

1. TEXTUAL PROBLEMS IN AESCHYLUS' *PERSAE*

It is a depressing experience to work through the multitude of conjectures to the text of Aeschylus that one finds in Wecklein's Appendix and in Roger Dawe's *Repertory of Conjectures*. On p. 3 of that book Dawe himself estimated that between Wecklein and his own publication in 1965 about 20,000 emendations had been suggested. Since then we now have Martin West's 1990 *Studies in Aeschylus*, with an Appendix listing almost 20 pages of new conjectures and earlier conjectures missed by his predecessors.¹ It is particularly sad to realise that almost all of the obvious and certain emendations have been made centuries ago, and that the chances are very small that any scholar in our own day will hit upon a correction that will be accepted by every other scholar. In this respect Aeschylus has perhaps suffered more than other Classical authors. His text is undoubtedly corrupt, and two of his plays, *Supplices* and *Choephoroi*, survive in only one independent manuscript. But it is equally true that his own poetic style is difficult, that his vocabulary, grammar, and syntax cannot always be judged according to the rules for fifth-century Attic Greek that we have all learnt to look for in prose authors of the period. I have therefore much sympathy for conservative textual critics, who, I think, may have the upper hand at present, those who reject wholesale emendation, and insist that we should try as hard as possible to make sense of the text as it has been transmitted to us. This, however, is a dangerous principle to follow. The textual critic's duty is not to defend the *paradosis* at all costs, but to establish or restore what Aeschylus wrote. Sometimes this may be impossible, but at least he or she ought to try. It is one thing to show that the *paradosis* makes sense, but quite another

¹ N. Wecklein, *Aeschyli fabulae, Appendix propagata*, Berlin 1885 (enlarged version 1893); R.D. Dawe, *Repertory of Conjectures on Aeschylus*, (Leiden 1965); M.L. West, *Studies in Aeschylus*, Stuttgart 1990.

to demonstrate that it is the right sense, the sense that Aeschylus himself intended. When faced with a problem of interpretation, we are often tempted to say, 'Emendation here is unnecessary'. That is fine if we mean that we are satisfied that the transmitted text is what Aeschylus must have written. But, if we mean that he must have written it simply because it makes some kind of sense, we are not doing our duty as textual critics. Even interpolators and scribes were not necessarily incapable of writing sense in correct Greek, and some could even scan iambic trimeters. We cannot therefore assume that corruption is always betrayed by incorrect grammar or faulty expression. Even the few lines which have never been suspected by critics could, in theory, be corrupt. And, where the manuscript tradition is itself divided, it is not enough to select the best reading that it offers; for it is quite possible that none of the codices preserves the truth. In the case of *Supplikes* and *Choephoroi* it is particularly foolish to put one's trust in the single Mediceus manuscript. If one considers the numerous occasions on which other manuscripts present superior readings in the plays of the Byzantine triad, it would be naïve to suppose that M is any more reliable when it is the only manuscript.

Dramatic texts have their own peculiar problems, in that we know nothing about how the author's final version was arrived at and how it was then copied. But it is reasonable to suppose that alterations were made to his original draft during the course of rehearsals. Which version then became the standard text? Actors' interpolations cause more trouble for Euripides than for Aeschylus, but for all tragedians one should consider the possibility that an actor might occasionally have forgotten his lines and had to make his own substitution, or even that, quite unconsciously, he replaced the original word with a synonym. After all, it does not matter whether a line should end, for example, with *πόλιν* or with *χθόνα*. Both words represent the concept that the actor has in his mind. I remember many years ago being involved in a theatrical production of Aristophanes' *Frogs*, in a new translation by one of my University colleagues. He had prepared his translation very carefully, and was grieved at rehearsals to find that the actors were much less careful in reproducing his words on the stage; as long as they got the general sense right, they thought that that was all that mattered. There are three places in *Persae*

in which the manuscripts are divided between στρατός and λαός or λεώς: 279, where West,² unlike most editors, prints the less well attested λεώς, explaining στρατός as an intrusive gloss, 728, and 729. Moreover, there are grounds for thinking that στρατός may have replaced λαός or λεώς at 235 and 345.³ No doubt this kind of corruption often does spring from an intrusive gloss, but it is a kind of substitution that in some cases may go right back to the time of the first performance.

On the other hand, the textual critic of a dramatic (or generally poetic) text has one advantage over the critic of a prose text: the constraints of metre provide him with some control. If ever he can be absolutely sure that a text is corrupt it is when it presents a line that is manifestly unmetrical, for example an iambic trimeter with too few, or too many, syllables, or a spondee in the fourth foot. The most certainly corrupt line in *Persae* is 329 [APPENDIX No. 1], which begins in almost all the codices with τοιῶνδ' ἀρχόντων νῦν, an impossible spondee in the second foot. How to put it right is another matter, which I shall not go into now.⁴ Even, however, with such a regular metre as the iambic trimeter we cannot always be so sure. Minor breaches of Porson's Law are generally agreed to be permissible. There are fewer in *Persae* than in Aeschylus' other plays. But what about the more serious one that we find at 321 [APPENDIX No. 2] - Ἀριόμαρδος Σάρδεσιν at the end of the line? There is no real parallel for this in Aeschylus, unless we include *PV* 821 ἡμῖν αὖ χάριν, where, however, one may print ἡμίν, with a short second syllable. The absence of a regular caesura is too common to arouse much suspicion, and sometimes it seems to be deliberately designed to create a laborious effect (e.g. 509 Θρήκην περάσαντες μόγις πολλῶ πόνῳ), but some may feel that *Persae*, with 9 such lines, has more than its fair share; the next highest is *Cho.* with 3.

² M.L. West, *Aeschylus tragoediae*, Stuttgart and Leipzig 1990 (corrected ed. 1998).

³ See R.D. Dawe, *The Collation and Investigation of Manuscripts of Aeschylus*, Cambridge 1964, 11n. and 135.

⁴ Of a host of emendations I mention only Wilamowitz' τόσον μὲν ἀρχόντων and West's τοσόνδέ (Heimsoeth) <γ> (Triclinius) ἀρχόντων.

With lyric metre the rules of strophic responsion can certainly help. If strophe does not correspond with antistrophe one may usually conclude that one of them must be corrupt, and it is not unreasonable to assume that where one provides good sense and the other does not it is the latter that requires to be emended. But, as I have suggested earlier, one should also reckon with the possibility that both are in fact corrupt. Consider the correspondence of 935-40 with 944-8 [APPENDIX No. 3]. The strophe means, 'in salutation for your return, I shall send you this ill-sounding cry, the lamenting voice of a mourner of Mariandynia, concerned with evil'. I shall not even attempt to translate the antistrophe, where there are major problems of text and interpretation. The strophe seems to provide acceptable sense, but it cannot be right. An anapaestic paroemiac period cannot end with the proclitic article. Page's νόστου ταύταν turns it into a full anapaestic dimeter.⁵ But that involves emendation at 944, in order to produce a full dimeter there in responsion. If after all a paroemiac is required one can delete καί with Weil, ἦσω τοι τὰν πάνδυρτον, or with West delete τὰν and posit a lacuna before νόστου. I shall pass over the major problems of this passage, and mention for the moment only 940 and 947. To restore responsion we may delete the second πέμψω in the strophe (so Ya), or we may keep the double πέμψω, but delete ἰαχάν as a gloss on ἰάν. That is better, as πέμψω is less likely to have been added than accidentally omitted. Another approach is, with Passow, to read κλάγξω κλάγξω δὲ γόον in the antistrophe. The delayed δέ is easy to parallel, but perhaps it is unwise to introduce it by conjecture.

The whole question of responsion is complicated by the fact that correspondence does not always have to be exact. One form of dochmiac may correspond with another, and resolved lyric iambics may correspond with unresolved. None of this applies to astrophic lyrics, of which there are quite a number in Aeschylus and the other tragedians. It is fortunately no longer fashionable to try to turn such a passage into a pair of responding stanzas

⁵ D. Page, *Aeschyli septem quae supersunt tragoedias edidit*, Oxford 1972.

by means of wholesale rewriting. The so-called mesode in the parodos of *Persae* (93-100) has suffered greatly from such attempts, as has the epode with which the play ends. Aeschylus has a particular liking for this kind of triadic structure in *Persae*, and the epode at the very end should certainly not be tampered with. As the final *kommos* comes to a close language breaks down almost altogether. Xerxes and the Chorus leave the orchestra in procession to the accompaniment of inarticulate cries, and then, as they disappear from the audience's sight, there is total silence. Despite what some critics have said, there is no closure at the end. Plataea still lies ahead, and we have the sense that the mourning will continue for ever. The metrical structure is perfectly adapted to reinforce that sense, as the non-responding epode leaves us with a sense of unfulfilment. What exactly is allowed and what is forbidden in lyric metres is of course a difficult subject. We know that hiatus and *brevis in longo* are not normally permitted except at period-end, or before exclamations, or after τί, but editors disagree as to whether it might be acceptable more widely. So at *Pers.* 650 Belloni⁶ accepts the hiatus between ἀνίει and Ἀιδωνεύς. In general I tend personally to trust the expertise and judgement of those admirable scholars who can detect metrical anomalies which are unparalleled, or scarcely paralleled, in the whole corpus of Greek lyric metre. I therefore believe, for example, Mark Griffith when he states that 'aneps is never preceded by *brevis* or aneps without intervening pause'.⁷ Those of us who are less expert in such matters would ignore such pronouncements at our peril.

In attempting to decide what Aeschylus is most likely to have written it obviously helps to have some familiarity with his poetic style. This, however, can be dangerous. Far too many editors have confidently rewritten his text on the arrogant assumption that what *they* think he ought to have written must be what he did in fact write. Humility is more fitting in an editor. I mention one place in *Persae* in which one may be reasonably confident that Aeschylus would have preferred one variant reading to another. At 80 [APPENDIX No. 4] the Chorus

⁶ L. Belloni, *Eschilo, I Persiani*², Milano 1994.

⁷ M. Griffith, *The Authenticity of Prometheus Bound*, Cambridge 1977, 265.

describes Xerxes as χρυσονόμου or χρυσογόνου γενεᾶς ἰσόθεος φώς, 'a godlike man of the race dispensed in gold', or 'born of gold'. It astonishes me that almost all modern editors prefer χρυσογόνου to χρυσονόμου (Page is a rare exception), despite the fact that it is less well attested in the manuscripts. Some say that it is the more poetic reading, which I do not think is true, and all argue, correctly, that the reference is to the story of Perseus, the eponymous ancestor of the Persians, the son of Danae, who was impregnated by the golden rain sent by Zeus, or, in the probably later version, when she was visited by Zeus himself in the form of a shower of gold. The epithet recalls all the references to gold and wealth in the opening anapaests. It seems to me that with χρυσονόμου, provided that it is properly translated, we still have the reference to Perseus, but in a much more poetic form than is provided by the flat and tautological χρυσογόνου γενεᾶς. The decisive factor for me is that Aeschylus has a remarkable fondness for compounds in -νόμος, and that he coins them with great flexibility as to the relationship between the two parts of the compound. In the same sentence he has already used πεζονόμοις (or -ός), in which -νέμω has a different sense, 'managing'. It is of course possible that a copyist's eye jumped to the compound in the line above, but it is much more likely that it was γενεᾶς that led to the corruption into χρυσογόνου.

Editors are usually careful to pay attention to the immediate context in which textual problems arise, but they are not always so good at relating them to the wider context of the whole play. The most important textual crux in *Persae* concerns, I think, Müller's transposition of the so-called mesode in the parodos (93-100). The correct interpretation of the entire tragedy depends heavily upon it, and I am sure that Müller was right to transpose. But I have written about this elsewhere,⁸ and will not repeat it here. Not much less important is the passage at 555-7, where the sorrowing Chorus asks why Darius was such a successful king. Page evidently felt that this is the wrong question; the Chorus *should* be asking why Xerxes has turned out to be such a failure.

⁸ A.F. Garvie, "Text and Dramatic Interpretation in 'Persae'", *Lexis* 17, 1999, 21-4.

So Page emended the text. But here the wider context shows that there is nothing wrong with the text. From now until the end of the play the antithesis between Xerxes and Darius is a major theme, and the question that the Chorus asks is one that the audience too must ask, a question to which Aeschylus will provide no easy answer: why, when both father and son pursued the same policy of foreign conquests, did one succeed and the other fail? Editors answer that question in various ways, but the tragedy is, I believe, more complicated than is usually recognised.

Persae begins with much stress on the wealth and luxury of the prosperous and successful Persians. It ends with their total ruin. The greater their initial prosperity, the greater is their fall. It has long been recognised that the recurring theme of clothes plays a large part in creating this effect. Already in the parodos the Chorus has a vision of women tearing their luxurious clothes in grief. In Atossa's dream Xerxes tears his clothes. The appearance of the splendidly dressed ghost of Darius contrasts with the entrance of Xerxes in his rags. In the light of all this it is surprising that, when the Chorus at 276-7 [APPENDIX No. 5] picture the Persian corpses being carried about *πλαγκτοῖς ἐν διπλάκεσσιν*, the text has suffered from so many emendations or improbable explanations; the sense is, 'alas, you speak of our friends' corpses, much-buffed, dipped in the sea in death, carried about wrapped in their floating cloaks' (Prien's simple emendation restores correct iambic responson). A *δίπλαξ* in Homer is a large, double cloak. Whether the Persians actually wore their cloaks in battle is not something that need concern us. What matters is this splendid picture of the great host, with their finery spread round them as they float, now dead, in the water. Seaford⁹ points out that in Homer the word sometimes has funereal associations. So here the splendid clothes have turned into shrouds. Moreover, after *ὀλιβαφῇ* we are probably to think of the robes as having been dyed with purple from shellfish. The sea now receives back that dye, along with the owners of the clothes which were dyed in it.

⁹ R. Seaford, *Reciprocity and Ritual: Homer and Tragedy in the Developing City-State*, Oxford 1994, 339 n.31.

At the very end of the play, in the lyric stichomythia at 1073 [APPENDIX No. 6], the theme of Persian luxury returns when Xerxes orders the Chorus to lament ‘walking softly’ (or, more precisely, ‘luxuriously’). The line repeats 1070, where it is certainly to be deleted. ἀβροβάται is one of a number of ἀβρο-compounds in this play, all of them contributing to the general picture of Persian luxury. Even their manner of walking, like their mourning at 135 (ἀβροπενθεῖς), is a mark of that luxury. The reappearance of the theme at the very end of the play is, however, surprising. West translates, ‘you elegant dancers’, but an ornamental epithet is out of place at this great emotional climax. Xerxes is not describing the Chorus’s talents as ballet- or flamenco-dancers; he is instructing it on how he wants it to leave the orchestra. But in this κομμός of unrelieved suffering and sorrow the days for ἀβρότης are surely past. The Chorus replies, ‘alas, alas, the land of Persia is hard to walk on’. LSJ’s ‘trodden in sorrow’ is too vague a translation. The word makes sense in the wider context only if we take it as a correction of Xerxes’ ἀβροβάται. Far from walking softly or luxuriously it is hard for the Chorus to walk *at all* in a land that has suffered such a shameful disaster. The tragedy is complete. I will say nothing about the extraordinary view of many older editors that in the final *kommos* the audience is meant to laugh contemptuously at the luxurious ways of these barbarians.

At the beginning of this paper I argued that the editor’s job is not to defend at all costs the transmitted text but to establish as far as possible what Aeschylus wrote. Let me give you two examples of what I mean. At 814-5 [APPENDIX No. 7] the ghost of Darius says, according to the manuscripts, that ‘the foundation of our troubles has not yet been laid; it is still being brought up from childhood’. I cannot see that it does Aeschylus any service to defend this nonsense. Aeschylus may often mix his metaphors, but the idea of educating the foundation of a building is too grotesque even for him. Tucker’s ἐκπλινθεύεται (or Page’s εἰσπλινθεύεται, a compound which is not in fact attested), is palaeographically an easy change, and restores a consistent and effective metaphor: ‘the foundation of our troubles has not yet been laid; it is still being built up’. The polarisation of expression is thoroughly Aeschylean. Schütz’s ἐκπιδύεται, which West prefers,

is much less appealing. Since foundations do not 'gush forth', it requires us to take *κακά* awkwardly as the subject,¹⁰ unless, with Housman¹¹ we read *κρηνὶς ἀπέσβηκ'*: 'the spring has not yet been quenched; it is still welling up'. The metaphor is acceptable, but palaeographically this is hard to justify. Secondly, consider 978-80 [APPENDIX No. 8], in the play's final catalogue of Persian names, where the Chorus laments the death of an official known as the King's Eye. In the first line all the manuscripts have τὸν (or τῶν) Περσῶν αὐτοῦ. Editors have gone to extraordinary lengths to defend the indefensible αὐτοῦ, meaning 'there'. Its position inside the complex τὸν...ὀφθαλμόν is almost impossible, and it is much too far from 985 to be the object of ἔλιπε. Nor does it look like a pronoun, equivalent to τὸν σὸν αὐτοῦ, 'your very own eye'. Not surprisingly, editors have been unable to agree as to whether Περσῶν is governed by ὀφθαλμόν or μυρία or πεμπαστάν. Clearly something was wrong with the text, but it was left to Page in 1972 to find the obvious solution. His *ἤ καὶ Περσᾶν τὸν ἄωτον*, 'the finest of the Persians', gives exactly the right sense, and is palaeographically an easy change. A favourite word of Pindar, and used by Aeschylus at *Supp.* 666, it can be employed in the same sort of metaphorical context as ἄνθος, 'flower' at 59. When such a splendid emendation is available, why should anyone prefer to think that Aeschylus wrote something as clumsy and unintelligible as the text that the manuscripts provide? This seems to me to be a rare example of a modern conjecture that deserves to be accepted by everybody. But I do not suppose that it will.

Earlier in this paper I expressed the fear that even where the manuscripts are unanimous and the text has never been suspected

¹⁰ E. Hall, *Aeschylus, Persians*, Warminster 1996, explains that we are perhaps to think of foundations which 'cannot be laid in (undrained or muddy) ground, because water keeps welling up', but I do not see how this can be extracted from the Greek.

¹¹ A.E. Housman, "On Certain Corruptions in the Persae of Aeschylus", *AJPh* 9, 1888, 322-4 (= J. Diggle and F.R.D. Goodyear (eds.) *The Classical Papers of A.E. Housman*, Cambridge 1972, 19-20). His emendation has most recently been accepted by J. Diggle, in P. Finglass, C. Collard, N.J. Richardson (eds.), *Hesperos: Studies in Ancient Greek Poetry Presented to M.L. West on his Seventieth Birthday*, Oxford 2007, 150-2.

one cannot be certain that it is what Aeschylus wrote. I turn back to 944-6 [APPENDIX No. 3], a passage in which, as I said, there are major textual problems. At 945 the relationship between *βάρη* and the two compound adjectives is unusually difficult, even for Aeschylus, and at 946 the three genitives are equally hard to disentangle. But my present concern is only with the one word *σεβίζων*, which, as far as I know, has never been emended, except by Prien to *σεβων* as part of his attempt to restore respension with the strophe. It seems that editors have been so preoccupied with the major problems that they have not had time to consider what *σεβων* or *σεβίζων* could possibly mean in the context. Why on earth should the Chorus want to 'respect' or 'honour' or 'worship' or 'feel awe at' the heavy griefs of the Persians? LSJ explain that it means 'pay a tribute', probably a dirge. This might be acceptable if the Greek could mean, 'paying a tribute by means of a dirge to those who suffer', but it is not what the Greek says. I do not know what the answer is, but it disturbs me that one of the few words in the whole sentence which seems to be safe turns out after all to be suspicious.¹²

Much of what I have been talking about could be applied to other tragic texts, and indeed to Greek texts in general. But *Persae* presents a peculiar problem with its catalogues of Persian names. Even Greek proper names are notoriously liable to corruption in our manuscripts, but foreign ones are infinitely worse, and there are nearly 50 in the play, almost all of them dreadfully mangled by the copyists. At 969 they provide us with no fewer than 8 spellings of Seualkes' name. What is the poor editor to do? Where a name occurs also in Herodotus or Xenophon, that can be a useful check. But how many did Aeschylus simply invent himself, as sounding suitably oriental and exotic for his dramatic purpose? R. Schmitt¹³ has done a splendid job of assessing each name as to whether it is genuinely Iranian, or probably or plausibly or doubtfully Iranian, or genuinely eastern but not

¹² There is a similar problem at 547, *καὶ γὰρ δὲ μόνον τῶν οἰχομένων αἶρω δοκίμως πολυπενθῆ*, where no known sense of *αἶρω* seems appropriate to the context. Blomfield emended to *ἔδω*.

¹³ R. Schmitt, *Die Iranier-Namen bei Aischylos (Iranica Graeca Vetustiora I)*, Wien 1978.

Iranian, or certainly a Greek invention. At one end of the scale we find Artaphrenes, at the other the Greek-sounding Pelagon (959), a name which appears twice in the *Iliad*, belonging to a Lycian and to someone from Pylos. But even when a name is certainly genuine its transliteration into Greek must have been arbitrary from the beginning, and it is impossible to be sure how Aeschylus would spell it. Artaphernes would be a spelling closer to the Iranian original than Artaphrenes, but the latter is metrically guaranteed at 21. The name has become assimilated to the Greek ἄρτιος and φρένες. Nor can we be certain that Aeschylus knew much or anything about the person whose name he uses. It is therefore a waste of time to speculate about whether Artabes (317) and Arsames (37, 308) and Artames (317 v.l.) are all the same man, or whether Amistris (320) is the same as Amistres (21), or why Egyptian Adeues fell from the same ship as Lydian Arkteus (44, 312). Were there two different men called Arcteus, or was a Lydian appointed as the commander of the contingent from Upper Egypt? Is West right to change Sesames (982) to Seisames, the name which is found at 322? In one the α is long, and in the other short. Fortunately most readers of the play are unlikely to be troubled by such trivia, but I would urge you to have some sympathy for the poor editor who has to make decisions.

I suggested at the beginning that present-day editors are very unlikely to hit upon emendations that will be acceptable to everyone. I do not wish, however, to end on an unduly pessimistic or negative note. I do not object when Martin West introduces a large number of new conjectures into his Teubner text of Aeschylus. His discussion in his *Studies in Aeschylus* has often opened our eyes to new ways of understanding and interpreting the texts of the plays. If I am not always convinced by his apparent rewriting of difficult passages, that is not necessarily because I can be sure that he is wrong. Rather, it is because there is not enough evidence for me to be certain that he is right. We ought to keep an open mind. My own feeling is that we should use the obelus more often, to show that we feel that there is something wrong with the text, but cannot be certain as to how to put it right.

Appendix

1. τοιῶνδ' ἄρχοντων νῦν ὑπεμνήσθην πέρι (329)
2. νωμῶν, ὅ τ' ἐσθλὸς Ἀριόμαρδος, Σάρδεσιν (321)
3. πρόσφθογγόν σοι νόστου τὰν
κακοφάτιδα βοάν, κακομέλετον ἰὰν
Μαριανδυνοῦ θρηνητῆρος
πέμψω πέμψω πολύδακρυν ἰαχάν

(935-40)

ἦσω τοι καὶ πανόδυρτον
λαοπαθῇ τε σεβίζων ἀλίτυπά τε βάρη
πόλεως γέννας πενθητῆρος
κλάγξω δ' αὖ γόον ἀρίδακρυν

(944-8)

νόστου τὰν] νόστου ταύταν *Page*, <υυ> νόστου *West*
πέμψω *semel Ya* ἰαχάν *del. Snell* πάνδυρτον
Blomfield καὶ τὰν π. *Anon.* ἦσω τοι τὰν *Weil*
λαοπαθῇ σεβίζων *NdVI* λαοπαθέα σεβων *Prien*
κλάγξω κλάγξω δὲ γόον *Passow*

4. χρυσονόμου γενεᾶς ισόθεος φώς (80)

χρυσογόνου *FQ^{2p}P^pB^{3p}W^{3p}* and *v.l. in ΣΣ*

5. ὀτοτοτοῖ, φίλων
ἀλίδονα σώματα πολυβαφῇ
κατθανόντα λέγεις φέρεσθαι
πλαγκτοῖς ἐν διπλάκεσσιν. (274-7)

πολύδονα σώμαθ' ἀλιβαφῇ *Prien* σπιλάδεσσιν
Hartung, πλακίδεσσιν *Prince*

6. Χο. ἰὼ ἰὼ [Περσὶς αἶα δύσβατος.]
Ξε. ἰωὰ δὴ κατ' ἄστν.
Χο. ἰωὰ δῆτα. ναί ναί.
Ξε. γοᾶσθ' ἀβροβάται.
Χο. ἰὼ ἰὼ Περσὶς αἶα δύσβατος. (1070-4)

