CORRESPONDENCE

Professor Robert Eisner writes:

Mr Simon Goldhill does not like my book, *The Road to Daulis* (*CR* 38 [1988], 75–6); he is welcome to dislike anything I write. He finds my style 'can slide into journalese'; he is welcome to his judgements, although this one bespeaks an academic obtuseness I thought had gone out with celluloid collars. He finds my scholarship shaky; many may, or may not. He takes me to task for ignoring a number of studies, most of them published since I handed over my manuscript to the publisher, or known to me but useless to my argument; the rest are prominent in Mr Goldhill's own recent study of Greek tragedy but would be otiose in mine. Most unfortunately, at numerous points in his review he falsely describes the contents of my book, whether from maliciousness or negligence I cannot say. He claims, 'the complexities of Plato... are passed over in a single, trite sentence.' This despite his subsequent objection to my treatment of a Dionysiac allusion in the *Symposium*. In fact, a glance at my index will reveal nearly twenty pages devoted to Plato's use of myth. I thought, if anything, I had rather overdone it. He finds me lax in talking of *the* myth, when I have insisted there are only versions. And yet I warned the reader in the preface (p. x) that despite anyone's attempt to sort out versions they tend in subsequent narrative to 'coalesce into a single, paradigmatic, authorless amalgam'. I might extend considerably my list of instances where I did in fact deal with an issue or problem Goldhill faults me for ignoring or sliding over. Instead I shall close with the wish my book is finding more alert readers than your reviewer.

San Diego State University

Dr Simon Goldhill writes:

I regret that Professor Eisner feels so hurt and writes so intemperately. I note, however, that he does not take issue with the brief summary of his argument that takes up the first third of the review. Since it seems to be criticism rather than description that is objected to, I suppose I shall have to restate the three points E. specifies, even more clearly (at the risk of taking a sledgehammer to a nut).

(A) E. writes: 'He takes me to task for ignoring a number of studies, most of them published since I handed over my manuscript'. I make four references to other scholars' work. (1) I compare E.'s understanding of the *importance of a cultural context* for myth with the recent studies of specifically Athenian myth-making by Loraux, Zeitlin, Vidal-Naquet. As I stressed, those authors were cited for their exemplary unwillingness to do what E. regularly does, namely, to fail to treat in any depth the different contexts for the production of myth in the fifth-century *polis* and elsewhere. (2) I pointed out his version of Freud does not broach 'the relevant historical context of Freud's and other early psychoanalytic and anthropological writers on myth'. By way of contrast, I cited a brief selection of recent work that has attempted such an analysis: Coward, Rudnytsky, Detienne. In both these cases, I used the most recent material to show how far short of the standard of contemporary discussion E.'s study falls. (3) On Freud and femininity I do take him to task, specifically for showing no sign of having read five standard authors on the subject, published between 1966 and 1982 – Lacan, Mitchell, Kristeva, Irrigaray, Gallop. I do not know when E.'s book was sent to the publisher. But I do recognize a wholly insufficient treatment of what is a major field of research. (4) On psychoanalysis and literature, his coverage and understanding of the issues are equally superficial. I mentioned the lack of reference to Felman (1975, 1977, 1978); Johnson (1977), and the authors of *YFS* 55/6 (1977) (the sophistication of whose approaches is in striking contrast to E.'s thoughts); I also regretted the single reference to André Green (1975), a highly influential writer on specifically classical literature and psychoanalysis. One of the jobs of a reviewer is to situate a new book in terms of contemporary debate. In these four areas – each crucial to his argument – I mention other scholars' work to help point out E.'s insufficient grasp of (a) the issues under debate; (b) the way others have dealt with them. I see no reason to change this evaluation.