

EURIPIDES' *ELECTRA*: THE RECOGNITION SCENE AGAIN*G. W. Bond: *in memoriam*

The issue of the recognition scene in Euripides' *Electra*, if not as 'eternal' as the controversy over the relative dating of the Sophoclean and Euripidean plays of that name, is certainly recurrent. After Eduard Fraenkel's resurrection of the problem at the end of his great commentary on Aeschylus' *Agamemnon*,¹ the contributions of Hugh Lloyd-Jones² and the late Godfrey Bond³ seemed to have settled the case in favour of authenticity. But soon after, David Bain and then M. L. West, G. Basta Donzelli and finally David Kovacs, all writing in the same journal,⁴ raised some new and awkward questions, which, at the very least, require more in the way of answers than they have yet received. The last word, as the saying goes, has not yet been spoken. In this article I try to provide the last word—no, that would be too much to expect, but further reflections on the issue—yes. In particular, I try to set the matter in a wider context, seeking analogies (both dramatic and extra-dramatic) for what, if vv. 518–44 are Euripidean, the playwright may have been aiming at in this particular scene. Such analogies should be important, for scholars have generally by contrast stressed the uniqueness of the recognition scene: 'in the extant remains of Greek tragedy we have indeed nothing', says Bond,⁵ 'comparable to the *Electra* parody'.

I

I begin by stating my views on five important points of detail, before proceeding from this orientation to more general observations. I take it, then, (i) that Bain has established⁶ (as against Bond) that *there is no cross-reference to the disputed passage (518–44) in other, undisputed, parts of the play*. For *πάλαι* at 568 was misinterpreted

*Earlier drafts of this article were kindly read and improved by David Bain, James Diggle, and David Kovacs.

¹ Appendix D of *Aeschylus' Agamemnon* (Oxford, 1950), vol. III, pp. 815–26. Dover's claim (in his Introduction to his commentary on Aristophanes' *Frogs*, p. 37, n. 77) that 'the hypothesis of . . . Fraenkel that Euripides' *Electra* contains an interpolated satire on a passage interpolated in *Choephori* rested on unrealistic assumptions about Athenian attitudes to tragic drama' may well seem (especially in the light of the articles listed in n. 4 below) both premature and complacent.

² 'Some alleged interpolations in Aeschylus' *Choephori* and Euripides' *Electra*', *CQ* 11 (1961), 171–84 = *Academic Papers* [I], pp. 335–52.

³ 'Euripides' parody of Aeschylus', *Hermathena* [H. W. Parke Festschrift] 118 (1974), 1–14.

⁴ *BICS* 24 (1977), 104–16 (Bain); and 27 (1980), 17–22 (West), 109–19 (Basta Donzelli); and 36 (1989), 67–78 (Kovacs). Further bibliographical information in A. Vögler, *Vergleichende Studien zur sophokleischen und euripideischen Elektra* (Heidelberg, 1967) p. 168, n. 107.

⁵ Bond (n. 3), p. 3. So too, for example, Gilbert Murray in his translation of the play (London, 1893), p. 91: 'no parallel for such an artistically ruinous proceeding [i.e. the relevant scene as usually interpreted, that is, as a criticism of Aeschylus] is quoted from Greek tragedy'. Note Kovacs's reminder ([n. 4], p. 68) that 'what is unique in an author is not *ipso facto* spurious'. For a useful survey of recurrent motifs in ancient recognition scenes in general see Cropp's commentary on Eur. *El.* 487–698 (pp. 134f.). Terence Cave, *Recognitions: A Study in Poetics* (Oxford, 1988) examines the theme in the widest possible context.

⁶ Bain (n. 4), pp. 105f.

by Bond,⁷ and *πάλαι δέδορκα· μὴ σύ γ' οὐκέτ' εἶ φρονεῖς*; need not, therefore, hark back to 524 *οὐκ ἄξι' ἀνδρός, ὃ γέρον, σοφοῦ λέγεις*. And further, the mention of *σύμβολα* at 577f. (*ἀλλ' οὐκέτ', ὃ γεραιέ· συμβόλοισι γὰρ | τοῖς σοῖς πέπεισμαι θυμόν*) can refer solely to the scar mentioned in 573, rather than to the three other tokens of recognition (lock, footprints, and garment) adduced in the passage under dispute. Again, the visit to the tomb made by the old man and mentioned by him at 510 does not necessarily imply these three tokens, for Greek tragedy sometimes defeats carefully engendered audience expectation, preparing us for what will *not* happen.⁸ As Bain puts it, 'an allusion . . . to a traditional element of the legend which will have no function in the effecting of the recognition' could be explicable as a means of emphasizing that 'in this case the dramatist is innovating'. So there are no cross-references elsewhere in the play to 518–44, though this fact, of course, does not *in se* constitute an argument against their authenticity, compatible with such a conclusion though it be.

On the other hand, (ii) *the passages immediately before and after the disputed lines, 503–17 and 545–6, do not entail suspicion of the portion that lies between them*. These passages are textually insecure, as Bain's and Kovacs's careful analysis shows, but their conclusions are compatible with the genuineness of 518–44.⁹ If we are troubled by the repetition of the verb *θαυμάζω* at such close quarters and with a somewhat different meaning in 516 and 519 (*καθαύμασ', ὦ παῖ, τίς ποτ' ἀνθρώπων ἔτλη | πρὸς τύμβον ἔλθειν . . . | . . . | μολὼν δ' ἐθαύμασ' ἄθλιον τύμβον πατρός*) we can always, like West,¹⁰ approve Canter's *ἐτίμησ'* in the second place and explain the corruption as due to 'a mechanical repetition from 516'. Electra's 545–6 are more complex: *ἀλλ' ἢ τις αὐτοῦ τάφον ἐποικτίρας ξένος | †ἐκείρατ' ἢ τῇσδε σκοποῦς λαβὼν χθονός†*. Diggle's *app. crit.* mentions as remedy *σκοποῦς λαθὼν ἐκείρατ' ἢ τῇσδε χθονός* by Victorius and Elmsley (the latter retaining *λαβὼν*) with Pierson's *ἢ 'κ τῇσδε χθονός* appended as a further slight improvement. If like Bain (and, on this occasion, West too) we think that any convincing emendation still leaves 545–6 looking suspiciously like a doublet of the old man's 518–19 (*ἀλλ' ἢ λθ' ἴσως που σὸς κασίγνητος λάθραι, | μολὼν δ' ἐτίμησ' ἄθλιον τύμβον πατρός*) we can always follow Dindorf in deleting the two lines.¹¹

Kovacs has examined 'the beginning and end of the disputed passage' in the broader sense of those terms, and discovered alarming anomalies that (for him) reinforce Bain's doubts. The old man is clearly weeping as he enters (cf. 501–2) and at 503ff. Electra asks him why. The text hereabouts is certainly corrupt: *Λ's μὼν τὰμὰ διὰ χρόνου σ' ἀνέμνησαν κακά* at 504 may either be emended (*ἀνέμνησεν* Dobree, *κακῶν* Diggle), deleted (M. J. Cropp *ap.* Kovacs, with a consequent reaccenting of 505's *ἦ* as *ῆ*), or supplemented (Kovacs, who supposes that some such line as *οἰκός τε φαῦλος καὶ πέπλων ἐμὼν ῥάκη* has fallen out after it). The Old Man's answer to the question is equally problematic and Kovacs's solution here too is to suppose a lacuna after 508.

⁷ For 'πάλαι used of immediately preceding events' see, for example, Soph. *Tr.* 1121 with my note ad loc.

⁸ For Euripidean examples of this, see F. Solmsen, *Hermes* 69 (1934) 391ff. = *Kl. Schr.* 1. 159ff. Compare the false anticipation of Aegisthus' murder at Aesch. *Cho.* 554ff. discussed below in Section III. Pindar sometimes leads us to expect the traditional form of the myth and then presents us with a revised version (e.g. *Pyth.* 3.27ff.), thus offering two incompatible versions of the same story (cf. n. 54 below).

⁹ Bain (n. 4), pp. 106–9; Kovacs (n. 4), pp. 70–7 respectively.

¹⁰ West (n. 4), p. 21, n. 22.

¹¹ But there are further difficulties: see n. 14 below.

His summary of the impression created by the lines leading up to 518ff. (which he claims,¹² I think rightly, to be 'independent of the truth or falsity' of both his detections of a lacuna) is that

If Euripides wrote a scene in which he intended to include the passage in which the Old Man argues tenaciously for Orestes as the bringer of the offerings, we would expect either that this point of view would affect his mood as he comes on or that he would realise suddenly in the course of describing the offerings at the tomb just what they must mean.

Now Kovacs thinks both possibilities are ruled out. The first one, certainly: there is insufficient evidence of excitement or appreciation of the implications of the sacrifice-laden tomb on the old man's part. But what of the second possibility? Kovacs flatly states that 'the Old Man shows no signs of realising *inter narrandum* the possible significance of what he is saying', and then moves on. But *prima facie* the disputed text *does* contain such a sign, for after ruling out the possibility that 'some Argive' brought the offerings, the old man proceeds, as if he had just thought of the possibility, ἀλλ' ἦλθ' ἵσως που σὸς κασίγνητος λάθραι κτλ. and quickly urges the first of his three tests.

Kovacs also thinks that 545–52 constitute 'evidence that' the old man 'still has no thought of' the possibility, in spite of the discussion in the disputed passage. When he asks to see the strangers at 547–52, he gives no indication that he suspects one of them to be Orestes, and his wish to question them σοῦ κασιγνήτου πέρι (548) 'implies that he thinks they have correct information to give him and that they are who they claim to be, Orestes' emissaries. That implies, of course, that Orestes is still abroad: no need for emissaries if he has come in person.' But, as with the previous argument, this approach rather prematurely overlooks the evidence of the (admittedly, at this early stage, still disputed) intervening passage. In this the old man has been 'sat upon' on three successive occasions, one for each of the three abortive tokens, by the formidable Electra. Small wonder if the poor old fellow, having been thrice contradicted, gives up the effort to convince,¹³ and asks Electra the whereabouts of her guests in language that does *not* suggest he is still harbouring suspicions that her brother has returned.¹⁴ And such a question economically evokes the entry formula of 549.

¹² Kovacs (n. 4), p. 72.

¹³ I am using somewhat flippant language here, of course, in an attempt to emphasize the point I am making. But that the Old Man in particular and this portion of the *Electra* in general have comic affinities seems clear. See, for example, Bond (n. 3), pp. 10f. I note in passing that Electra's apparent demolition of the Old Man's inferences from offerings at the tomb, inferences the sequel shows to be perfectly correct, would, if genuine, form a parallel to vv. 871ff. of Sophocles' *Electra*. In that scene, Chrysothemis brings her sister news of fresh libations, garlands, and a lock of hair at their father's tomb, and infers Orestes' return. Electra, with far more apparent justification than her Euripidean counterpart (since she has just heard the Paedagogus' lying account of their brother's death) rejects any such outcome, but, ironically, Chrysothemis is right. Both passages display a formidable heroine easily but erroneously quashing the entirely legitimate deductions of a weaker, secondary figure, and it would be extremely plausible if one passage were inspired by a wish to contrast with the other. That generalization has, of course, been extended to the entire two dramas (Euripides bringing out more explicitly than Sophocles the moral dilemmas of matricide; or Sophocles choosing to handle them more implicitly), though ignorance of their relative dating precludes a definitive interpretation. (For a recent assessment of the differences between the Euripidean and Sophoclean treatments see, for example, J. W. Halporn, *HSCP* 87 [1983], 102f.)

¹⁴ Kovacs's penetrating analysis ([n. 4], pp. 75–7) of the difficulties (cf. n. 11 above) in 545ff. actually has the surprising result of undermining the point he makes about the Old Man's attitude in 547ff. He argues that the likeliest solution for 545–6 is slight emendation of, and another lacuna after, 546, so that Electra completed an expression of the possibility that 'one of the ξένοι sent by

Of course these arguments will fall, and Kovacs's be vindicated, if our further search uncovers evidence against 518–44. All I wish to stress at this stage is that, as with (i) above, the phenomena considered are compatible with, but not in themselves indicative of, spuriousness.

I further believe (iii) that Bond is right in arguing that *Euripides' supposed 'unfairness' to Aeschylus in misrepresenting his use of the three tokens of recognition would be inevitable, given the type of criticism he is making*. Bond¹⁵ rightly asks 'What matter if . . . the *Choephoroi* motif [involving the lock of hair] had been perverted? Such perversion is surely the stuff of . . . parody and burlesque', and goes on to observe that 'An element of misrepresentation or exaggeration is normal in any parody' (he might have added that it is not unknown even in one scholar's critique of another's work . . .), and 'burlesque, as it thrives on misrepresentation, is not worried overmuch about verisimilitude.' It is possible to parallel this type of misrepresentation from the work of another poet¹⁶ seeking to undermine a traditional myth. It was unnecessary, then, for West¹⁷ to seek to 'mitigate the unfairness of Euripides' attack on his predecessor' by suggesting that at the start of *Cho.* Aeschylus had presented the ground by Agamemnon's tomb as no less stony than Euripides' Electra alleges (534); or by supposing that misrepresentation of the ὕψασμα as a full-size garment originated with the anonymous individual who supervised the recent revival of Aeschylus' *Oresteia* which underlies the criticism in question.

This brings me to the penultimate point in this initial orientation. For in spite of the reservation just expressed I follow West (and, for example, Bond)¹⁸ in supposing that (iv) *Euripides' critique was given extra point by a revival of Aeschylus' Oresteia that was*

Orestes took pity on Agamemnon's tomb and cut his own hair, or perhaps . . . brought an offering of hair to this land from Orestes'. But if 545ff. originally did run along those lines, then Electra's language is quite incompatible with the notion that Orestes has returned, and this would constitute another reason for the Old Man not to hint at that notion in what he says at 547ff.

¹⁵ Bond (n. 3), p. 6. The following quotations are from p. 8. Observe that Mastronarde in his note on Eur. *Phoen.* 751–2 (a passage often compared to ours: see below, p. 396) expresses the view that the criticism of Aeschylus in that couplet is 'captious' to a degree. I presume this was the point intended by Porson in one of the earliest examples extant of this interpretation of the passage, his 1792 *Praelectio in Euripidem*: 'hunc locum [i.e. *S.C.T.* 369ff.] cum imitari se posse non speraret Euripides, frigidio ioco in *Phoenissis* irridet' (*Adversaria* [Cambridge, 1812], p. 7).

¹⁶ I refer to Pindar, who in *Olympian* 1 notoriously revises the traditional version of the myth of Pelops which represented that hero as served up as a meal for the gods by his father Tantalus. The gods were at first ignorant of the fact, and, when they realized it, refused to eat, and Pelops was restored to life in a magic cauldron (minus a shoulder, absent-mindedly eaten by the grieving Demeter). To explain away this traditional version, Pindar ingeniously invents the idea that it was concocted by neighbours jealous of the truth (i.e. that Pelops had been abducted by Poseidon). But the language Pindar uses when he summarizes the neighbours' concocted tale is extraordinary (*Ol.* 1.47ff.): ἔννεπε κρυφαῖ τις αὐτίκα φθονερῶν γειτόνων, | ὕδατος ὅτι τε πυρὶ ζέουσιν εἰς ἀκμὴν | μαχαίραι τάμον κατὰ μέλη, | τραπέζαισι τ' ἀμφὶ δεύτατα κρεῶν | σέθεν διεδάσαντο καὶ φάγον. || ἐμοὶ δ' ἄπορα γαστρίμαργον μακάρων τιν' εἰπεῖν· ἀφίσταμαι. In these lines the gods consciously devour Pelops as an act of pure gourmandise (τάμον [49], διεδάσαντο and φάγον [51]: see Gerber's commentary ad locc., where the verbs in question are said to respectively 'exaggerate', 'enhance', and 'emphasize' the scene's horror) and note especially the implications of ἀμφὶ δεύτατα (50) and γαστρίμαργον ('glutton' [52]): again see Gerber's commentary ad locc. Pindar is here demolishing, not the traditional version, but an artificially heightened form of it, in which the gods are mere gluttons. And he does this because it is a good rhetorical device to exaggerate the incredibility of an opponent's position, just as Euripides would be doing in the disputed passage, and actually does (or makes Iphigeneia do) with the very myth just cited for comparison at *I.T.* 385ff. (cf. esp. 386–8: ἐγὼ μὲν οὖν | τὰ Ταντάλου θεοῖσιν ἐσιτάματα | ἀπίστα κρίνω, παιδὸς ἥσθηται βορᾷ).

¹⁷ West (n. 4), p. 20.

¹⁸ West as cited in the previous note; Bond (n. 3), p. 8.

still fresh in his audience's memory. Aristophanes' *Clouds* 534–6 is usually interpreted as an allusion to this revival.¹⁹ Bain resists this interpretation in the Appendix to his article ('Revivals of Aeschylus in the fifth century B.C.') in a manner which, like West, I find characterized by 'special pleading'. However, rather than indulge in name-calling from behind another's shield, I prefer to adduce counter-arguments from a different angle. Bain²⁰ finds 'the strongest evidence for a revival of the *Oresteia* in the period shortly before the first production of Euripides' *Electra* . . .' to be the very passage which is under dispute. But as I shall show below under Section IV, lines 671–93 of our play are very plausibly interpreted as a retort on Euripides' part to the Κομμός of the *Choephoroi*. A striking feature of that passage is Orestes' outburst at 438, *ἐπειτ' ἐγὼ νοσφίσας ὁλοίμην*, long misinterpreted as a poignant *cri de coeur* from a hero wracked by prospective guilt at his act of matricide, now more coolly seen as a typical Greek expression of eagerness to achieve a goal.²¹ It is unlikely to be a coincidence that, shortly before 671ff. of the *Electra*, we find a similar phrase in the context of the anticipated death of Clytemnestra, *εἰ γὰρ θάνοιμι τοῦτ' ἰδὼν ἐγὼ ποτε*, but this time set in the mouth of the Old Man (663). I find it hard not to see some satirical intent on Euripides' part here. As Denniston observed²² of an earlier passage of the play: 'Euripides seems to be intentionally making his hero cut a poor figure. He is helpless himself, throws himself on the resourcefulness of the Old Man, and then is piqued at having to play a subordinate role.' One may detect a similar point to 651ff. Orestes, having delivered himself of the confident-seeming *ἔσται τάδ'* at the start of 650, adds the helpless question *εὐρίσκεῖς δὲ μητρὶ πῶς φόνον;* Electra answers by turning to the Old Man (*λέγ'*, *ὦ γεραιέ, τάδε Κλυταιμῆστραι μολών*) and the two latter characters take up the stichomythia while Orestes subsides into silence until roused by Electra's *σὸν ἔργον ἦδη· πρόσθεν εἰληχας φόνου* (668), to which he retorts, again not very positively, *στείχοιμ' ἄν, εἴ τις ἡγεμὼν γίγνοιθ' ὁδοῦ*. In this context, the placing of the formula of eager anticipation in the mouth of the Old Man rather than Orestes seems a wry comment on the hero's inadequacy. But it is worth stressing that such a detailed point of phrasing presupposes a very close awareness of the text (and, as it were, texture) of the *Choephoroi*. This would most naturally, I believe, be explained by the hypothesis of a recent revival of the *Oresteia*. Certainly the 'allusiveness' which Bain²³ complains about in the disputed recognition scene pales into insignificance when set beside the effect of 663.

Finally, (v) I agree with West²⁴ that '*nothing in the language has been objected to as*

¹⁹ See especially H.-J. Newiger, *Hermes* 89 (1961), 422ff. These considerations are not taken into account by Hutchinson (in the Introduction to his commentary on Aesch. *S.C.T.* pp. xliif. [*sic* rather than the misprinted reference s.v. 'revivals' in the General Index]) in his brisk denial of fifth-century Aeschylean revivals.

²⁰ Bain (n. 4), p. 110.

²¹ See, for example, Lloyd-Jones, *JHS* 92 (1972), 195 = *Academic Papers* [I], pp. 281f. and Sier's and Garvie's commentaries ad loc. Cf. Cropp on Eur. *El.* 281.

²² In his commentary on 620. See too his Introduction, p. xxvii: 'When it comes to forming a plan, he is bankrupt himself, and all constructive counsel has to come from his sister and the Old Man.' At *El.* 281 the heroine herself says *θάνοιμι μητρὸς αἵμ' ἐπισφάξας' ἐμῆς* (her as yet unrecognized brother ironically replies *εἴθ' ἦν Ὀρέστης πλησίον κλύων τάδε*) so within the play as a whole it is only Orestes, of the relevant three figures, who fails to express thus his eagerness for the deed.

²³ Bain (n. 4), p. 111. Here is something even more allusive: what I have called 'the confident-seeming *ἔσται τάδ'*' at Eur. *El.* 650, recalls Orestes' *ἔσται* (similarly at line-start) in Aesch. *Cho.* 514, where the contrasting context underlines the hero's resourcefulness and eagerness to act.

²⁴ West (n. 4), p. 19. Cf. Kovacs (n. 4), p. 68: 'the lines . . . are written in flawless tragic trimeters, and anyone who tried to show that they could not be by Euripides on the basis of their style would soon cover himself with disgrace'.

un-Euripidean: can the same be said of any other interpolated passage of comparable length? This is a very important observation.

II

I wish to begin my account of general considerations with another very important perception by West. We should preface it with the reminder that, in *any* treatment of the Orestes story, the two most important elements are likely to be his recognition by his sister; and his killing of his mother and of Aegisthus. Now West observes²⁵ that, in Euripides' treatment,

the mechanism of Orestes' recognition is governed by the setting of the play. Having elected to locate the action at an isolated country cottage, Euripides is precluded from using at least two of the three tokens that are decisive in the *Choephoroi*, the lock of hair laid on Agamemnon's grave-mound and the footprints nearby. The recognition must be effected on stage, and the hair and the footprints cannot be brought there. . . . The economy of the play does not allow Electra herself to visit the grave.

One might further add (what was not relevant for West's own purposes) that the second plot-element mentioned above, the killing of Clytemnestra and Aegisthus, is also governed by Euripides' unorthodox setting. Since the scene is far from the royal palace, neither of the pair can be killed there, the original (and most obvious) locale. Instead, Aegisthus is struck down at a sacrifice and Clytemnestra must be lured deceitfully to the Farmer's dwelling. This is important, since their modes of death are among those aspects that most contribute to the play's particular colour and tone. As Denniston observes,²⁶ 'it is perhaps significant that both Clytemnestra and Aegisthus expose themselves to a murderous attack by a good action, Clytemnestra by visiting her daughter in childbed, Aegisthus by extending hospitality to strangers'.

This avoidance of the obvious, this preference for the complicated, the refined, and the unexpected in matters of plot and setting, is often explained in terms of the relative *lateness* of Euripides as a dramatist. The Sophoclean *Electra* is notoriously undatable, but even leaving it out of account, the topic of Euripides' play will have already been familiar from the *Oresteia* of Aeschylus and doubtless several other now unknown Greek tragedians.²⁷ A parallel may be drawn with Sophocles' *Philoctetes* (the full significance of this parallel will only become clearer further on). Thanks to Dio Chrysostom, *Oration* 52²⁸ we can say for sure (as we cannot for the Euripidean *Electra*) that Sophocles' treatment of the Philoctetes theme postdated not only Aeschylus' but also that of the third of the great Attic tragedians. And this has coloured its handling of plot and locale. Echoing West's words, we may say that 'The mechanism of Philoctetes' consent to go to Troy is governed by the setting of the play. Having elected to locate the action on an uninhabited island, and dispensing with Aeschylus' and Euripides' ideas that in various ways Philoctetes could fail to recognise Odysseus, Sophocles is precluded from having Odysseus directly intrigue against Philoctetes, and the crucial role of Neoptolemus as intermediary is necessitated.' But more of this later (p. 399).

²⁵ West (n. 4), p. 17.

²⁶ Denniston (n. 22), p. xxx.

²⁷ H. J. Mette's *Urkunden dramatischer Aufführungen in Griechenland* (Berlin, 1977), Index s.v. 'Tragödien und Satyrspiele' (pp. 209–11) provides no suitable names.

²⁸ Cf. the translation and notes provided by D. A. Russell in Russell and Winterbottom, *Ancient Literary Criticism* (Oxford, 1972), pp. 504ff.

III

I come now to my promise to set Euripides' recognition scene in a wider context and cite analogies both dramatic and extra-dramatic for what we would be faced with if *El.* 518–44 were authentic. Of course, scholars have already done this to a certain extent. I think in particular of Bond's valuable citation²⁹ of what might be called initially abortive deliberation scenes in the *IT*, the *Ion* and the *Helen*. All three dramas exhibit a pattern of the wrong method of deliberation followed by the right one. As Bond³⁰ puts it, in 'several Euripidean plotting scenes, [we find] the proposal and rejection of various impossible plans, ἀδύνατα, until the right method is evolved'. Thus in *Hel.* 1032ff. two possibilities for escape are raised and rejected by Menelaus and his wife, and a third is criticized but (in duly refined form) approved and put into operation. Bond concludes that 'it seems probable that Euripides was interested not merely in showing realistically how a plot is evolved but also in the dramatic possibilities of the rival plots suggested'. A further aspect of this scheme might be expressed as follows: the previously raised and rejected plans *emphasize by contrast* (almost act as 'foils' to) the plan that is finally approved, in a way that is curiously reminiscent of the operation of the rhetorical device known as the *Priamel*.³¹

We encounter a similar process elsewhere in Greek tragedy. For instance, at Aesch. *Cho.* 554ff., Orestes anticipates the circumstances in which he will murder Aegisthus: he will infiltrate the palace disguised as a Phocian, find Aegisthus seated on the throne he has usurped, and strike him down. In fact the expectations carefully nurtured by this account are totally defeated: Aegisthus is not at home and has to be summoned from the countryside by the Nurse. But the series of events merely (and erroneously) anticipated by Orestes in the *Choephoroi* is depicted on several vases that pre-date the *Oresteia* of Aeschylus, and the likeliest explanation is that Stesichorus' *Oresteia* had presented his hero as killing Aegisthus on his throne.³² This would already be quite similar to one of the ways in which the *Electra*'s recognition scene could be interpreted as working (pre-existing way of handling material raised but rejected in favour of poet's novel treatment, which is thereby drawn all the more forcefully to audience's attention). Something analogous seems to be attested in Euripides' *Bacchae*. In the prologue and elsewhere in that play, we are given the misleading impression that the climactic encounter of Pentheus and Dionysus will take the form of a pitched battle between the two sides. Once more, external evidence (again vase-paintings, which show *Bacchae* clad in armour, but this time also the phrasing of Aesch. *Eum.* 25–6 ἐξ οὗτε Βάκχαις ἐστρατήγησεν θεός, | λαγῶ δίκην Πενθεῖ καταρράψας μόρον) suggest that in Aeschylus' *Lycurgus* trilogy this formal battle was precisely what happened.³³ Again Euripides would seem to be drawing attention to his own novel treatment by contrasting it with an earlier, Aeschylean, handling of the same theme.

²⁹ Bond (n. 4), pp. 9f. following in the footsteps of W. Ludwig's *Sapheneia*.

³⁰ Bond (n. 4), pp. 9f. The following quotation is from pp. 11f.

³¹ For which see, for instance, my commentary on Soph. *Tr.* 498ff.

³² See, for example, Th. Zielinski, *Tragodumenon libri tres* (Cracow, 1925), pp. 73f., R. D. Dawe, *PCPS* 9 (1963), 55f.

³³ See in particular Zielinski (n. 32), pp. 68–70 and more recently J. March, *BICS* 36 (1989), 33ff., summarized in her contribution to *Euripides, Women and Sexuality* (London, 1990), pp. 49ff. Greek literature's tendency to emphasize a given presentation by contrasting it with an alternative, rejected, one emerges very clearly from *Il.* 24.22ff., where the gods are debating how to rescue Hector's corpse. The possibility of sending Hermes to steal it is raised (v. 24) but dismissed by Zeus (v. 71). The stratagem is obviously Homer's *ad hoc* invention to emphasize the course of action that is actually decided on (and which does, in a different way, involve Hermes).

IV

The above instances come quite close to what some scholars who deem *El.* 518–44 genuine have taken to be the way in which it operates. However, I anticipate that most readers will think they do not come close enough. In particular the (perhaps unreasonable) *criticism* of an earlier treatment which colours the *Electra*'s passage is missing from them. But here too scholars believe they have detected something comparable elsewhere in Euripides. For instance, Bond states³⁴ that 'smaller pieces of dramatic criticism have been rightly detected in Euripides, including two hits at the *Septem*', to wit *Suppl.* 846ff. and *Phoen.* 751f. The first of these passages seems to me formally different from the second and others I shall shortly be citing and to fall into a separate category, so I set it aside³⁵ and begin with the second, which has frequently been cited by other scholars as relevant. The context is that 'Eteocles', as Bond³⁶ puts it, 'makes several rash suggestions for defeating the enemy before Creon tells him to station a champion at each of the gates of Thebes'. Eteocles sees this is finally the right solution.

(i) Eur. *Phoen.* 748–53

ἔσται τάδ'· ἔλθων ἐπτάπυργον ἐς †πόλιν†
τάξω λοχαγούς πρὸς πύλαισιν, ὡς λέγεις,
ἴσους ἴσοισι πολεμίοισιν ἀντιθείς.
ὄνομα δ' ἐκάστου διατριβὴ πολλὴ λέγειν,
ἐχθρῶν ὑπ' αὐτοῖς τείχεσιν καθημένων.
ἀλλ' εἴμ', ὅπως αἶν μὴ καταργῶμεν χεῖρα.

The orthodox interpretation³⁷ of 751f. here is that they are a hit against Aeschylus' *Seven against Thebes*, specifically the vast scene that dominates the centre of that drama, in which Eteocles names and despatches each of his seven champions to their respective gates (*S.C.T.* 369–685): Euripides finds it ridiculous that at such a time of crisis, with the enemy camped before the very walls, there should be any such lengthy scene, and his Eteocles acts with speed.³⁸ The interpretation seems *prima facie* plausible, but it cannot be judged in isolation. We must first examine analogous scenes, from Euripides and elsewhere, in which a similar effect seems to be aimed at.

In our next example, Orestes is just about to set off with Pylades to attack Helen and Hermione. Before he goes, he finds it expedient to pray to the dead Agamemnon.

³⁴ Bond (n. 4), p. 3.

³⁵ See Appendix below.

³⁶ Bond (n. 3), p. 12.

³⁷ So generally accepted is this view that doxography would be pointless. Mastronarde in his commentary *ad loc.* observes that 'there is certainly an intertextual allusion' to Aeschylus' *S.C.T.*, though he is admirably cautious as to whether the tone is intended as 'polite . . . complimentary . . . or sarcastic' (see below, p. 401) and he observes that any criticism intended must be 'captious at best' (cf. n. 15 above) 'since Aeschylus himself marks the suspension of action necessary for the pairs of speeches at the outset of the sequence . . . and the symbolic import of the scene obviously outweighs any interest in chronological realism'. He also observes that the lines also possess a 'local meaning', conveying, for example, Eteocles' impatience with military planning.

³⁸ ἀλλ' εἴμι at 753 is somewhat peculiar (see Mastronarde *ad loc.*), because utterers of this phrase in Greek tragedy almost invariably leave the stage very soon afterwards and Eteocles, in the text as it stands, does not. One consideration that might be invoked in explanation is that in other scenes, to be considered shortly, where Aeschylean leisureliness is contrasted with Euripidean speed, a speaker cuts proceedings short with some such phrase as *στεῖχειν δ' ἀκμή* (*El.* 684) or *πρὸς ἔργον ἐξορμώμεθα* (*Or.* 1240), to which ἀλλ' εἴμι might be thought equivalent.

(ii) Eur. *Or.* 1225–42

ὦ δῶμα ναίων νυκτὸς ὀρφναίας πάτερ,
καλεῖ σ' Ὀρέστης παῖς σὸς ἐπικούρον μολεῖν
τοῖς δεομένοισι. διὰ σέ γάρ πάσχω τάλας
ἀδίκως κτλ.

And so on, until at 1231ff. Electra, and then Pylades, intervene:

— ὦ πάτερ, ἰκοῦ δῆτ', εἰ κλύεις ἔσω χθονός
τέκνων καλούντων, οἱ σέθεν θνήσκουσ' ὕπερ.
— ὦ συγγένεια πατρὸς ἐμοῦ, κάμας λιτάς,
Ἀγάμεμνον, εἰσάκουσον· ἔκωσον τέκνα.

The trio then proceed with their prayer in the sequence Orestes–Electra–Pylades (twice), but the third time round Pylades brings the proceedings to a close (1240–3):

παύσασθε, καὶ πρὸς ἔργον ἐξορμώμεθα.
εἵπερ γὰρ εἴσω γῆς ἀκοντίζουσ' ἀραί,
κλύει.

It is hard not to conclude that here too Euripides is reacting against a vast and central Aeschylean set-piece, in this case the *Oresteia*'s *Κομμός* (*Cho.* 306–478),³⁹ where a somewhat differently constituted trio (Orestes, Electra, and the chorus) appealed to Agamemnon's ghost⁴⁰ before Orestes and Pylades set off to attack Clytemnestra. The passage shares with (i) above a sense of greater urgency and compression in comparison with the Aeschylean prototype.

The next example⁴¹ has already been alluded to (above, p. 393). Another trio is involved⁴² (Orestes, Electra, Old Man, in that order), the murders of Aegisthus and Clytemnestra are impending, and again various deities need to be invoked if the enterprise is to succeed. First of all Zeus.

³⁹ Willink's commentary on 1225–8 compares *El.* 671ff. and *Cho.* 479ff., while noticing the differences in formal structure between the three passages (irregular in *Cho.*, stichomythic in *El.*, antilabic in the case of the *Orestes*). It might be argued that this formal differentiation is another form of 'literary criticism' (see below, n. 54) on Euripides' part: in other words, Euripides here transposes Aeschylean lyric (of an extraordinarily interwoven complexity) into terser iambic trimeters, just as he does the reverse at *El.* 1177ff. *ὦ Γᾶ καὶ Ζεῦ πανδερκέτα | βροτῶν, ἴδετε τὰδ' ἔργα φόνια μυσάρᾳ, δίγωνα σώματ' ἐν | †χθονὶ κεμμένα πλαγαῖ† | χερὸς ὑπ' ἐμᾶς, ἄποιν' ἐμῶν | πημάτων < > vis-à-vis *Cho.* 983ff. ἐκτείναντ' αὐτὸ καὶ κύκλωι παρασταδόν | στέγαστρον ἀνδρὸς δεῖξαθ', ὡς ἴδῃ πατήρ | οὐχ οὐμός ἀλλ' ὁ πάντ' ἐποπτεύων τὰδε | {Ἥλιος, ἀναγνα μητρὸς ἔργα τῆς ἐμῆς, del. Barrett} | ὡς ἂν παρῇ μοι μάρτυς ἐν δίκῃ ποτέ | ὡς τόνδ' ἐγὼ μετῆλθον ἐνδίκῳ μόρον | τὸν μητρὸς (note, in passing, how Euripides' reworking here confirms Barrett's deletion of *Cho.* 994 (see West, *Studies in Aeschylus* [Stuttgart, 1990], p. 262)). Similarly, Eur. *Troades* 451ff. transposes into trochaic tetrameters the iambic trimeters of Cassandra at Aesch. *Ag.* 1264ff. One might compare the archaic technique of *metaphrasis*, whereby epic hexameters and the like were transposed into different metres and dialect by later poets (cf. Kassel, *ZPE* 42 (1981), 11ff. = *Kl. Schr.* pp. 121ff.).*

⁴⁰ It may not be irrelevant (see above, n. 22, on *El.* 663) that, shortly before the reworking of the *Κομμός* at 1225ff., Orestes' exclamation ὦ φίλτατ', εἰ γὰρ τοῦτο καθάνομι' ἰδὼν (1100) represents another abuse of the Aeschylean motif. Here it is returned to Orestes; applied, however, not to his mother's impending death, but to the prospect of Menelaus' discomfiture.

⁴¹ 'One could but need not see allusion to Aeschylus at *El.* 671ff.', wrote Winnington-Ingram, *Arethusa* 2 (1969), 139, n. 19.

⁴² On the symmetrical division of the passage into groups of three lines, see Denniston's commentary on 671–83. It presupposes a large number of conjectured changes of speaker (argued against by Kovacs, *TAPA* 117 [1987], 263ff.).

(iii) Eur. *El.* 671–93

- ὦ Ζεῦ πατρώϊε καὶ τροπαῖ' ἐχθρῶν ἐμῶν.
- οἴκτιρέ γ' ἡμᾶς· οἴκτρα γὰρ πεπόνθαμεν.
- οἴκτιρε δῆτα σοῦ γε φύντας ἐκγόνους.

At 677 Orestes turns the prayer to his father Agamemnon:

- σύ τ' ὦ κάτω γῆς ἀνοσίως οἰκῶν πάτερ
- καὶ Γαῖ' ἀνασσα, χεῖρας ἦι δίδωμ' ἐμᾶς
- ἄμυν' ἄμυνε τοῖσδε φιλτάτοις τέκνοις.

And finally, after a last appeal to Agamemnon from Orestes, the Old Man brings the proceedings to a close (684) and Electra provides the coda:

- ἤκουσας, ὦ δειν' ἐξ ἐμῆς μητρὸς παθῶν; 682
- πάντ', οἶδ', ἀκούει τάδε πατήρ· στείχειν δ' ἀκμή. 684
- πάντ', οἶδα· πρὸς τὰδ' ἄνδρα γίγνεσθαι σε χρή. 693

The similarities with (ii) are unmistakable, as is the relationship to the *Choephoroi's* Κομμός. The latter is even closer here than in (ii), for the context is the same (the impending murder of Clytemnestra, rather than Helen). The Old Man here assumes Pylades' role (in [iii]) of the character who brings the prayers to a far speedier conclusion than was allowed in Aeschylus' treatment. In each case the closing formula (with its implicit message: 'action will speak louder than words') is remarkably similar: Pylades' πρὸς ἔργον ἐξορμώμεθα (1240) ≈ the Old Man's στείχειν δ' ἀκμή (684).

It is perhaps worth stressing that this technique of implicit criticism of Aeschylus is not restricted to Euripides. There is something analogous in the prologue of Sophocles' *Electra*.⁴³ towards the end of this, Electra's cry of woe is heard off-stage (77). In a similar portion of the *Choephoroi's* prologue (20ff.), Orestes turned to his friend and said Πυλάδη, σταθῶμεν ἐκποδῶν, ὡς ἂν σαφῶς | μάθω γυναικῶν ἧτις ἦδε προστροπή. The *parodos* ensues, after which Electra addresses the chorus as δμωαὶ γυναικες (84). In the Sophoclean treatment, by contrast, the Paedagogus thinks Electra's cry of woe belongs to some handmaid (78–9 καὶ μὴν θυρῶν ἔδοξα προσπόλων τινὸς | ὑποστενούσης ἔνδον αἰσθέσθαι, τέκνον). Orestes' response is ἄρ' ἐστὶν ἡ δύστηνος Ἥλέκτρα; θέλεις | μείνωμεν αὐτοῦ κάπακούσωμεν γόωνε (80–1) to which the Paedagogus indignantly replies (82–4) ἦκιστα. μηδὲν πρόσθεν ἢ τὰ Λοξίου | πειρώμεθ' ἔρδειν ἀπὸ τῶνδ' ἀρχηγετεῖν, | πατρὸς χέοντες λουτρά κτλ. Here the Paedagogus occupies the chivvying role undertaken by Euripides' Old Man in *Electra* and Pylades in *Orestes*. He too has a formula for breaking off speech or inactivity in favour of action: πειρώμεθ' ἔρδειν (83) ≈ πρὸς ἔργον ἐξορμώμεθα (*Or.* 1240). Cf. *El.* 22 οὐκέτ' ὀκνεῖν καιρὸς, ἀλλ' ἔργων ἀκμή ≈ στείχειν δ' ἀκμή in Eur. *El.* 684.

We may end with another Sophoclean instance, this time much more allusive and

⁴³ Cf. Tycho von Wilamowitz, *Die dramatische Technik des Sophokles* (Berlin, 1917), pp. 168f.; Ed. Fraenkel, *Beobachtungen zu Aristophanes* (Rome, 1962), p. 22, n. 1 (cf. *Due seminari Romani di Eduard Fraenkel* [Rome, 1977], p. 47). Like Fraenkel and, for example, Lloyd-Jones and Wilson in their OCT (cf. *Sophoclea* ad loc. [p. 44]) I follow the MSS's distribution of the lines in question. Nauck's attribution of 80–1 to the Paedagogus and of 82–5 to Orestes would, if correct, sharpen the contrast with the *Choephoroi's* opening scene: there Orestes insists on spending time eavesdropping on his sister's lament; here he himself would be taking the lead in putting action before such wasting of time.

compressed,⁴⁴ from the prologue of the *Philoctetes*. Having encapsulated his earlier abandonment of the titular hero on Lemnos in the play's opening (and enormous) sentence, Odysseus then breaks off (11–14): ἀλλὰ ταῦτα μὲν τί δεῖ | λέγειν; ἀκμὴ γὰρ οὐ μακρῶν ἡμῖν λόγων, | μὴ καὶ μάθῃ μ' ἤκοντα κακχέω τὸ πᾶν | σόφισμα τῷ νιν αὐτίχ' αἰρήσειν δοκῶ. In his commentary on 12's μακρῶν . . . λόγων, Jebb ingeniously and sensitively (if rather speculatively) inferred that the phrase was 'possibly a covert criticism on the length of the prologue of some previous *Philoctetes*'. In the light of the prologue to Sophocles' *Electra* we might speculate still further that it was Aeschylus' *Philoctetes*. Be that as it may, vv. 13f. of Sophocles' play make it all the likelier that someone's play on the same topic is being criticized, because one of the poet's own innovations is signposted in these lines. As we saw above (p. 394), Sophocles abandoned the idea, variously presented in the Aeschylean and Euripidean treatments, that Philoctetes could ever fail (by reason of divine disguise or lapse of time) to recognize his old enemy Odysseus. Consequently that figure must be constantly on the alert (as here) in case Philoctetes take him unawares, and Neoptolemus must be entrusted with the main thrust of the deceit and intrigue against the hero.

V

How many parallels establish a case is, like the issue of how many swallows make a summer, a prickly question. Let us first check that the passages cited in Section IV, especially the Euripidean instances that constitute (i)–(iii), are genuine and close parallels for what Euripides would be aiming at in the *Electra*'s recognition scene, if it is genuine. While the general motif of *criticism aimed at an earlier Aeschylean treatment of a theme* is shared by all, the *grounds* for criticism are not identical in all the passages. Most of them seem to be blaming Aeschylus for inappropriately spinning out a scene longer than later taste could accept. But example (i), from the *Phoenissae*, seems to combine this with criticism of the *propriety* of lengthy speeches while the enemy is about the city walls, and the notion of propriety surely brings us very close to the main ground of criticism in the *Electra*'s scene. No character there explicitly says, in effect, as characters do in (i)–(iii) or in the prologue of Sophocles' *Electra*, 'that's enough talk, let's get down to action'. But there may be an implicit equivalent. Note the description of speech and action at *El.* 572ff. by Bond (who is approaching the issue from a quite different angle and cannot be suspected of *parti pris*): 'Now the recognition moves forward with express speed. "What sign?" asks Electra. "Scar on the brow", replies the Old Man promptly, and the recognition is complete in just ten lines.'⁴⁵

This may be the point in the phrasing at line 549 where Electra heralds the approach of Orestes and Pylades with these words: οἷδ' ἐκ δόμων βαίνουσι λαυφηρῶι ποδί. On a realistic level, it is hard to see why the pair should be rushing out of the Farmer's cottage. Perhaps the speed is meant to symbolize the change in pace from the laboured plodding imposed by the three Aeschylean tokens to the swifter development allowed when they have been set aside and Euripides' adaptation of the Odyssean scar hurries

⁴⁴ Compare Netta Zagagi's remarks (*Tradition and Originality in Plautus* [Hypomnemata 62 (1980)], p. 45) on 'mythological hyperboles': 'It seems that Aeschylus and Sophocles preferred using structural forms of a more allusive and disjointed character, whereas Euripides sought modes of expression that would enable him to bring out as clearly as possible the element of hyperbole.'

⁴⁵ Bond (n. 3), p. 10.

things along.⁴⁶ In other words, *Electra* may be posing the same criticism as (i)–(iii) but in a different way. Not ‘let’s dispense with the Aeschylean natter and get down to action’. Rather ‘look how much time the Aeschylean natter took up, whereas my alternative allows a speedier move towards action’. Certainly when one compares the two parts of the scene (518–46 and 547–84), and allows for possible or probable lacunae in the first, the proportions come out as something like 50:28 lines. And this is a timely reminder that, although the *Electra*’s would still be the longest example of Euripidean criticism of Aeschylus, (ii) and (iii) above come out at 18 and 22 lines respectively. This is very different from the six or so lines represented by (i), the best-known example, whose gross disparity in length from the *Electra*’s instance has obviously deterred some scholars from taking the comparison between it and our passage very seriously.⁴⁷

VI

Let us finally try to decide what Euripides may have been doing in the *Electra*’s recognition scene and the other passages considered above. If he is complaining about excessive length in Aeschylean scenes, then changes of taste over time may be relevant. One crucial consideration is likely to be the differences that arose with the move from the connected trilogies of Aeschylus, which offered a more leisurely opportunity to explore the vicissitudes of a mythical family generation by generation, to the non-connected trilogies of Sophocles and Euripides, where events had to be compressed within a single tragedy. Another relevant factor may well be Euripides’ position as the youngest of the three great tragedians. By the time he came to compose his dramas, the most obvious and straightforward treatment of the traditional myths may well have seemed to him to have been exhausted.⁴⁸ (It is unlikely to be a coincidence that one of the relatively few Sophoclean instances of dramatic criticism of predecessors we can plausibly identify occurs in the *Philoctetes*, to which we can, as it happens, give a (late) date, and where we know that both Aeschylus and Euripides had preceded the poet in treating the same theme.) Bond has written⁴⁹ that ‘it is likely enough that as intrigues became more complex the competing dramatists increasingly criticized each other’s plots’, and I do not believe the generalization needs to be restricted to plays of intrigue. Increased complexity will have been a function of the passage of time, and as the same mythological themes were treated again and again, the competing dramatists will have made the plots and presentation more complex as part of the same process. Lloyd-Jones⁵⁰ has talked of the ‘eagerness, natural in a competitor for tragic prizes at a time when poets constantly treated of the same legendary themes, to present a familiar story in a

⁴⁶ Denniston on *El.* 549 thinks ‘*λαυφηρῶν ποδί* looks, at first sight, like feeble padding. . . . But the point may be that the young aristocrats’ light and nimble tread is very different from the tramp of the muscle-bound farmers.’ It may be, however, that the phrase is to be explained along very different lines, in the light of passages cited in my note on *Soph. Tr.* 58. Characters whose appearance on stage is timely (in view of remarks just made by another character) are often said to appear *ἀρτίπους* or *ὀξύπους* (*Or.* 1550), *vel sim.*

⁴⁷ Even Bond ([n. 3], p. 3) refers to ‘smaller pieces of dramatic criticism’, and Bain observes ([n. 4], p. 109) that ‘the kind of reference to other plays elsewhere in tragedy that has been likened to [the *Electra*’s recognition scene] tends to be brief and passing’. Cf. Kovacs ([n. 4]), p. 68.

⁴⁸ For a list of those plays of Euripides which are known to have shared titles or themes with plays by Aeschylus or Sophocles see Schmidt, *Geschichte d. gr. Lit.* I.3.333.

⁴⁹ Bond (n. 3), p. 11.

⁵⁰ *Gnomon* 34 (1962), 742 = *Academic Papers* [I], p. 198.

striking and unfamiliar way'. A wish to draw attention to⁵¹ novelties of treatment, not least by contrasting them with earlier Aeschylean handling of themes, is perfectly understandable in this context.

Scholars have used a variety of terms to describe what Euripides may have been doing in the *Electra*'s recognition scene and the related passages we have considered above, and I have echoed them myself without reaching a final preference for one or other of them. 'Polemic' (or 'veiled' or 'implicit' polemic) is one such term that has been used,⁵² though that is perhaps more appropriately applied to the scholar-poets and 'arte allusiva' of the Hellenistic period. 'Parody' (or even 'burlesque') is also conspicuous,⁵³ though again that seems to me more at home in the context of Old Comedy. The relatively sedate term 'literary criticism' has also been called in aid.⁵⁴ Of more recently emerged terminology, perhaps the most useful and appropriate in the present case is 'intertextuality'.⁵⁵ But any further consideration of these terms, treating them with the seriousness they deserve, would take us beyond the scope of

⁵¹ This is why I find the idea that *El.* 518–44 is a subsequent interpolation by Euripides himself (West [n. 4], pp. 17, 20, taken very seriously by Kovacs [n. 4], p. 67: 'the best [hypothesis] currently on offer'; p. 77: it 'covers many of the facts') so spectacularly unconvincing. As originally put forward by its author (at the meeting of the Oxford Philological Society [in October 1977] at which Bain's paper was first read [cf. p. 113, n. 1 of his article]), it was recommended as a way of 'having one's cake and eating it'; but the cliché that strikes me as most appropriate is 'the worst of all worlds'. If Euripides worked in the material *before* the original performance, then the passage is no different qualitatively from the *x* number of other passages where, for all we know, he did the same (no different except that here, for some reason, he was obtrusive about it). If Euripides worked in the material *after* the original and, for all he knew, sole performance ('as seems likelier' to West), he did something quite remarkably pointless, since the main function of the criticism of Aeschylus (especially when we bear in mind passages [i]–[iii] in Section IV) would seem to be to draw the audience's attention to his own way of doing things differently.

⁵² For example by Kurt von Fritz in *Antike und moderne Tragödie* (Berlin, 1962), pp. 148f. (cf. Lloyd-Jones, *Gnomon* 34 [1962], 742 = *Academic Papers* [I], p. 198) and Fraenkel, *Due seminari Romani* [n. 43]).

⁵³ So, for example, Dover (n. 1) who talks of Euripides' 'parody' of the Aeschylean footsteps scene, and Bond (n. 3) *passim*, esp. p. 8 (where we also find 'burlesque' [already in L. Radermacher's treatment of Euripides' recognition scene, *RhM* 58 (1903), 549]). I may be indulging in pedantry, but given the pre-existing convention whereby one talks of the 'parody' of passages from Greek tragedy by poets of the Old Comedy, this term too, like 'satire' (see Dover [n. 1]), seems undesirable. Certainly, if it is in any way responsible for Kovacs's unfortunate idea ([n. 4], pp. 77–8) that *El.* 518–44 are from a Middle Comedy play on the Orestes theme 'borrowed' by a 'tragic producer in a weak moment . . . for a fourth-century or later production of the *Electra*', the term will have served scholarship ill. For further objections to the use of the term 'parody' in this context, see Halporn (n. 13), pp. 114f.

⁵⁴ The article by Radermacher mentioned in the previous note was entitled 'Euripides als literarischer Kritik', and 'dramatic criticism' is a term that occurs more than once in Bond's article. To be accurate, of course, Euripides would have to be engaging in proto-literary criticism. Cf. n. 39 above. My favourite exemplification (as opposed to labelling) of the sort of effect Euripidean references to Aeschylus would produce can be achieved by adapting Fraenkel's comment (in *Beob. zu Aristoph.*: see above, n. 43) on the prologue of Sophocles' *Electra*: 'Es ist als wenn Sophokles sagte: "ich habe die Choephoren nicht vergessen, aber ich mache es anders".' (This is not too different from Denniston's view of Euripides' recognition scene: see his commentary, p. 114 and cf. G. H. Gellie, *BICS* 28 [1981], p. 4 with nn. 8–9.) A related mode of interpretation (suggested to me by Jaume Portulas) is to suppose that Euripides is confronting the audience with two *incompatible* ways of telling the same story: this would be not unlike his frequent technique of departing so much in his plot from the traditional story that the audience wonders how a *dénouement* will be possible, only to find the tradition unconvincingly restated at the eleventh hour by *dei ex machina* or other means.

⁵⁵ Invoked by Mastronarde on Eur. *Phoen.* 751f. (see above n. 37). For hostile comment on the general term cf. Kovacs, *Mnemosyne* 48 (1995), 570, n. 6.

this paper.⁵⁶ In the long run, of course, it matters little what short-hand terms we use (although I have found it illuminating to consider and reject those just listed). Our conception of Euripides' aim is what counts, and that he did sometimes aim (*inter alia*)⁵⁷ at criticizing Aeschylus in order to draw attention to his own novel treatment⁵⁸ I hope to have established beyond peradventure.

St John's College, Oxford

M. DAVIES

APPENDIX

FURTHER ALLEGED CRITICISMS OF SPECIFIC TRAGEDIES IN EXTANT TRAGEDY

The impossibility of recording a battle's single combats confessed at Eur. *Suppl.* 846–56 has been taken (to quote Collard's commentary ad loc.) as 'a disingenuous

⁵⁶ Perhaps an analogy from the world of art history may be found enlightening (or at least provoking). Fifteenth-century Florence saw a number of contemporary or near-contemporary artists working at close quarters on a limited number of themes, and one treatment can seem to be a comment on an earlier version. Thus 'Verrochio's later statue of David seems to constitute a sharp criticism of' the 'shortcoming in the emotional temper of' Donatello's notably androgynous and dreamy hero (I quote from Charles Avery, *Florentine Renaissance Sculpture* [London, 1970], p. 82).

⁵⁷ An important qualification. Mastronarde (n. 37) has pointed out that *Phoen.* 751–2 has other 'local' functions beside criticizing Aeschylus, and the same is certainly true of the *Electra*'s scene (cf. Bond [n. 3], p. 3: 'these dramatic and theological aims can easily co-exist with the aim of parodying Aeschylus. Euripides was capable of doing several things at once; that is one reason why we find him difficult.'). I agree with those scholars (e.g. Bond [n. 3], p. 11) who think that characterization of Electra is one of these further functions. Kovacs ([n. 4], pp. 68f.) raises a difficulty when he claims that Electra's remark at 524–6 (οὐκ ἄξι' ἀνδρός, ὦ γέρον, σοφοῦ λέγεις, | εἰ κρυπτόν ἐς γῆν τήνδ' ἂν Αἰγίσθου φόβῳ | δοκεῖς ἀδελφὸν τὸν ἐμὸν εὐθαρσῇ μολεῖν) constitutes 'an irrationality' and a view of Orestes' position that is 'completely out of touch with reality'. The usual explanation is that of, for example, Denniston ad loc. ('She cherishes a romantic conception of the ideal hero which is very different from the reality') and I do not think that Kovacs has disproved this possibility (the contrast between the real and the ideal can be shown to operate as a theme in other parts of the play: see my remarks in *G&R* 42 [1995], 155). Still, since he himself (p. 68) thinks 'it too falls short of the proof we require', I will not pursue the matter further.

⁵⁸ Kovacs ([n. 4], p. 68) makes rather heavy weather of what would be involved if we accepted that Euripides criticized a play by Aeschylus: 'something which tragedy normally does not do, admitting its own fictitious character by allowing the world of the audience, which contains other plays in it, to impinge on that of the play they are watching'. How Euripides or any other Greek tragedian could ever have prevented the world of the audience from sometimes so impinging I simply do not see. But what we are faced with is not like, for example, audience address (that phenomenon so notoriously distinguishing tragedy from comedy) which shatters the dramatic illusion: we should not follow those critics who, to quote Halporn ([n. 13], p. 102), 'have often had the sense that the dramatic illusion itself has been broken and that Euripides is speaking in his own person'. Rather (to sidestep the whole question of tragic allusions to contemporary or recent historical events, itself 'another hornets' nest') we have something like the issue of the Areopagus reforms in Aeschylus' *Eumenides* and it operates on two levels: Electra's criticisms of the three tokens make dramatic sense in their own right (as an expression of character, vehicle for irony, etc.), but gain a further dimension if the audience thinks of the *Choephoroi*. Precisely how many of them would so think is an unanswerable question, but one closely related to the sort we have over long years come to live with in the (different but analogous) case of Aristophanes and Old Comedy (see, for example, Dover, *50 Years (and 12) of Classical Scholarship* [1968], p. 128 = *Greek and the Greeks*, pp. 195f., on the issue of how large a proportion of Aristophanic audiences would recognize his parodies).

sneer at the conventions of simulated realism in messenger-speeches, directed principally at the central section' of Aeschylus' *S.C.T.* or at his *Eleusinians*, but as Collard shows, this seems unlikely. Certainly there is none of the specificity of allusion which characterizes the *Electra* passage's references to Aeschylus' three tokens of recognition. Of other *loci* (see e.g. Bain [n. 4], p. 109; Schmidt, *Geschichte d. gr. Lit.* I.3, p. 333, n. 1) sometimes quoted as potentially relevant, (a) Eur. *Hel.* 1055–6 (Menelaus' reaction to his wife's proposal that he feign death) *σωτηρίας δὲ τοῦτ' ἔχει τί νῶν ἄκος; | παλαιότης γὰρ τῶι λόγῳ γ' ἔνεστί τις* is (Bond [n. 4], p. 12) 'an incidental piece of dramatic criticism: the sham death, brilliantly used in *Choephoroi* and in Sophocles' *Electra*, and doubtless used elsewhere, had been used too often', but again the reference is not at all specific (see further Kannicht ad loc.); and Eur. fr. 165 N² (from his *Antigone*) *ἄκουσον· οὐ γὰρ οἱ κακῶς πεπραγότες | σὺν ταῖς τύχαισι τοὺς λόγους ἀπώλεσεν* goes too far in the opposite direction if it is rightly taken (cf. Nauck ad loc. and Schmidt [sup. cit.]) as a specific but very limited retort to a single couplet in Sophocles' *Antigone* (563–4 *οὐ γὰρ ποτ', ὦναξ, οὐδ' ὅς ἂν βλάσθη μένει | νοῦς τοῖς κακῶς πράσσουσιν, ἀλλ' ἐξίσταται*). As regards (b) possible Sophoclean instances, *El.* 62–4 *ἤδη γὰρ εἶδον πολλάκις καὶ τοὺς σοφοὺς | λόγῳ μάτην θνήσκοντας· εἴθ', ὅταν δόμους | ἔλθωσιν αὖθις, ἐκτετίμηνται πλέον* is again extremely unspecific ('It is vain to ask what particular story or stories Sophocles was thinking of': Jebb ad loc.; see further Kannicht on Eur. *Hel.* 1055–6) and *El.* 1259 *οὐ μὴ 'στι καιρὸς μὴ μακρὰν βούλου λέγειν* is merely gnomic (contrast *Ph.* 12 *ἀκμὴ γὰρ οὐ μακρῶν ἡμῖν λόγων* considered above, p. 11). *O.C.* 1148–9 *χῶπῳ μὲν ἄγῳν ἡιρέθη τί δεῖ μάτην | κομπεῖν, ἃ γ' εἴσῃ καὶ τὸς ἐκ ταύταιν ξυνῶν*; falls into the same category. *O.C.* 1115–16 (Oedipus' reaction when his daughters are restored to him) *καί μοι τὰ πραχθέντ' εἴπαθ' ὥς βράχιστ', ἐπεὶ | ταῖς τηλικαῖσδε σμικρὸς ἔξαρκεῖ λόγος* might seem to belong there too, although Jebb ad loc. suggests 'We seem to hear covert criticism on some drama in which this maxim had been neglected' (cf. his comment [above, p. 399] on *Phil.* 12).

None of the above instances seems to me to come anywhere near Eur. *El.* 518–46 or the other passages discussed above in Section IV as a potential instance of criticism of an earlier, specific tragedy.⁵⁹

⁵⁹ Still less does Eur. *Hel.* 1165ff., where Theoclymenus begins his rhesis by hailing his father's tomb: *ἐπ' ἐξόδοισι γὰρ | ἔθαψα, Πρωτεῦ, σ' ἔνεκ' ἐμῆς προσήσεως· | αἰεὶ δέ σ' ἐξιὼν τε κάσιων δόμους | Θεοκλύμενος παῖς ὅδε προσενέπω, πάτερ*. This was taken by Winnington-Ingram ([n. 41], p. 131) as 'a hit at the conventional treatment of locality in the *Choephoroi*, where the scene shifts unobtrusively from tomb to palace'. The suggestion strikes me as totally far-fetched.