

Response of P. Kyriakou to the review of C. Michael Sampson of P. Kyriakou, *The past in Aeschylus and Sophocles*

It is self-evident that everyone is entitled to their likes and dislikes. It is also clearly an abuse of a reviewer's license to distort the arguments of a book under review and resort to pithy aphorisms in order to promote one's preferences and idea of sophistication.

The reviewer criticizes me for not writing the book he would have liked to read and review, a misguided attack that has nothing to do with the book under review or its author. He falsely claims that I ignore traditions found in other texts or otherwise known to the audience(s) of the plays and I neglect nuances and distinctions. In the analysis of every play, I discuss thoroughly the authors' mythological and dramatic choices and their impact on members of the audience with potentially diverse expectations (see e.g. 46, 107, 111, 228-31, 254, 315-16, 338-39, 387-89, 405-7, 488). The reviewer also emphasizes in ring-composition at the beginning and end of the review that the book is not the last word on the topic. I never harbored the hubristic ambition for it to be anything of the sort, as it is indeed difficult to imagine the continuation or progress of scholarship on the basis of such a premise.

Many arguments in the book are dismissed as self-evident, a claim with which I naturally disagree. To take just a few examples, as is obvious from a even a cursory review of the literature, it is far from self-evident that the principals of *Persae* would downplay Marathon, that the discussion of the infamous oracle in Aeschylus' *Supplices* is a digression (from what?), or that Deianeira wished to preserve her position as Heracles' institutionally sanctioned prize in Sophocles' *Trachiniae*. This is not the place to argue in detail against such criticisms, the validity of which is left to the readers' judgment. In any case, whatever the merits or problems of the book, the appendices do not dwarf its conclusions, or any other part of it for that matter.

My main complaint, and the review's worst offense, involves the completely unjustified claims that I find fault with Aeschylus' complexity and I shockingly accuse Sophocles of incompetence. The book, and presumably any study of a similar sort and length written by a basically sane person, aims at elucidating the authors' complexity and competence. My arguments about the parts of the plays the reviewer singles out for criticism aim precisely at showing that the choices of the two authors exemplify their subtlety and sophistication. The reviewer has regrettably failed to grasp, or ignored, this simple fact, and the manner I go about arguing, accusing me of wishing to trace Agamemnon's murder *to a single cause* (his italics; see 113, 120), or of failing to investigate what the gap in Philoctetes' memory reveals about his world-view and morality (see 276-80).

I hope and believe that such distortions and misplaced criticisms are not the last word about the book.