannot avoid: death lurks in the throats of women, hidden in their

beauty, which the texts never evoke more freely than at the precise moment when their lives are threatened and in the balance. White throat of the grief-stricken Medea, whose nurse fears she may kill herself; the perfect white neck of Iphigenia, over whom the murderous sword is already standing guard.[14] The Euripidean fantasy of the knife on the throat reveals tragedy's concept of feminine seduction, which is especially dangerous for the woman who is its too vulnerable agent.

A Recital of the Male Body

In epic there is no point in the body through which death is not able to "tame" the male. There is the neck, of course, but also the belly (*Iliad* XI.381), the forehead, the temple, the side, the right breast, the chest and the lung, the groin, the navel, the heel. There I shall stop the recital; its only point is to suggest the richness of the male body in Homer, which is vulnerable all over to tearing, slicing, and felling.[15] Tragedy certainly does not take over this compulsive list, but it does still endow the male with a body that is infinitely more diversified than that of a woman, so far as ways of access for death are concerned.

There is the side (*pleuron*), which the warrior protects in battle all the more carefully because he dies if he is pierced there;[16] and murder, too, seems to make its fatal way into man's body in this region. Thus, Neoptolemus, treacherously set upon in Delphi and struck by a hail of missiles, falls only when a sharp sword wounds him in the side.[17] There is the stomach, where Polynices in the *Phoenissae* is mortally struck by a blow on the navel; and there is the whole cavity within the body, where even physicians do not always clearly distinguish higher and lower, or front and side, because everything is so interconnected that a mortal

blow can be said to sink in "through the lungs" or "through the side."[18] In the same area of the body, the blow to the liver is especially fatal for the warrior—the wound which in the *Erechtheus* brings about the death of Eumolpus, and which, in the *Phoenissae,* Polynices on the point of death manages to inflict on Eteocles. This is a mortal blow above all others, since Eteocles dies before his brother, unable to utter one more word; it is a deadly blow whose devastating power was well known to the enchantress Medea, who, in her plan for a triple murder that was to look like an engagement of war, dreamed for a while of striking the king of Corinth, his daughter, and Jason in the liver.[19]

So the side and the liver are two fatal places on a warrior's body. It is there that a man sinks in his sword to commit suicide. In the side, like Haemon or like Ajax, that paradigm of the manly suicide:[20] in the liver, the method that Heracles, Orestes, or Menelaus imagined, when they thought of destroying themselves, just long enough to underline the nobility attaching to such a death.[21] In fact the liver is a vital organ (which does not warrant its being systematically translated as "the heart" where the Greek says *hēpar*), and the "blow in the liver" is the metaphor most used in tragedy to express the violence of an emotion.[22]

To come back to those blows that are not in the least metaphorical, real blows that open up the body to death. They are the blows that men sustain, but, all the same, there are women in tragedy who die of them. The suicide by a blow to the liver that in Euripides is contemplated by such heroes as Heracles, Orestes, or Electra (*Electra* 688)—this is something that in Sophocles some women, in their despair, find the courage to carry through. I have in mind Eurydice, whose death, at once sacrificial and like that of a warrior,[23] dealt a final blow ot Creon's doubtful manliness. Above all I have in mind Deianira, that fragile wife who

knew only too well how death comes to warriors, for without hesitation she pierced her side "with a two-edged dagger, rammed home between the liver and the diaphragm" (*Trachiniae* 930–931).

However, it is not self-evident that a woman could carry through to the end a man's death: she could not, for instance, force language to invent a feminine form for military terms such as *parastatēs* (companion in the ranks), which occur only in the masculine.[24] So we should scrutinize more closely this form of suicide "that a hand of woman has dared carry out" (*Trachiniae* 898). No doubt it was a manly death[25] achieved in the Homeric style by the "groaning steel that slices the flesh" (*Trachiniae* 886–887). And indeed, to kill herself, Deianira uncovered those martial parts of the body—the side and the arm.[26] But this is just where the difficulty starts. To strike herself below the liver, Deianira uncovered her *left* side (*Trachiniae* 931) and not her right side, as one would expect, even if one's anatomical knowledge were minimal. Commentators are bewildered and ask whether Sophocles may have been careless. A lazy explanation, and so the least satisfactory.[27] It would be better to follow Jebb's commentary with its suggestion that in this case Sophocles uses the word *hēpar* in the very general sense of the "center of life." However, such a use would not justify putting the organ in its wrong place, and besides, one would still have to explain why Deianira strikes on the left side—a detail which is puzzling but which cannot possibly have been added randomly. I take another view and submit that this anomaly is pregnant with meaning; for in exposing her left flank the wife of Heracles laid bare the female side.[28] It is a textual ruse, a contradiction deliberately presented to emphasize that a woman's death, even if contrived in the most manly way, does not escape the laws of her sex.

So we have to sustain an inconsistency that is full of meaning. Deianira did indeed die from a blow under the liver *and* on her left, as a woman in love who wanted *in extremis* to assume the values of the martial world.[29] We can take it that a man's body, even when viewed through the ambiguity of tragedy, would not show such inconsistencies.

Polyxena's Alternative

Here is another anomaly, an ever so slight one—or rather a question. Why does Polyxena, on the point of being sacrificed and having just declared herself ready "to proffer the neck [*derēn*] of a valiant spirit" (Euripides, *Hecuba* 549), change her mind and give Neoptolemus the choice between two ways of killing her?

It is true that in the meantime the head of the Achaean army has given the "chosen" an order to release the young girl. Whereupon Polyxena, making the best of the liberty that remains to her, takes the initiative:

> When she had heard the masters' words, she seized her veils and tore them from the shoulder down to the middle of her side near where the navel is, uncovering her breasts and her bosom as lovely as that of a statue [*mastous t' . . . sterna th' hōs agalmatos kallista*]. Then, placing one knee on the ground, she uttered these words of incomparable gallantry: "Here is my bosom [*sternon*], young man. Strike there, if that is where you would like to strike. If you would prefer the neck [*hyp' auchena*], here is my throat [*laimos*] ready." (*Hecuba* 557–565)

Neoptolemus hesitates. But it is not the alternative offered by Polyxena that makes him "wish and not wish"; it is simply "pity for the young girl." Without further hesitation and like a skilled sacrificer "he cuts her windpipe with the

steel."[30] That is to say, he chooses the normal way. No sacrificer would strike in the chest, and there are very few women in tragedy to whom death comes through the breast.[31] So what did Polyxena mean when she spoke to Neoptolemus in this way?

In Aristotle's language, this problem would not arise, since, by his anatomical criteria, *sphagē,* the word for a throat virtually opened up, is used to indicate precisely "the part common to the neck and to the breast."[32] However, in the tragic universe in which Polyxena dies, no compromise can eliminate the choice between these two, and the regions of the body carry such strong symbolic values that any choice between them—certainly where tradition did not impose one—has a definite meaning.

Sternon or *laimos?* Since the "bosom" is topographically opposed to the severed throat, we should, like Euripides, consider the naked beauty of Polyxena. Perhaps it is not the nudity of the *parthenos* in itself that should claim our attention. Virgins being sacrificed are usually stripped of their clothes,[33] and, as she means to be free to the end, Polyxena herself does what *parthenoi* who are being sacrificed are forced to undergo.[34] But Polyxena's nakedness, described in its beauty as like a statue, stared at by the Achaean army, is treated by Euripides as a spectacle—as it will remain, from Hellenistic painting up to the art of Pietro da Cortona.[35] Polyxena uncovered her breasts (*mastous*) and her fine bosom (*sterna*). This conjunction is not a pleonasm; the two words carry such different meanings that Euripides rarely uses them together. A good example of a "partial object," *mastos* is the mother's breast swollen with milk, but it is also, fleetingly glimpsed, the erotically provocative bosom of the beautiful Helen, at the sight of which Menelaus one day dropped his sword,[36] as the Greeks loved to recount. The values of the *sternon* are more diverse. In a

man the "chest" is a region of the body that is thought a particularly good place to strike an enemy in battle: he is killed at a blow and, not having run away, earns a noble death.[37] The woman's bosom is mainly conjured up as a source of affect, aesthetic or sentimental: *sternon* of Electra or Iphigenia, clasped in the tender embrace of Orestes or Agamemnon; tender bosom of the virgin Iphigenia, which Agamemnon, weeping over the beauty of his sacrificial victim, evokes together with the virgin's lovely cheeks and her fair hair; and the white bosom that women uncover as they mourn, to strike it or tear it, in a contrast that is very telling.[38]

By associating these two words, mentioning the desirable breast at the same time as the shapely bosom,[39] does the description of Polyxena in her nakedness merely aim to eroticize the virgin's death? Again a distinction must be made between what the army sees (of which the messenger's speech professes to be a faithful testimony) and what Polyxena wants. The choice she proposes to Neoptolemus is an initiative of the *parthenos* and has meaning for her alone. In fact, as she addresses Achilles' son, Polyxena does not talk of those desirable breasts on which the Greek army feasted their eyes, but only of her *sternon:* "Here is my bosom, young man. If it is there that you prefer to strike, strike there." So Polyxena does not speak out in order to eroticize her end; her only ambition in Hades is to lie dead among the dead, and, as she dies, she is able to show a modesty of the most virginal kind.[40] So what is it, then, that gives meaning to her proposal?

If we are reluctant to press the interpretation further and prefer to stop at this question, we may make some progress by turning to Roman accounts of Polyxena's death, if only because they show that, despite a range of variations, Euripides was always read in the same way, one that places the young girl's end in the context of martial courage.

Take Seneca's Polyxena, who is to marry Achilles in death and whose immolation matches, in considerable detail, a marriage ceremony.[41] Then, at the moment of death, to the amazement of the reader looking for a "nuptial sacrifice,"[42] the virgin (*virgo*) becomes a *virago,* and the tender victim behaves like a fighter meeting a fatal blow head on: "Far from withdrawing, the courageous and manly young girl [*audax virago*] turned toward the fatal blow, drawing herself up proudly and showing no fear." And the crowd admires her courage (*tam fortis animus*) (Seneca, *Troades* 1151–53). Seneca is a good reader of Euripides. Could this be a way of commenting on Polyxena's proposal ("If you prefer to strike me in the breast, strike there")?

Without rushing to conclusions we can turn to Ovid, an even more faithful reader of Euripides. In book XIII of the *Metamorphoses,* Polyxena, "unhappy virgin raised by her courage above her sex" (*plus quam femina virgo*), is led to the tomb of Achilles, to have her throat cut. The daughter of Priam talks to the hero's son in the same language as in Greek tragedy ("Plunge your weapon into my throat or my bosom," *jugulo vel pectore*), and, at the same moment, she uncovers her throat and her bosom. As in Euripides, she falls "taking care to veil those parts of her body that she wishes to hide from the general view, and to observe the decencies that modesty imposes on a chaste woman."[43] Ovid, however, in choosing where to deal the mortal blow, gave the sacrificer the action that Euripides did not allow Neoptolemus: "The officiant, himself weeping, sadly plunges the steel into the bosom that is offered to his blows" (*Metamorphoses* XIII.475–476).

This difference, all the more remarkable because what

leads up to it is so faithful to the Greek model, needs explaining. Perhaps one can call on some taste for this kind of death, peculiar to Ovid[44] or Latin poetry. We will remember no doubt that Camilla in the *Aeneid* was mortally wounded in her naked breast.[45] However, when one sees that Ovid, in what follows, insistently comments on the courage of Polyxena, fallen, like her brothers, to Achilles' sword (*Metamorphoses* XIII.497–500), one becomes convinced that there is more to be said. So I would suggest that in choosing to let the virgin have the death that in Euripides she suggested she might have, the Latin poet meant to outdo Euripides by giving its fullest meaning to the alternative that Euripides introduced: in the throat, like a sacrificial victim, or in the breast, like a warrior.

We have now formulated the interpretation at which we hesitated earlier. The Greek army may have been dazzled by the feminine attractions of Polyxena's nakedness, but for the *parthenos* the blow in the breast simply meant that Neoptolemus was paying a proper tribute to her *andreia*. But *andreia,* of course, the name of courage, refers to a male virtue . . . So the detour we have made through Latin poetry will have served to confirm *a contrario* a proposition we were already in a position to support when discussing Deianira: whatever freedom the tragic discourse of the Greeks offered to women, it did not allow them ultimately to transgress the frontier that divided and opposed the sexes. Tragedy certainly does transgress and mix things up—this is its rule, its nature—but never to the point of irrevocably overturning the civic order of values; a "manly woman" has to be menacing and not seductive, something that Clytemnestra can be, and Polyxena cannot. Polyxena could indeed offer up her bosom like a warrior, but the Greek army saw in the gesture only a virgin unveiling her woman's breasts.

It is at the throat, therefore, that in Euripides Neoptolemus, as a good sacrificer, slaughters the virgin; she is struck at women's weak point[46] and is reclaimed at the last moment by femininity. Doubtless it was not in tragedy's power to upset a well-established discourse. Wasn't it again in the throat, or, if you prefer, the neck that in archaic times Achilles dealt Penthesilea a mortal blow?[47] It is always the throat, in war as in sacrifice, and that choice is certainly significant, in a tradition fed by epic, in which the whole of a man's body is laid open to fatal wounds. To cast light on the regularity—one might almost say, the monotony—of this pattern, one should look for a principle outside the universe of tragedy and move toward the gynecological thinking of the Greeks, where woman is caught between two mouths, between two necks,[48] where vagaries of the womb suddenly choke the voice in a woman's throat,[49] and where many a young girl old enough to be a *nymphē* hangs herself to escape the threat of the terrifying suffocation inside her body.[50] Anyone at all familiar with Freud's work will remember Dora, the cough that was one of her symptoms, and the remarks of Freud on "this displacement from the lower to the upper part of the body," which invades the throat because "that part of the body had to a high degree retained its significance as an erogenous zone in the young girl."[51] However, once one immerses oneself in the medical thought of the Greeks, or joins up, bag and baggage, with psychoanalysis,[52] one can find no way of rejoining the tragic universe. For tragedy wants no part of this gynecological imagery, or at least does not want to talk of it explicitly. It is enough to note this silence without pressing it, and to suggest that in the tragic body nothing is left to the whims of free association, because in it all the places of death have their proper locations.

INNOVATION, orthodoxy; liberty, constraint: it was against the background of this tension that women's destiny was played out in tragedy, as no doubt it was at many levels of civic experience in Athens. But there is this special feature of tragedy, that because it notably exalts the role of liberty, the effect of constraint in it—however subtle it may be, however covertly present in this or that signifier—is all the more powerful because it shows up in words rather than in institutions. There is this feature, too, that innovation takes place in the purely verbal context of fiction, and the royal road to it is death.[53]

To interest oneself in what is said about women's deaths in tragedy is to enjoy a privileged viewpoint. It is true that once the firm line has been drawn separating feminine from masculine, Greek creative imagination delights in blurring it; but where is the best place to try to define the processes and limits of the game, if not at the institutional center of this confusion, right inside the space in which tragedy produces its interference?[54]

This has been my plan. The aim was to determine how and to what extent manly values and feminine attributes acted on one another in the tragic presentation of women, because, where this shadowy "half of the city's population" is concerned, tragedy can be readily credited with a boldness remarkable in fifth-century Athens. The fact that this boldness turns out to be less than one had supposed is not disquieting in itself. Any investigation runs the risk, as it proceeds, of challenging or modifying the initial hypotheses, especially when these were adopted with only one preconception—that at all costs the sterile opposition between feminism and misogyny should be avoided. I have simply done my best to follow the twists and turns of tragedy's very unusual orthodoxy. It has given me pleasure—the pleasure that comes from exploring byways—

and it has been perhaps not without profit. This meandering journey at least provides an opportunity to ask clearer questions about the important deviations that may exist within an established genre. Such in fact is the paradox of women's glorious death—for death to be noble it must be manly. Therefore, wives and young girls, if they are going to win the elusive *kleos gynaikōn*, must strive for *andreia*. It is precisely at this point that femininity is on the watch and pulls them back, without their knowledge, but to the great edification of the audience: it happens in an instant, in the time taken by one word that represents a deeply significant choice made by the tragic text. In this respect Euripides, whether he was in fact an admirer or an enemy of women (tradition has never really been able to decide on this point), is the equal of Sophocles, that master of ambiguity. This all goes to show that tragedy displays virtually an unchanging tendency to think of femininity in the same terms.

This is indeed a very general conclusion to reach after a long spell of reading, in which word-for-word attention has deliberately been paid to the texts. Yet such a generalization reveals the true benefit of an inquiry of this sort. Indeed, in speaking generally of "deaths of women in tragedy," I was already aiming at a generalization, taking a chance on the genre as such. To take a chance on the genre commits one to assuming that it has a unity, or at least to trying to discover its constants. These constants can be defined as shared aspects of tragic discourse—shared even when, from one author to another, they are fiercely contested. If this was to be my aim, it immediately followed that I could not accept either of two well-established ways of reading the tragedians. One of these is founded on the sacrosanct dogma of evolution, which decrees that from Aeschylus to Sophocles and from Sophocles to Euripides (even though the last two were more or less contemporary) the notions

and intellectual choices change and, as the theory has it, evolve. The other way wants to isolate each body of work in its own particular nature and is intent on extracting each tragic writer's predilection for some particular motif: Aeschylus is obviously very interested in the violence of murder, Sophocles in the desperate will that drives someone on to suicide, Euripides in the immolation of tender virgins.[55] These are well-marked paths, and, without neglecting them, I have preferred to make a different journey. It matters to me, in closing, that it should be agreed that the route was a sound one; in other words, it should be agreed that, granted all the differences, the interrogation of femininity goes on in much the same terms from one tragedian to another (as with this verb *aeirō*, to which, contrary to what one might expect, we have come back several times), and also within the same limits (represented, for instance, by the idea that a woman's throat tends to enclose her death).

To bring out these very overdetermined elements of discourse, there is now a well-marked way that consists in submitting the texts of tragedy to questions put by an anthropology of the ancient world. This is a fruitful approach, as has been amply shown, but only on condition that it is coupled with a tireless attention to the special nature of the particular genre. So I have tried to open out the questions of anthropology into an inquiry more closely centered on the directions and the forms taken by the imagination among the Greeks, in order to understand what kind of benefit accrued to the city through this event institutionally separated from the rest of its life, the dramatic performance. Put another way, how far is the oxymoron, so dear to tragic texts, essential to the representations that the city gives of itself in drama? Or again, what do spectators in the theater gain from thinking, in the mode of fiction, things that in everyday life cannot and must not be thought? It is a

chance, then, to reflect on the aim of the tragic "purification,"[56] which surely purges the citizen more than the private individual, because it purges emotions that should be unknown to the ideal of a good citizen. So virgins are sacrificed in the theater of Dionysus . . .

In trying to search out the ways in which the city's thought worked, I have concentrated on the signifier, which is like a subtext to the text of the tragedians and can, perhaps, be identified only through reading. This has meant that I have moved back to a point that comes well before any achieved tragic effect, toward the margins of what makes the genre intelligible at all. So I have willingly taken up the rather prosaic role of reader. We have to reconcile ourselves to the fact that we shall never be in the position of the spectators in fifth-century Athens. But all the same, we can see clearly enough—I rest my hopes on this—to understand what it was in the death of Deianira or the sacrifice of Polyxena that gave the Athenian spectator the controlled pleasure afforded by an enjoyment of the deviant when it is acted out, reflected upon, and tamed.

ies of Orion's daughters, who killed themselves for their country, into *juvenes*. But the metamorphosis is foreign to the logic of tragedy, which prefers to stick to the resources of discourse.

63. If tragedy is feminist, it is so in the style of those feminists mentioned by P. Darmon, who "revive the feminine gender in a bath of blood" (*Mythologie de la femme dans l'ancienne France,* Paris: Le Seuil, 1983, p. 59).

III. Regions of the Body

1. For example, consider Mazon's translation (Belles Lettres) of 271–272 of the *Choephoroe,* where "the warm liver" becomes "the blood of my heart," for reasons that Mazon details clearly in a note where the issue is well laid out—between transposition and a "literal" translation, which latter can be indicated only at the foot of the page. On these questions, see also the remarks of Mazon's disciple, J. Dumortier, in the introduction to his work, *Le vocabulaire médical d'Eschyle et les écrits hippocratiques* (Paris: Les Belles Lettres, 1935).

2. For example, *Helen* 354 and *Hippolytus* 781.

3. See Chantraine, *Dictionnaire étymologique,* s.v. *auchēn* and *derē.* Throat of Aphrodite; *Iliad* III.39 (and *Homeric Hymn to Aphrodite* 88); throat of the loved girl: Sappho, fr. 216 Page, 16; neck of Medea: Euripides, *Medea* 30–31; mourning: Euripides, *Electra* 146–147.

4. On *sphazō* as the word for throat-cutting, on the equivalence of *sphazō* and *deirotomeō* (slice the throat), and on *sphagē* as a word for the throat, see Casabona, *Vocabulaire,* pp. 155–156 and 175.

5. *Iphigenia in Tauris* 853–854 (cf. 1460); *Iphigenia in Aulis* 1430 (and 1516, 1560, 1574); *Hecuba* 151–153. Of course, the immolation of a man, if it took place, would also be carried out at the throat; *Hercules Furens* 319–320 (but it so happens that this type of immolation never in fact took place).

6. *Derē* and the knife on the throat: for example, *Orestes* 1194, 1349, 1575; *laimos* and the act of sacrifice: *Heraclidae* 822, *Phoenissae* 1421, *Iphigenia in Aulis* 1579. *Laimos* is also Polyxena's throat when she is considered as a sacrificial victim (*Hecuba* 565; in 567, Neoptolemus cuts the "breath passage"). *Laimotomos* (*laimotmētos*) characterizes the Gorgon, with her throat cut: *Ion* 1054, *Electra* 549, *Phoenissae* 455.

7. Euripides, *Orestes* 1471–73, with the note of Chapouthier (Belles Lettres) and that of Delcourt (Gallimard, "La Pléiade"). On the significance of the gesture that bends the victim's neck upward or downward, see Stengel, *Opferbraüche,* pp. 113–125.

8. Euripides, *Electra* 1223, also 485 (in 1222 Orestes uses the "sacrificial" verb *katarkhomai,* and in 1228 Clytemnestra's wound is described as *sphagas*). Already in Aeschylus Clytemnestra was struck in the throat: *Eumenides* 592 (*pros derēn temōn*), also *Choephoroe* 883–884 (*auchēn*).

9. See *Helen* 355–356 (in Helen's plans for suicide, *laimotomon sphagas* is the alternative to hanging).

10. Even Aegisthus, whose death in Euripides is involved in the sacrifice on which he had embarked, was not struck in the throat, but in the vertebrae, by Orestes, who smashed his back (*Electra* 841–842).

11. *Tropōn tōn autōn: Choephoroe* 274; the ax blow full on the brow: Sophocles, *Electra* 95–99 and 195.

12. The neck, weak point: *Iliad* XXII.321–327 (death of Hector), also VIII.325–326 and XXIII.821; warriors with their throats sliced: XIII.202, XVII.49, XXI.555 (*deirotomeō*). See also Hesiod, *The Shield* 418 (Cycnus killed in the neck). In Homer, C. Daremberg (*La médecine dans Homère,* Paris: Didier, 1865, pp. 14–15 and 38) counts six wounds in the throat and sixty-two in the neck. The purely functional reasons advanced by M. D. Grmek (*Les maladies à l'aube de la civilisation occidentale,* Paris: Payot, 1983, p. 55) are probably inadequate to explain the recurrence of such a wound in the epic.

13. *Phoenissae* 1288–92; civil war (*stasis*) and *sphagē:* see M. Detienne and J. Svenbro, "Les loups au festin ou la cité impossible," in *La cuisine du sacrifice,* p. 231.

14. Euripides, *Medea* 30, *Iphigenia in Aulis* 875. One can appreciate the difference from the *Iliad,* where the neck, seen as white and tender at the moment the steel cuts, is the man's neck, because only the warrior's body is eroticized. See Vermeule, *Aspects of Death,* pp. 101–105.

15. All these places of death are taken from one book, i.e., IV.457–531. On the essential vulnerability of the man's body in Homer, see Vermeule, *Aspects of Death,* pp. 96–97.

16. The protected side: Euripides, *Troades* 1137, *Heraclidae* 824; the wounded side: Aeschylus, *Seven against Thebes* 624 and especially 888–890 (description by the chorus of the death of the sons of Oedipus by the left side—the unusual, sinister side—*di' eyōnymōn tetymmenoi . . . homosplanchnōn te pleurōmatōn,* a passage parodied by Euripides in *Phoenissae* 1288–92).

17. Euripides, *Andromache* 1150; in 1120, Neoptolemus has not been "hit in the right spot," and in 1132–34 he has been riddled with projectiles of various kinds (stones, darts, arrows, etc.).

18. Wounded through the navel (*Phoenissae* 1412–13), Polynices falls, bending *pleura kai nēdyn*. The image of the sword through the lungs/through the side: compare Aeschylus, *Choephoroe* 639–640; Euripides, *Ion* 765–767; and Aeschylus, *Eumenides* 843.

19. *Erechtheus,* fr. 65 Austin, 15; *Phoenissae* 1421 and 1437–41; *Medea,* 379.

20. Haemon: *Antigone* 1236 (*pleurais*); Ajax: Sophocles, *Ajax* 834 (*pleuran*) (cf. Pindar, *Nemean* VII.25: *dia phrenōn;* on the wound in the diaphragm, see Dumortier, *Le vocabulaire médical d'Eschyle,* p. 11).

21. Euripides, *Hercules Furens* 1149, *Helen* 982–983, *Orestes* 1062–63 (*eugeneia*). Note that one of the themes of the *Orestes* is the contrast between *sphagē,* a method of murder, and a voluntary, noble death, which is administered by a blow in the liver.

22. Aeschylus, *Agamemnon* 432, 792, *Choephoroe* 272, *Eumenides* 135 (and 158); Sophocles, *Ajax* 938; Euripides, *Suppliant Women* 599, *Hippolytus* 1070.

23. Sophocles, *Antigone* 1315–16 (*hyph' hēpar*), 1291–92 (*sphagiōn*), 1301 (*bōmia*), 1283 (*plēgmasin*), 1314 (*en phonais;* cf. 696, where the warrior death of Polynices occurred *en phonais*).

24. The nurse has been "companion in the ranks" (*parastasis: Trachiniae* 889) of Deianira's suicide, which was still solitary. It is worth recalling that the notion of *parastasis* forms the basis of a phalanx's order of hoplites.

25. Which must be interpreted in the logic of the text, and not, as G. Devereux has done in a study that is otherwise most attentive to word-for-word meaning in tragedy (*Tragédie et poésie grecques,* Paris: Flammarion, 1975, pp. 117–136), in the logic of someone's unconscious—that of Deianira or Sophocles (in whom this "masculinization" of the mild and tender wife could be put down to the "backlash of repressed feeling").

26. *Trachiniae* 923–926. Even though the brooch unfastened by Deianira may have held her dress between her two breasts, it is not her bosom that Heracles' wife exposes, but her arm and side.

27. The interpretation that attributes the passage as a whole to a slip of the pen (i.e., the view of Devereux, *Tragédie et poésie grecques,* pp. 114, 122, 136) is hardly more satisfying. What is more, to assign this "confusion" of right and left to Sophocles' "strong homosexual tendencies"

because "two categories, homosexuals and those who are lefthanded, tend to confuse left and right" (p. 137) is not a suggestion to be taken seriously. When one is reading a tragic text, it is important to remember that one is reading a text, and a very finely wrought one at that.

28. For the close correlation of right side/masculine and left side/feminine, see Nicole Loraux, "Héraklès, le surmâle et le féminin," *Revue Française de Psychanalyse,* 46 (1982), 725.

29. Note that in the *Trachiniae,* the connotations of the side can be erotic as well as warlike: see 930–939 and 1225–26 (cf. Euripides, *Hecuba* 826).

30. *Hecuba* 566–567. It is also in the throat that, in the *Alexandra* of Lycophron, the son of Achilles strikes Polyxena (326: *laimisas*).

31. It is in an entirely different context that Aristodamus, who killed his daughter to prove that she was not pregnant, sees her in a dream "with her breast and belly open" (Pausanias IV.13.2). As far as I know, no woman is killed through the breast in tragedy. As we have seen, Clytemnestra, in spite of using her *mastos* in a suppliant role, was struck in the throat; and it was the scene in the *Choephoroe* that influenced Mazon in his translation of *Eumenides* 84, when he wrote "piercing a mother's breast" where the text speaks only of "piercing the maternal body" (*mētrōion demas*).

32. Aristotle, *History of Animals* I.14.493b7 (*koinon meros auchenos kai stēthous sphagē*), commented on by Casabona, *Vocabulaire,* p. 175, n. 31.

33. The most common interpretation of *Agamemnon* 239 is that "the saffron dress" of Iphigenia "flows to the ground"; but there are good reasons for accepting another meaning, by which it is "the saffron hue" of the virgin's blood that is poured on the ground (see the demonstration of Bollack, *L'Agamemnon d'Eschyle,* I/2, pp. 300–303). If, as some commentators have thought, the sacrifice of Polyxena is a Euripidean reinterpretation of Aeschylus' lines, we would have to date from Euripides the traditional reading of this passage.

34. In the *Heraclidae,* Macaria alludes to an unveiling (561). J. Heckenbach (*De nuditate sacra sacrisque vinculis,* Giessen, 1911, pp. 9–10) queries this behavior as regards Polyxena. One might point out that this unveiling is like a brutal parody of the *anakalypsis* of the bride on marriage, which Seneca seems to imply, *Troades* 87–93.

35. Greek painting: see *Planudean Anthology* IV.150; Pietro da Cortona: I am thinking of the *Sacrifice of Polyxena* in the Capitol museum in Rome.

36. There are in Euripides twenty-seven occurrences of *mastos* as the

word for the maternal breast, against two uses in the erotic sense: *Andromache* 629 (see Aristophanes, *Lysistrata* 155–156) and *Cyclops* 170. I borrow the term "partial object" from the language of psychoanalysis: see J. Laplanche and J.-B. Pontalis, *Vocabulaire de la psychanalyse* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1967), pp. 294–295.

37. Euripides, *Suppliant Women* 604, *Phoenissae* 134, 162, 1375, 1397, 1437. Since Homer (*Iliad* XIII.288–290, XXII.282–285), the valiant warrior had to be hit in front, in the chest, and not in the back.

38. Electra: Euripides, *Orestes* 1049, *Electra* 1321; Iphigenia: *Iphigenia in Aulis* 634; the virginal beauty of Iphigenia: 681. Note that (1) the signs of beauty—the bosom, cheeks, and hair—are precisely what are spoiled in mourning, and (2) in Euripides' *Electra* (1023) it is by evoking the "white cheek" of Iphigenia that Clytemnestra sums up the scandal of the sacrifice. Mourning: *Suppliant Women* 87, 979, *Troades* 794, *Andromache* 832–834. The bosom "as of a statue" (*hōs agalmatos*), the source of Polyxena's beauty, evokes in a quite different key the Iphigenia of Aeschylus, jewel of her father's house (*Agamemnon* 208).

39. Note that the very rare association of *mastoi* and *sternon* appears once again in *Hecuba* (424: Polyxena's farewell to the softness of a mother's body).

40. *Hecuba* 208–210 (*nekrōn meta*); 568–570 (modesty).

41. Seneca, *Troades* 195–196, 202, 361–364, 940–944, and 1132 (the account of the sacrifice starts with *thalami more*).

42. Fontinoy ("Le sacrifice nuptial," p. 386) is surprised that the theme of marriage, essential in his view, is so little developed in the account of the sacrifice.

43. Ovid, *Metamorphoses* XIII.451–452, 458–459, 479–480. Euripides as model of Ovid and Seneca: Aelion, *Euripide héritier d'Eschyle,* II, 114, n. 9.

44. In the same book of the *Metamorphoses,* one of the daughters of Orion kills herself "with a courage exceeding her sex, by striking her naked breast" (XIII.693).

45. See G. Arrigoni, *Camilla, Amazzone e sacerdotessa di Diana* (Milan: Cisalpino-Goliardica, 1982), especially pp. 37–38 (right breast of Camilla). Note that Dido likewise strikes herself on the breast (*Aeneid* IV.689). The prose of the historians does not lag behind—Lucretia sinks the blade into her breast (Livy I.48.11), while Virginius strikes his daughter there to save her virginity (Livy III.48.5). Furthermore, it should be pointed out with Devereux (*Tragédie et poésie grecques,* p. 123) that in the Latin texts women generally kill themselves with a sword.

46. The other alternative starts with the words *hyp' auchena* (*Hecuba* 564). For Polyxena the nape is also the classic place for the yoke (*Hecuba* 376).

47. The death of the Amazon Penthesilea was already in archaic, and then in classical times, a *topos* for artistic representation. See, for example, Vermeule, *Aspects of Death,* p. 158; also D. von Bothmer, *Amazons in Greek Art* (London: Clarendon Press, 1957), IV, 2 and pl. LI (Attic black-figure amphora, London B 10).

48. I refer here to the analyses by Giulia Sissa of the women's bodies caught between the upper and lower mouth (*Le corps virginal,* Paris: Vrin, 1986). The cervix can be called *auchēn,* like the neck: see Hippocrates, *Diseases of Women* III.230 (also II.169: *trachēlos,* another name for the neck).

49. Hippocrates, *Diseases of Women* II.127, 151 (as well as 110, 126, 201, 203); on the place of this "hysterical aphonia" within the Hippocratic system of the "silences of the body," see M. G. Ciani, *Le regioni del silenzio* (Padua: Bloom Edizioni, 1983), pp. 157–172.

50. In this connection the Hippocratic treatise *Diseases of Young Girls* is remarkable. I analyze its essential ideas in "Le corps étranglé," p. 216.

51. S. Freud, *Standard Edition,* 24 vols. (London: Hogarth Press, 1953–1974), VII, 3–12.

52. Which, as Monique Schneider pointed out to me, has not always been prepared to bother about women's throats.

53. The figure of Medea is important in this respect, in that she refuses to turn death on herself. Killing, instead of killing herself, she sets a different logic in motion. Faced with it, the spectator no doubt finds it harder to profit from the imagination.

54. I borrow the expression "interference" from P. Vidal-Naquet in *Tragedy and Myth in Ancient Greece.*

55. At least this is so in those plays that, as a result of the Alexandrians' choice, have come down to us in their entirety. These make up the corpus which is available to everyone, and on which we have elected to work. To mention only Euripides, we should remember that, like Phaedra, his Laodamia and his Stheneboea committed suicide in tragedies that have been lost.

56. The famous *Katharsis* (Aristotle, *Poetics* 49b28), according to the translation by R. Dupont-Roc and J. Lallot (Paris, 1980); see their commentary on this passage, pp. 186–193.

Tragic Ways of Killing a Woman

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