λαία is a substantive noun, it can stand as an enallage: ‘the hands of young women’. K.’s σύνναιμος (159) does not explain what he thinks is a corruption. As for metre, οὖ for οὐδὲ will do nicely. 124 f. προλπείν ἤνε (159 f., a joint guess of K. and Sir Charles Willink) is brilliant, but I don’t see how ἀνω (ἀνώ, ἀνύτω) can have a complementary infinitive rather than a participle—and a participle meaning ‘causing to leave’ just doesn’t exist. 674 “addressing a male and a king in his prime as ‘my son’ would be bad form” (163 n. 1). The chorus, a chorus consisting of young girls to boot, do in fact so address Etecles at Λ. Τh. 686 (cf. Hutchinson’s valuable note). K. misses the strongest argument against the authenticity of ὁ παῖ. If a sentence opens with a vocative, δὲ can be used after it only with σὺ (with change of addressee) and in questions.

Med. 365 The ‘direct and blatant contradiction’ that K. perceives (169) between this line and the previous one is only caused because he has omitted to translate πω and to consult LSJ s.v. ὀντὸς C VIII 4 c. οὖ πω ταῦτα ταύτα would have meant ‘things aren’t over yet’ (cf. Ar. Εq. 843); πω is here placed after μὴ δοκεῖτε. A shift from “It’s not the case yet, don’t you believe it” to “It’s not the case, don’t you believe it yet” may not be to K.’s taste in logic, but this is precisely the sort of thing that is going on all the time in living speech. 752 ἡλίου θ’ ἄγνον σέλας is excellent, but K. should have told us that this is a proposal made by Porson (reading σέβας) and Musgrave (correcting to σέλας)—it turned up in a MS later. K. should also have referred to Diggle, CQ 33 (1983), 356 f. (now in Euripidea (Oxford 1994), 270 f.), who gives good arguments for σέβας.

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The Lives of Galba and Otho, written by Plutarch, represent the earliest extant information for the events of AD 68-69, momentous years in the history of the Roman Principate. If the author wrote and circulated an interconnected series of biographies by AD 93,
which dealt with the lives of Augustus and his successors down to Vitellius, then a translation and commentary of the two Lives which survive must be a worthwhile exercise. Since Plutarch had visited Rome, northern Italy and some of the battlefields of the civil war, which followed the suicide of Nero, within perhaps four or five years of its conclusion (p. 2), he was in an almost unique position to write from memory. And, where his own experience failed him, he employed, amongst others, a ‘Common Source’ (p. 3-4). This work, the author of which is discussed briefly by Little and Ehrhardt, with reference to other modern discussion, was also later employed by Tacitus, Suetonius and Cassius Dio. Since the accounts of the same events by these later writers do not differ substantially from the one transmitted by Plutarch, it makes his work doubly important as a recognisable link to this lost source for the period. Publication at the beginning of the 90’s may be advanced with some confidence, though L & E, while acknowledging the probability and the date (p. 3, 39, 57 & 59), are a trifle cautious here. A biographical series which culminated with the unfortunate ‘Year of Four Emperors’, but which concluded with Vitellius and not with Vespasian certainly looks likely to have been published under Domitian, younger son of that first Flavian.

Since this volume claims to be a ‘companion’ to Plutarch’s text of the Galba and Otho, it is as an aid to understanding and studying the original that the following notes have been compiled. In terms of a translation, it is refreshing to find the English of current usage and, therefore, a distinct improvement on the Loeb edition which, as the easiest available, is still the most commonly used. While the charms of earlier translations, including the Loeb, may undoubtedly be endearing to some and exasperating to others, for a student in particular, the vernacular of a bygone era can often hamper accessibility to the text and its contents. For example an extract from Galba 8.1-2:

He (Nymphidius Sabinus) thought that Galba was an old man and would hardly have the strength to be carried to Rome on a litter, by reason of his age, for he was in his seventy-third year; moreover, he knew that the soldiery in the city had long been well disposed towards him and were now devoted to him alone, regarding him as their benefactor because of the large gifts which he promised, but Galba as their debtor. (Loeb 221)

Galba was, he said, senile, and at that age it would tax his strength to be carried to Rome in a litter (he was seventy-three years old). He (Nymphidius) had long been popular with the troops in Rome, and now they looked to