

of Electra¹. "Can he be in Argos? . . . It seems He must be . . . And yet . . . Impossible! . . . Yes . . . No! . . . But then again And again Who is this? Orestes! You are not You cheat me Or you jest? . . . I will pretend you are It is! It is!". How futile and wearisome is all this argument and obstinacy, if nothing is really proved, if all the time the question remains visibly where it was, the final belief as weak as the first surmise, and all the rejoinders equally void!

Assuming then that it is a matter of just censure upon the *Choephoroi*, the story being what it is, if the proof of identity is not fairly solid, we have next to ask whether the proof criticised by Euripides is fairly solid. And here it will be well to observe, that Euripides cannot be answered by showing that the arguments are such as might under certain circumstances occur to the mind. It is really a little strange, since after all Euripides was not quite brainless, how many modern respondents would have requested him not to forget, that Electra, when she thus argues, is 'agitated'. For example Seidler², an excellent scholar, gravely observes: "In this ridicule Euripides was wrong. It is a truth perceived by Aeschylus that an anxious and depressed mind will often catch at hopes which have no real ground". Euripides would have been wrong indeed, and withal a transparent fool, if he had censured Aeschylus for doing *what he at that very moment was doing himself*, for attributing these arguments to an anxious and depressed mind. He censures the scene of Aeschylus not because it contains these worthless arguments, but because it contains no others, and because these are treated as sufficient ground for a momentous practical decision. Are they sufficient? That is the only question.

We may be the more brief with the answer, because at this point even the most valiant defenders of Aeschylus hesitate. Even Schlegel, in the midst of his fury, can say no more than that "the seeming improbability of the Aeschylean recognition perhaps admits of being cleared up". The proofs impugned are (1) that a lock of Orestes' hair is like his sister's, (2) that her foot fits his foot-print, (3) that he possesses a piece of her weaving. What is the value of them? Nothing. The first is nothing, the second is nothing; the third, by its nature, is worthless alone, and worthless in the circumstances supposed.

Of the third it might be sufficient to say, what I think will be admitted by any one who will calmly consider the text, that, according to Aeschylus, before Orestes presents himself, and therefore before the

¹ *Cho.* 164—231.

² On Eur. *El.* 520.