Transactions of the American Philological Association 117 (1987) 257–270

TREADING THE CIRCLE WARILY: LITERARY CRITICISM AND THE TEXT OF EURIPIDES*

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The somewhat cryptic phrase in my title refers to an observation of A. E. Housman. In his outrageously titled address, "The Application of Thought to Textual Criticism," Housman observed that the process of deriving grammatical rules from the manuscripts of Greek and Latin authors is open to the objection of circularity. He writes:

> There is one special province of textual criticism, a large and important province, which is concerned with the establishment of the rules of grammar and of metre. Those rules are in part traditional, and given us by the ancient grammarians; but in part they are formed by our own induction from what we find in the MSS of Greek and Latin authors; and even the traditional rules must of course be tested by comparison with the witness of the MSS. But every rule, whether traditional or framed from induction, is sometimes broken by the MSS; it may be by few, it may by many; it may be seldom, it may be often; and critics may then say that the MSS are wrong, and may correct them in accordance with the rule. This state of affairs is apparently, nay evidently, paradoxical. The MSS are the material upon which we base our rule, and then, when we have got our rule, we turn round upon the MSS and say that the rule, based upon them, convicts them of error. We are thus working in a circle . . .; but, as Lachmann says, the task of the critic is just this, to tread that circle deftly and warily.

Housman goes on to describe how to assess the weight of apparent deviations from the rules of grammar. To take one example of his, after verbs of saying or thinking, to express time subsequent to the main verb Greek uses future infinitive or aorist infinitive with ἄν. But our MSS show plenty of examples of simple aorist infinitive. Do we therefore overturn the rule? Not if we look carefully. The vast majority of the apparent exceptions consist of

* A paper on this subject was delivered to the annual meeting of the APA in December, 1985 as part of a panel entitled "Textual Criticism and the Future of Classical Studies." The chief example I used in the original paper has now appeared in *CQ* 35 (1985) 310–14. I have substituted others and have abbreviated the theoretical introduction that preceded it. I am grateful to the editor for helpful suggestions.

places where the two infinitives closely resemble one another or where ἄν could easily have dropped out. Which therefore is the more likely assumption, that the Greeks used simple aorist infinitive for future infinitive on occasion but restricted themselves preponderantly to the first aorist, which most resembles the future, or that the apparent exception is caused by mistaking δέξεσθαι for δέξασθαι or ποιήσειν for ποιῆσαι? To frame the question is to answer it.

There is thus a way in which the apparent circularity of the argument can be gotten round. It involves being a critic. The critic does not allow apparent exceptions to the rules of grammar to overturn the rules when the evidence for an exception, if examined critically, is seen to be capable of a different and likelier explanation. Nor, on the other hand, does the critic lack the courage to correct grammatical generalities when the evidence from the MSS is sufficient. All this means that the art of grammar and the art of editing texts are not two independent arts. Nor is one superordinate over the other. Rather the two arts illuminate each other, and neither can exist in isolation. Readings of MSS can sometimes correct grammatical rules and grammatical rules can sometimes correct MS readings. And although there are many times when a trained judgment cannot say which ought to be corrected by which, there are many more times when it can.

There is a similar relation between the literary and stylistic judgments we make on an author and the constitution of his text. Although literary criticism and textual criticism are regarded for certain purposes as separate disciplines, they are closely bound up with one another, and no one can be a responsible interpreter of ancient literature without being aware of variant readings or a responsible editor without taking into account evidence of a literary nature. There is an inherent circularity about the process of understanding ancient literature, with literary considerations employed (sometimes unconsciously) in the determination of the text and textual decisions contributing (sometimes without the interpreter's awareness) to the interpretation of a work. Genuine criticism starts from a consciousness that both halves of this evidence must always be reexamined, each in the light of the other.

In this paper, I give examples from Euripides of the interdependence of these two disciplines. My purpose is to show that there is still a great deal that can be done both to recover the text of Euripides and to make our literary judgments of him more just, provided that literary interpreters and editors of texts are both willing to examine for themselves both halves of the evidence available.

Literary critics sometimes think of their own studies as occupying a position of lofty elevation over the niggling work of textual critics, and of textual criticism as involving excessive worry about whether to read δέ, τε, or γε, to the neglect of weightier issues. Likewise, some text-critics speak as if their subject were somehow exempt from the vagaries of opinion and subjective judgment that beset literary criticism. Both these views are mistaken.

Even the choice between δέ, τε, and γε is sometimes fraught with important questions of interpretation editors themselves may be unaware of. And if the literary interpreters compound the editors' omissions by not considering all the textual evidence for themselves, they may never learn that some of the questions they bring to the text have already been answered—perhaps incorrectly—before they themselves even began to consider them.

As an example of this, I cite *Andromache* 24–25, which reads as follows in Murray's Oxford text:

> κἀγὼ δόμοις τοῖσδ' ἄρσεν' ἐντίκτω κόρον,
> πλαθεῖσ' Ἀχιλλέως παιδί, δεσπότῃ γ' ἐμῷ.

On this passage Albin Lesky comments, "Andromache speaks of her fate, which has placed her at the mercy of Neoptolemus after the fall of Troy. Euripides compresses the tragedy of her lot in[to] the single particle γε. She has borne a child, Molossus, to the son of Achilleus—she could not deny herself to him, he was her master![1]

What Lesky fails to notice is that he is making his literary point on the basis of a conjecture of Brunck's and takes no notice of the MS reading τ' or of Elmsley's conjecture δ'. Either of these alternative readings is a perfectly apt way of joining two attributes applied to the same individual, for example, "your aunt Dinah and my sister," as Elmsley, Hermann, Fraenkel, and P. T. Stevens have shown. Brunck's and Murray's γ' is possible, but there is no evidence for it, and all of Lesky's impressive and sensitive reading of these lines is built on sand. Furthermore, if we read γ' with Brunck and interpret it as Lesky does, we import into the play with this single particle a view of the relation between Andromache and Neoptolemus for which there is little evidence in the play. It is true that in summarizing her misfortunes she alludes (403) to the fact that she lives with the son of her husband's killer. But in two other passages (269, 416) she expresses attachment to him and confidence in his good will. Lesky assumes (as I did, until the apparatus raised the question in my mind) that Andromache hates Neoptolemus rather than that she takes roughly the same attitude towards him that Briseis does toward Achilles and Tecmessa toward Ajax. And although Lesky is comparatively sober in his treatment of this γε, other critics who do not possess his sobriety are led much further astray. Several who write on the play create on Andromache's part whole Iliads of hatred for Neoptolemus. She is made to grit her teeth in his bed and look with disdain on his corpse at the end of the play.[2] But there is nothing in the text to show that she takes this attitude.

Important issues of interpretation are thus at stake in the choice of a particle, and neither Murray the editor nor Lesky the interpreter seems to be

[1] Albin Lesky, *Die tragische Dichtung der Hellenen*[3] (Göttingen 1972) 339, trans. M. Dillon (New Haven and London 1983) 248.

[2] See, for example, H. Erbse, "Euripides' *Andromache*," *Hermes* 94 (1966) 276–97.

aware of this fact. We have made a significant discovery here when we realize that literary questions are being unconsciously answered by the constitution of the text and that other and more accurate answers are available to those who are wary enough to reconsider both halves of the evidence for themselves.

I turn now to my chief examples of the interdependence of literary and textual criticism. Here too literary views and answers to literary questions have entered into the constitution of the text. That is as it should be. What is wrong is that inherited literary views have been employed uncritically, without submitting them to the test of all the available evidence.

There is a long tradition of regarding Euripides as a modernist in his ideas and an iconoclast in his treatment of tragic convention. According to this view, Euripides brings the figures of myth down from their high pedestals and treats them with realism at times amounting to satire, heroes and gods alike. Corresponding to this "realistic" treatment of character is realism in another sense, the attempt to present action and conversation unrefracted through the lens of tragic convention and decorum, more like real life. It is the uncritical acceptance of this last view that has given much of its odd character to the edition of his plays that we all read up until quite recently, that of Gilbert Murray.[3]

Here is a problem parallel to Housman's conundrum about grammar and manuscripts. For our manuscripts in some few places seem to tell us that Euripides violates normal tragic practice. Are we to trust them on the theory that this is Euripidean dramaturgy? In other places the manuscripts make his characters speak with notable want of logic. Are we to say that this again is just Euripidean realism, that people do in fact speak illogically and Euripides accurately represents this? No a priori answer to these questions is possible, and each case must be decided on its own merits, on the basis of the probabilities of transmission. The question the critic must ask is the same as Housman's: what is the quality of the evidence for these apparent irregularities? Is there a better and less expensive explanation for them?

The three examples from the *Electra* and two from the *Medea* that follow have common features. They require editors to weigh critically evidence of various kinds. Some of it is of a literary nature, the regularities of the genre of tragedy and the general question of what gives the passage in question the most satisfying sense of coherence. Other evidence concerns the probabilities of transmission. The failure to take both kinds of evidence into

[3] Murray's examination of the text resulted for him in the conclusion that, to quote from his *praefatio,* "Euripides is more in need of interpretation than of emendation." But the kind of interpretation Murray had in mind often presupposed that Euripides was the practitioner of a particular kind of dramatic realism: see, e.g., his apparatus at *Med.* 167, *Andr.* 1035, and *Hec.* 504. Murray resorts to the hypothesis of aposiopesis, interruption, etc. despite the existence of other, likelier possibilties. And as a result, all of us raised on Murray have an exaggerated sense of the looseness of Euripidean language, at least until we learn to look at the apparatus.

account, to allow unexamined assumptions to do the work of half of it, means that both the wording of Euripides' text and the tone and intent of his tragedies is likely to be misrepresented. The lemma is quoted in each case from Diggle's Oxford text.

El. 646–56

Ορ. πῶς οὖν; ἐκείνην τόνδε τ' ἐν ταὐτῶι κτενῶ;
Ηλ. ἐγὼ φόνον γε μητρὸς ἐξαρτύσομαι.
Ορ. καὶ μὴν ἐκεῖνά γ' ἡ τύχη θήσει καλῶς.
Ηλ. ὑπηρετείτω μὲν δυοῖν ὄντοιν ὅδε.
Ορ. ἔσται τάδ'· εὑρίσκεις δὲ μητρὶ πῶς φόνον; 650
Ηλ. λέγ', ὦ γεραιέ, τάδε Κλυταιμήστραι μολών.
‹Πρ.
‹Ηλ.› λεχώ μ' ἀπάγγελλ' οὖσαν ἄρσενος τόκωι.
Πρ. πότερα πάλαι τεκοῦσαν ἢ νεωστὶ δή;
Ηλ. δέχ' ἡλίους, ἐν οἷσιν ἁγνεύει λεχώ.
Πρ. καὶ δὴ τί τοῦτο μητρὶ προσβάλλει φόνον; 655
Ηλ. ἥξει κλύουσα λόχιά μου νοσήματα.

650 Ορ. Dobree: Πρ. L 651 post h.u. lac. indic. Camper u. del. Matthiae

Stichomythy occurs in every Greek tragedy that has come down to us. Its regularities can be established for the genre and for the individual poets.[4] Here there seems to be an irregularity. As Denniston points out, it is highly unusual to break a long stichomythy so far from either its beginning (612) or its end (670).[5] Denniston's solution, following Camper, is to posit a lacuna after 651. But this creates a further anomaly. While it is true that Housman once wrote

> Alc. A shepherd's questioned mouth informed me that—
> Cho. What? For I know not yet what you will say.

there is not actually anything that palpably silly in the extant remains of tragedy. In particular, one looks in vain for a parallel to our passage, where a speaker uses τάδε, a word completing the syntax of the sentence but clearly implying that more is to come, but is then interrupted by another speaker.[6] It

[4] For valuable discussions of particular aspects of stichomythic practice, see D. J. Mastronarde, *Contact and Discontinuity: Some Conventions of Speech and Action on the Greek Tragic Stage,* University of California Classical Studies, vol. 21 (Berkeley, Los Angeles, and London 1979) with literature cited. See also E.-R. Schwinge, *Die Verwendung der Stichomythie in den Dramen des Euripides* (Heidelberg 1968) and Bernd Seidensticker, *Die Gesprächsverdichtung in den Tragödien Senecas* (Heidelberg 1969).

[5] J. D. Denniston, *Euripides: Electra* (Oxford 1939) pp. 130–31. Mastronarde (above, note 4) 94, and Schwinge (above, note 4) 133–34, defend the disruption of the stichomythy. So too does M. Kubo, "The Norm of Myth: Euripides' *Electra,*" *HSCP* 71 (1966) 15–19.

[6] Quite different is the phenomenon, discussed by Mastronarde (above, note 4) 54–73, where one speaker's sentence is left incomplete at line-end and another cooperatively completes it by a

is hard to imagine a way of filling the lacuna posited by Camper and Denniston that does not sound as ridiculous as Housman's parody. If we had no other choice, we might resign ourselves to putting in the Old Man's mouth some such line as "I am eager to carry out whatsoever you order." But there is a much more attractive solution. It is mentioned in Diggle's apparatus, but since he declines to adopt it in his text and since editors since Nauck have simply ignored it, it seems worthwhile to say a few words about its merits.

Instead of having to add Euripidean filler, it is our duty to delete post-Euripidean. Line 651 is flat, pedestrian, and well within the abilities of the latest and dullest of Euripides' exegetes: "Say, old man, the following to Clytaemestra, going [to her]." The last two syllables of 651 are clumsy make-weight, and it takes no abnormally suspicious mind to smell spuriousness here.[7] It also wears on its forehead the motive for its manufacture. The man who invented it had a text which gave, or appeared to give, 650 to Orestes, as in Diggle's text above, while Electra's next utterance is an order given to the Old Man. What could be more natural for a man of tidy disposition than to fadge up a trimeter to show clearly the person addressed?

His attempt to be helpful infected even those parts of the tradition where the truth about 650 was known and the invention of 651 unnecessary. That is the case with L, for L here and at 653 deserts the paragraphos in favor of the speaker's name (see Murray's apparatus at 614–68), which shows that it is deliberately handing on something and not inadvertently falling into error. L names the Old Man as the speaker of 650. That L is telling the truth here is evident from the context.

In 649 Electra says, "Let this man serve the two of us." If the Old Man were Orestes' slave, it would be proper for Orestes to answer "It shall be so," but the Old Man is not Orestes' slave, and there is furthermore no reason for him to be treated as a mute extra. It is for the Old Man himself to say these words and then to ask how he can be of service. This is exactly what he does, for the second part of 650—"How are you contriving death for your mother?"—simply asks what the plan is. Electra replies by giving him his immediate orders, whose function in the murder plan is first revealed, in good stichomythic fashion, several couplets later. We should therefore assign 650 as L does, accept Matthiae's deletion of 651, and spare ourselves the unpleasant

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statement (cf. *Ion* 271–72) or a surmise-question (cf. *Hec.* 1259–60, *Ion* 552), or where the first speaker's syntax is suspended by a one-line intervention (*Hcld.* 737ff., *Hec.* 1000–1, 1271–72, *Sup.* 142–44, 934–35 etc.). Electra's τάδε makes her line syntactically complete, and for that to be followed by a line of interruption seems unparalleled. Certainly *Ion* 275, whose first half contains a τόδ' but whose second half closely resembles 271–72, is the slenderest possible defense for our passage, yet this is the only parallel I was able to find.

[7] Another suspicious circumstance is that λέγ' in 651 and ἀπάγγελλ' in 652 are two imperatives with no connective between them. I cannot find a parallel, and elsewhere (*Hec.* 604, *Hcld.* 250, Aesch. *Ag.* 604, *Cho.* 770) "say *these things*" if followed not by another imperative of a verb of saying but by some kind of oratio obliqua.

choice between violating the regularities of stichomythy and having to turn "What? For I know not yet what you will say" into an iambic trimeter. Stichomythic regularity is restored. No less important, so is tragic propriety: Orestes now treats the Old Man as an independent human being and not as a mute extra.

El. 671–84

Ορ. ὦ Ζεῦ πατρῶιε καὶ τροπαῖ' ἐχθρῶν ἐμῶν
‹Ηλ.› οἴκτιρέ γ' ἡμᾶς· οἰκτρὰ πεπόνθαμεν.
Πρ. οἴκτιρε δῆτα σοῦ γε φύντας ἐκγόνους.
Ορ. Ἥρα τε βωμῶν ἣ Μυκηναίων κρατεῖς
‹Ηλ.› νίκην δὸς ἡμῖν, εἰ δίκαι' αἰτούμεθα. 675
Πρ. δὸς δῆτα πατρὸς τοῖσδε τιμωρὸν δίκην.
Ορ. σύ τ' ὦ κάτω γῆς ἀνοσίως οἰκῶν πάτερ
‹Ηλ.› καὶ Γαῖ' ἄνασσα, χεῖρας ἣι δίδωμ' ἐμάς
‹Πρ.› ἄμυν' ἄμυνε τοῖσδε φιλτάτοις τέκνοις.
‹Ορ.› νῦν πάντα νεκρὸν ἐλθὲ σύμμαχον λαβών 680
‹Ηλ.› οἵπερ γε σὺν σοὶ Φρύγας ἀνήλωσαν δορί
‹Πρ.› χῶσοι στυγοῦσιν ἀνοσίους μιάστορας. 683
‹Ορ.› ἤκουσας, ὦ δείν' ἐξ ἐμῆς μητρὸς παθών; 682
Πρ. πάντ', οἶδ', ἀκούει τάδε πατήρ· στείχειν δ' ἀκμή. 684

672 ‹Ηλ.› Kvičala οἴκτιρέ γ' Fix: οἰκτείρεθ' L: οἴκτειρέ θ' Victorius 673 Πρ. Kvičala: Ηλ. L 675 ‹Ηλ.› Kvičala 676 Πρ. Kvičala: Ηλ. L 678 ‹Ηλ.› Kirchhoff 679 ‹Πρ.› Kvičala 680 ‹Ορ.› Kvičala 681 ‹Ηλ.› Kvičala 683 ante 682 trai. Reiske ‹Πρ.› Kvičala 682 ‹Ορ.› Kirchhoff, ‹Ηλ.› Murray 684 Πρ. Murray: Ηλ. L

According to our only ms., the stichomythy comes to an end at 671, Orestes utters two prayers of two lines each and one of seven lines, all three followed by single-line utterances of Electra.[8] This is followed by a non-stichomythic exchange between Electra and Orestes. The by now standard arrangement of these lines, which continues the stichomythy down to 684, is due to Kvičala. What is gained by this? What is lost? What are the transcriptional probabilities?

What can be said in favor of this arrangement is set out by Denniston. The twelves lines 671–83 fall naturally, he says, into four groups of three. Since both the ms. tradition and the wording (δῆτα with an echoed word is usually found in replies) mark a change of speaker at 673 and 676, "considerations of symmetry prove that 679 and 683 also are spoken by a fresh speaker." (Already we must enter a demurrer: considerations of symmetry prove very little except in literary forms, like the stasimon, that are inherently symmetrical.) Denniston decides on the basis of the wording that Electra cannot be the speaker of 673 and is unlikely to speak 676 and that the Old Man should have the ninth and twelfth as well as the third and sixth lines. Further

[8] I discussed this passage in brief outline in my review of Diggle, *AJP* 105 (1984) 238–39. I take this opportunity to spell out what was adumbrated there and to remedy omissions.

considerations of symmetry dictate that in each of these postulated triplets we must either divide the first two lines between Orestes and Electra or give the whole couplets alternately to brother and sister. Denniston decides for the former on the basis of the emendation he adopts in 672, which requires a change of speaker.[9] And thus he arrives at four triplets, each of which contains one line by Orestes, one by Electra, and one by the Old Man.

This is an interesting sequence and it might have been right. But both stylistic considerations and the probabilities of transmission tell against it. Stylistically, it is unparalleled in tragedy for a prayer to be uttered in this piecemeal fashion, with one speaker supplying a vocative (677), the second another vocative (678), the third an imperative (679), or in any of the other combinations Kvičala's version exhibits. (For comic examples where prayers are interrupted, see Ar. *Pax* 446 and 452 and Platnauer's notes and Denniston, *GP* 137.) Though here for once editors make Euripides more stylized and artificial than his mss. show him to be, it is a kind of stylization that is foreign to tragedy.

The transcriptional evidence adds further weight against Kvičala. Manuscripts are witnesses, and their evidence is not to be uncritically accepted but tested against other evidence. When a witness in a law-court shows a high level of accuracy in places where he can be corroborated, it is reasonable to give his testimony considerable weight in places where no corroboration is available, especially if it is testimony on the same sort of matters as that which has already been corroborated. Now the Laurentianus shows a change of speaker in every place in our passage (673, 674, 676, 677, 684) where the wording of the text either compels or strongly suggests a change, and in the previous 58 lines of stichomythy it omits the paragraphos only at 630. It is therefore improbable that a ms. showing this level of accuracy on this point should have omitted eight paragraphoi over the space of fourteen lines.

We should decline in 672 Fix's οἴκτιρέ γ' (which does require a change of speaker) in favor of Dobree's οἴκτιρον. The alternation at close interval of the aorist and present imperative of the same verb is attested (see Barrett on *Hip.* 473–74), and the conjecture explains the corruption to the reading of L as easily as Fix's (the first word of 673 was copied also as the first word of 672 and later "corrected" to save the meter). L assigns 673, 676, and 684 to Electra, and while names of speakers have no authority since they probably did not stand in the author's original text, there is no particular reason to differ with L's assignment of 679 ("Avenge these dear children of yours" could easily be spoken by Electra) or 684, where the absence of a paragraphos in 685, and the ease with which unmodified πατήρ fits in her mouth, suggest

[9] Denniston says nothing about the asyndeton in 680 or the γε in 681, presumably because he knew that these did not necessarily indicate change of speaker here. Cf., for the asyndeton, *Med.* 366, and for γε with a relative clause, Denniston, *The Greek Particles* 123.

that Electra is the speaker. (That it is the Paedagogus in Sophocles who urges haste is neither here nor there. We cannot argue, as Denniston does, that only the Old Man is sufficiently detached from the situation to bring Orestes back to the business at hand since 685ff. are also a call to serious business and seem an unexceptionable continuation of 684.) Only 676 gives pause: in Electra's mouth it would mean "Grant these men (Orestes and the Old Man) the right to avenge [my or a] father." If that assignment is correct, the Old Man's role is finished when he offers in 670 to escort Orestes on his way, if incorrect, then six lines later. I give below the passage as I would print it. Elsewhere I defend 685–87, bracketed by Diggle, and impugn 688–92.[10]

Ορ. ὦ Ζεῦ πατρῶιε καὶ τροπαῖ' ἐχθρῶν ἐμῶν,
οἴκτιρον ἡμᾶς· οἰκτρὰ γὰρ πεπόνθαμεν.
Ηλ. οἴκτιρε δῆτα σοῦ γε φύντας ἐκγόνους.
Ορ. Ἥρα τε βωμῶν ἥ Μυκηναίων κρατεῖς,
νίκην δὸς ἡμῖν, εἰ δίκαι' αἰτούμεθα. 675
Ηλ. δὸς δῆτα πατρὸς τοῖσδε τιμωρὸν δίκην.
Ορ. σύ τ', ὦ κάτω γῆς ἀνοσίως οἰκῶν πάτερ,
καὶ Γαῖ' ἄνασσα, χεῖρας ἣι δίδωμ' ἐμάς,
ἄμυν' ἄμυνε τοῖσδε φιλτάτοις τέκνοις.
νῦν πάντα νεκρὸν ἐλθὲ σύμμαχον λαβὼν 680
οἵπερ γε σὺν σοὶ Φρύγας ἀνήλωσαν δορί—
ἤκουσας, ὦ δείν' ἐξ ἐμῆς μητρὸς παθών;—
χὤσοι στυγοῦσιν ἀνοσίους μιάστορας.
Ηλ. πάντ', οἶδ', ἀκούει τάδε πατήρ· στείχειν δ' ἀκμή.

El. 896–906

ὃν εἴτε χρήιζεις θηρσὶν ἁρπαγὴν πρόθες,
ἢ σκῦλον οἰωνοῖσιν, αἰθέρος τέκνοις,
πήξας' ἔρεισον σκόλοπι· σὸς γάρ ἐστι νῦν
δοῦλος, πάροιθε δεσπότης κεκλημένος.
Ηλ. αἰσχύνομαι μέν, βούλομαι δ' εἰπεῖν ὅμως. 900
Ορ. τί χρῆμα; λέξον· ὡς φόβου γ' ἔξωθεν εἶ.
Ηλ. νεκροὺς ὑβρίζειν, μή μέ τις φθόνωι βάληι.
Ορ. οὐκ ἔστιν οὐδεὶς ὅστις ἂν μέμψαιτό σε.
Ηλ. δυσάρεστος ἡμῶν καὶ φιλόψογος πόλις.
Ορ. λέγ' εἴ τι χρήιζεις, σύγγον'· ἀσπόνδοισι γὰρ 905
νόμοισιν ἔχθραν τῶιδε συμβεβλήκαμεν.

[10] See above, note 8. I am now not sure how much force my objection to the tense of θνήσκοντος has: cf. Xen. *Hel.* 2.3.39.

Kvičala's version is defended by Mastronarde (above, note 4) 62, n. 33. Schwinge (above, note 4) 338, is non-committal. See F. Stoessl, "Die Elektra des Euripides," *RhM* 99 (1956) 61–63 for an earlier defense of the transmitted assignments.

Once more we have stichomythy, and once more its rules are violated. In 902 the infinitive ὑβρίζειν has to depend on the construction of either Orestes' question or Electra's previous line. The former is impossible. The latter is equally so in spite of Denniston's attempt to construe it with αἰσχύνομαι.[11] For 900 must mean "Shame prevents me from speaking, but nonetheless I wish to speak." Both the μέν/δέ contrast and the fact that both verbs normally govern an infinitive make this quite incontrovertible. (Cf. *Ion* 934 and Diggle's apparatus there.) So too does the answer in the next line, which bids her overcome her fear and speak. That means that neither αἰσχύνομαι nor βούλομαι is available to govern ὑβρίζειν in 902.

But that is not all that is wrong. Orestes begins this scene by suggesting (896–99) that Electra outrage Aegisthus' corpse physically, leaving it to the dogs or impaling it on a stake for the birds.[12] In 902 Electra uses the verb ὑβρίζειν, which in the context just established most naturally means doing just as her brother suggested. In her next reply she says nothing to correct Orestes' notion of what she has in mind and to explain that she wishes to abuse Aegisthus' corpse verbally. Yet by 905, miraculously, Orestes has divined his sister's hidden thought and tells her to go ahead and *speak*. Something is wrong.

Logic and grammar and that *res ipsa* that is said to be worth more than a hundred codices speak with a single voice here and make it plain that when *El.* 900–6 left Euripides' hand, there were verses before 902 not destined to survive the ravages of time, verses in which Electra told her brother what she wanted to do and he or she supplied a main verb to govern ὑβρίζειν. I cannot manage all the requirements in fewer than four omitted verses. Here is what the passage might have looked like:

Ηλ. αἰσχύνομαι μέν, βούλομαι δ' εἰπεῖν ὅμως.
Ορ. *τί χρῆμα*; λέξον· ὡς φόβου γ' ἔξωθεν εἶ.
‹Ηλ. *νεκρόν* περ ὄντα τόνδ' ὀνειδίσαι θέλω.
Ορ. καὶ μὴν πάρεστι, τῆι τύχῆι τε χρηστέον.
Ηλ. καὶ βούλομαι μὲν ταῦτα δρᾶν, δέδοικα δὲ
Ορ. *τί χρῆμα* δρᾶσαι, σύγγον', ἢ παθεῖν φοβῆι;›
Ηλ. *νεκροὺς* ὑβρίζειν, μή μέ τις φθόνωι βάλῃι.
Ορ. οὐκ ἔστιν οὐδεὶς ὅστις ἂν μέμψαιτό σε.

[11] Denniston's arguments are weak. He claims that αἰσχύνομαι "bears more weight" than βούλομαι εἰπεῖν, and that the latter phrase must mean "I wish to name my wish," rather than "I wish to speak," for which we would require λέγειν. I do not understand the argument about weight. Examples of εἰπεῖν used absolutely in the sense required here are not lacking. Cf. *Hcld.* 182 and fr. 883. A similar attempt at defense is made by Schwinge (above, note 4) 83–84.

[12] His corpse, not his head, as Denniston mistakenly says. See "Where is Aegisthus' Head?" *CP* 82 (1987) 139–41, where I show that in Euripides' play, as in all other treatments of this myth, Aegisthus' head remains firmly attached to his body and that no decapitation takes place.

My *exempli gratia* trimeters, for which I claim no other special merits than that they scan, serve to show how the desiderated sense could have been expressed. In addition, if either of the italicized expressions occurred in the missing lines, as would be quite natural, it is easy to see how the lacuna was caused. Omission happens with especial ease in line-by-line dialogue. Here either of the pairs of italicized words would have made it easier for the eye to slip down the page with greater than wonted speed. The resulting passage was grammatically dubious and dramatically unintelligible, a fact that has escaped editors who do not expect that the most tragic of the poets will necessarily make sense.

Med. 357–61

Xo. φεῦ φεῦ, μελέα τῶν σῶν ἀχέων, 358
δύστηνε γύναι, 357
ποῖ ποτε τρέψηι; τίνα πρὸς ξενίαν
ἢ δόμον ἢ χθόνα σωτῆρα κακῶν 360
[ἐξευρήσεις];

357 post 358 trai. Barthold: ante 358 Ω: om. DLP: del. Matthiae δύστηνε Diggle: -τανε codd. 359 πρὸς ξενίαν ΩL: προξενίαν P et B^c et $^1\Sigma^b$ 361 ἐξευρήσεις (εὑρήσεις O) del. Elmsley

Diggle is right to transpose δύστανε γύναι and to alter the Doric vocalism if he means to save the phrase, for there is no example in Euripides where φεῦ φεῦ is anything but first in its sentence, and these are spoken anapaests where Doric is out of place. But deletion of these two words seems indicated by the convergence of three facts: they are a vocative phrase standing where an interpolator would be likely to put it in ignorance that it violates the regular usage of φεῦ φεῦ, its vocalism is wrong, and it is missing from D, L, and P.[13]

More important is his treatment of the remainder. Diggle takes the majority reading πρὸς ξενίαν rather than προξενίαν of P, the corrector of B, and B's scholiast. Then he must delete ἐξευρήσεις with Elmsley. This ignores both transcriptional and literary evidence. On transcriptional grounds there is a much stronger likelihood that προξενίαν coming right after a ποῖ question would be corrupted to πρὸς ξενίαν than that the reverse occurred (cf. Aesch. *Sup.* 491). We must also suppose on Diggle's view that the monometer in 361 infected even those parts of the tradition where it made nonsense.

The only reason to accept this expensive solution is discomfort with the metaphor, "public guest-friendship, patronage, sponsorship," but the word and its congeners are perfectly suitable metaphors in tragedy: see Aesch. *Sup.* 419, 491, 919, 920 (dub. lect.), Soph. *Tr.* 726, *El.* 1451. In Euripides, it several

[13] Omissions from some portion of the manuscripts is sometimes an indication not of spuriousness but of transposition: see James Diggle, "On the Manuscripts and Text of Euripides, *Medea*," *CQ* 33 (1983) 352–53.

times has its literal and official sense (*Ion* 335, *Hel.* 146, *Andr.* 1103) but also its extended sense (*Ion* 551, and fr. 721). Cf. also Ar. *Thesm.* 576. To clinch the case, however, we must merely note that the Chorus's despairing question alludes to the rescuer Medea thinks may appear, and when Aegeus does appear, a πρόξενος is precisely what he promises to be: see 724, πειράσομαί σου προξενεῖν δίκαιος ὤν. The metaphor occurs once in the play and should not be deleted at its other occurrence.

Med. 1415–19

[Χο. πολλῶν ταμίας Ζεὺς ἐν 'Ολύμπωι,
πολλὰ δ' ἀέλπτως κραίνουσι θεοί·
καὶ τὰ δοκηθέντ' οὐκ ἐτελέσθη,
τῶν δ' ἀδοκήτων πόρον ηὗρε θεός.
τοιόνδ' ἀπέβη τόδε πρᾶγμα.]

I have saved for last the clearest instance in the *Medea* of the close interconnection between literary and textual criticism, the last five lines. Diggle deletes, following Hartung. Reasons of two sorts are adduced by editors for deletion of these lines and similar tailpieces elsewhere. One is the verbatim repetition from one play to another, a repetition more likely, it is said, to be due to actors or copyists than to Euripides. Another is that these lines seem "a little inapposite" (Page). Neither reason will survive serious scrutiny.

Alcestis, Andromache, Helen, and *Bacchae* all end with the same five lines, identical with the *Medea* lines except that in the other four plays, the first line reads πολλαὶ μορφαὶ τῶν δαιμονίων. It would be possible to argue that of these four cases the lines are genuine in one and interpolated in the other three. But such an argument breaks down in the case of the *Medea,* for here whoever added the lines changed the first of them. This is not characteristic of our putative borrower of tailpieces, who is *ex hypothesi* content with what is ready-made and has in this particular case no strong inducement to change a good thing or to be original. The only person with a motive to alter and adapt *Alc.* 1159–63 is Euripides himself, and the reason for the adaptation, discussed below, while good enough to actuate a poet with high standards, would have been too subtle to motivate our putative borrower to improvise an anapaestic dimeter.

When we look at the wording of the substitution, the case grows even stronger. For Zeus is described as the ταμίας of many things. The very same metaphor, with a slightly different sense of ταμίας ("guardian" rather than "dispenser") is applied to the same god at 169–70, where Zeus ὅρκων θνητοῖς ταμίας νενόμισται. Because of the importance of oaths in this play (see below), it is Zeus in particular whose unexpected action in the world the poet wishes to emphasize. We have good reason therefore to think that we have unmasked the adapter and that his name is Euripides, for it is hard to imagine a borrower of the ready-made acting on this motive or hitting on this precise metaphor for Zeus's activity.

Thus far consideration of transcriptional probabilities combined with consideration of other parts of the work combine to make the genuineness of 1415–19 a near certainty. At this point, textual criticism, which has laid literary criticism under contribution, is in a position to repay with interest. For if we once admit the likelihood that these lines are genuine, and, more important, nor merely genuine lines repeated, perhaps perfunctorily, by the poet but lines deliberately adapted by him to this particular play, we find that they throw an unexpected light on the play and that we may remove any doubt about the appositeness of these lines and at the same times cast grave doubt on the completeness and adequacy of the commonest approaches to the play's meaning.

The lines are thought to be inapposite because the role of the gods and of Zeus in particular is not thought to be very great at all, certainly nothing like as great as these emphatic and gnomic lines, prominently placed at the end of the play, would suggest. Yet Zeus in various relevant connections, especially in relation to oaths, is mentioned in 148, 158, 169, 209, 332, 516, 766, 1352, and 1405. (Cf. the other mentions of gods and oaths in 21, 160–63, 439–40, 492–95, 625, 737, 745–55, 802, 915, 919, 964, 966, 1013, 1110, 1115, 1224–30, 1231–32, 1260, 1270, 1284, 1324, 1333, 1389, and 1410.) It is repeatedly suggested by Medea, the Chorus, and the Messenger that the gods will have, or have had, something to do with what befalls Jason, that they are working through circumstances to effect the punishment of Jason himself and possibly Medea as well. A textual note is not the place to set forth a full-scale interpretation of a play,[14] but perusal of the passages above should serve to cast doubt on the usual judgment of Euripides' art as concerned exclusively with the human plane of action. And to the extent that this judgment influenced Diggle's decision to delete 1415–19, this decision is an instance of mistaken literary judgments adversely affecting the constitution of the author's text.

If these discussions carry conviction, certain general conclusions are suggested. First, progress in the establishment or interpretation of the text can be made only by those who relinquish prejudices and predispositions about how sound the text is. At one time the readings of the manuscripts must be defended against misguided criticism, and at another they must be attacked and their misguided defenses exploded. There is no room for *parti pris,* and the consistent conservative, prepared to defend the mss. at all costs, and the thorough-going skeptic, indulging his *prurigo emendandi* in season and out, are equally likely to miss the truth. Second, neither the literary critic who cannot be bothered with the small print at the foot of the page nor the

[14] I hope to publish soon a general interpretation of this play. For a partial interpretation, in connection with another textual problem, see "On Medea's Great Monologue," *CQ* 36 (1986) 343–52.

textual critic who thinks he can leave literary questions to others[15] is well fitted to advance our understanding of classical antiquity's imperfectly transmitted remains. What is needed is the ability to see and weigh all the relevant evidence, to be neither a textual nor a literary critic but a critic *simpliciter*.

[15] When I said, at *CQ* 35 (1985) 314, that editors' choices at *El.* 307–13 and 1292–1307 were a clear case of "the influence of literary upon textual criticism," I did not mean that textual and literary criticism can be separated, but the reverse. On this point, at least, I am in perfect agreement with S. Goldhill (*GRBS* 27 [1986] 158 note 4.)