ADDENDA TO THE ARIS & PHILLIPS EDITION OF AESCHYLUS’S
LIBATION BEARERS (Liverpool University Press, 2018)

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These are supplementary notes on points that would have taken up too much space in the edition or have occurred to me since I completed it. References that are not given in full below are given in the Bibliography to the book.

On p. 6 I list those errata (typos and other small-scale slips) that I am aware of. These errata apply only to the initial print run and the e-book, not to any copies printed from 2021 on.

7: I should have referred to L. Kurke, ‘Pindar’s Pythian 11 and the Oresteia: Contestatory Ritual Poetics in the 5th c. BCE’, CA 32 (2013), 101-75. Kurke gives reasons (109-25) for thinking that Pindar’s account of the myth of Orestes is derived from Aeschylus (for instance the speculation on Clytemnestra’s motives belongs to tragedy rather than non-dramatic lyric) and (150-63) seeks to counter Finglass’s argument that the ode must celebrate a victory won in 474 rather than 454. The issue is complex and she may be right. In playing down the importance of Stesichorus she neglects the fact that the nurse’s role in rescuing the infant Orestes is very probably derived from him (and certainly not from Aeschylus) but this is a minor consideration. Pindar’s reasons for alluding to Aeschylus’s tetralogy would remain debatable since not everyone will be persuaded by Kurke’s ‘contestatory ritual poetics’.

8 n. 24: On the popular Athenian conception of Orestes as a dangerous revenant I regret that I neglected a stimulating article by V. Liapis, ‘Ghosts, wand’ring here and there: Orestes the revenant in Athens’ in D. Cairns and V. Liapis (eds.), Dionysalexandros: Essays on Aeschylus and his fellow tragedians in honour of Alexander F. Garvie (Swansea, 2006), 201-31. Besides giving a full account of this conception he argues (207-11) that it strongly influenced Libation Bearers, in which Orestes is ‘an underworld figure’ (207) and ‘an agent of underworld forces’ (211). In particular he draws attention to the invocations of Chthonic Hermes as Orestes’ helper (1-2, 727-9); to the fact that Orestes is called ‘the dead’ (886) following the pretence that he is so; and to the underworld associations of snakes, with which he is equated (543-50, 928).

The case is not altogether compelling. A man can be aided by chthonic powers (to whom Electra also prays at 165 + 124-8) without being himself chthonic; the pretended death does not alter the obvious fact that this Orestes is actually alive; and the underworld associations of snakes are not explicit in the text. Nor should we ever forget the play’s insistent emphasis on Orestes’ role as the agent of Apollo and of justice (see my p. 32). Still, he proves to be an ambivalent figure, both a preserver and a death (1073-4), and it may not be wrong to see him as having a chthonic aspect which paradoxically coexists with the Apolline. The ‘riddle’ of 886 would then have a wider relevance than my commentary seems to give it.

14, ‘The Oresteia was no doubt the last set of plays that Aeschylus produced at Athens’: This overstates the case. The Life may mean that he died in the third year either after producing his Women of Aetna for Hieron or after his arrival in Sicily and this may be a pure fiction unconnected with the fact that he actually died (assuming that the date of 456/5 is accurate) in the fourth calendar year after producing his Oresteia at Athens. In that case we have no evidence that he did not produce plays for at least one further Dionysia, perhaps that of 456.
17: For tombs close to houses see now C. Papadopoulou, ‘The living and their dead in Classical Athens: new evidence from Acharnai, Halai Aixonidai & Phaleron’, AR 63 (2016-17), 151-66, esp. 165. Eur. Hel. 1165-8 gives a specific reason for the siting of Proteus’s tomb in front of his son’s palace, implying that it is not standard practice but not that it is unheard-of.

43, ‘the only manuscript containing all seven surviving plays’: Not true: Mb and Mc both do so.

52 n. 133: In writing κωκυτοίσ’ (150) and ἀχαλκεύτωσ’ (493) I am not claiming that the apostrophe makes any difference to the pronunciation. The point is rather that in a line such as Ἑρμῆς ἥθονε, πατρὸς ἐποπτεύων κράτη (Cho. 1) the mid-line caesura appears to be excused by the virtual presence of a vowel which would bring us to the standard heptameter caesura if it did not happen, so to speak, to be elided (West 1982, 83). Similarly a line such as ύμας ἐπανθίζειν νόμος (Cho. 150) must be excused by the virtual presence of an iota which could have been written if the rest of the line had taken a different turn, since such lines (listed by West) occur too often (in relation to ‘inexcusable’ lines such as Eum. 26) for coincidence. Thus it seems only reasonable to mark the iota as elided. In principle we could take our cue from such lines and always write -οισ’ and -αισ’ in a dative plural before a vowel, reserving -οις and -αις for instances before a consonant or a pause, but clearly this would be misplaced pedantry, besides giving us the impossible task of defining what we meant by ‘pause’ in this context.


82 (app.), 188 on 73-4: φοιβαίνοντες at 73 should be attributed to W. Headlam (Cambridge University Reporter 1328 [4/12/1900], 302) although Tucker thought of it independently.

170 on 7: On seeing Orestes’ sword the audience were no doubt able to predict that it would be used for a less innocent purpose before long. Compare Chekhov’s maxim that ‘If in Act I you have a pistol hanging on the wall, then it must fire in the last act’ (https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Chekhov%27s_gun).

180 on 32: It is perhaps worth noting that on the mirror LIMC Erinys 28, shown on the cover, the menacing Erinys has bristling hair.

231 on 243-5, ‘bringing me respect’: Compare (in a modern edition) Sappho fr. 5.9-10 (in a prayer for the return of her brother): ‘May he wish to make his sister more highly honoured’.


310 on 531-3, ‘as a brief on-line search reveals’: My favourite example was a report in the Arizona Daily Star for 17/05/1912. The article is no longer readily available on line but fortunately I downloaded it:

The Mohave County Miner says: From Topock, at the east end of the Colorado River bridge, in this county, comes one of the most remarkable snake stories that we have ever heard.

The story is vouched for by James W. Quinn, and as the victim of the snake is in the hospital at Needles suffering from a bite of the snake and fright, there is every reason to believe that Mr. Quinn is telling the exact truth.
Recently there was born to a Mexican family at Topock a baby girl. The child thrived nicely until about three weeks ago, when it commenced to fade away. The mother was unable to account for the condition of the child and was greatly worried.

Last Sunday night she was awakened by a sharp pain in her breast and a light being struck it was found that a great bullsnake was suckling her and when she accidentally rolled over it, the reptile bit her.

Greatly frightened over the bite of the snake she was hurried to Needles, where the physician found that the bite was not serious.

An examination of the child disclosed the fact that it was in a starving condition, the snake evidently securing all the woman’s milk during many nights before its discovering. ...

It is thought that the snake had been in the habit in crawling under the covers of the woman’s bed to get out of the chill of the night and had been attracted by the smell of milk while the child was nursing.

That such a thing could occur really passes belief, but nevertheless, the woman and child are at the hospital, where anyone who doubts the story may interview the mother.

A belief in suckling snakes is reported also from Spain, among other places (including Macedonia, as Garvie mentions), and was no doubt brought from there to Mexico.

319 on 574: Having rejected the prophetic present κτείνω (on a balance of probabilities) at 550, can I consistently champion Tucker’s ἔρρει at 574? There is an interesting point of grammar here. At Thuc. 6.91.3 Alcibiades tells the Spartans, εἰ αὕτη ἡ πόλις λαμψάτεται, ἔχεται καὶ ἡ πᾶσα Σικελία, ‘if this city is taken, all of Sicily too is theirs’ (i.e. in Athenian hands). He means ‘all of Sicily too will (already, ipso facto) be theirs’ but he expresses this by means of a vivid or hyperbolic present tense, ‘voilà, it’s theirs’. If Thucydides had written ἔχεται, the sense would have been relatively banal, ‘all of Sicily too will (then) come into their possession’. At Cho. 574, if Aeschylus had written ἔρρήσει (metre permitting), the sense would have been not only relatively banal but tautologous, since it would refer to the same event as νεκρὸν θῆσω. To express the sense ‘he will (already in effect) be a dead man’, the present tense had to be used.

I am not sure why West (1990, 248) says ‘It is doubtful … whether ἔρρει could be used in such a context’. In Tucker’s three examples (Pers. 732, Soph. OT 560, El. 57) the sense is completed by predicative adjectives (as also at Eum. 301, 884), but the verb is used absolutely at e.g. Ag. 419, Eum. 747, Soph. OT 910, El. 925, Eur. Tro. 107, Phoen. 1272, Rhes. 747, Xen. Symp. 1.15, and often in informal curses (ἔρρε and the like). Most of these examples (other than the curses) have an impersonal subject but Eum. 747 and Tro. 107 are sufficient parallels for a personal one. In this use it seems that the sense is not specifically ‘die’ but that a man who ἔρρει must at least be on his last legs – as good as dead for practical purposes (e.g. at Phoen. 1272, ἔρρει σῶν κασιγνήτων βίος, the brothers are alive but doomed) – and that is exactly what we need here.

If ἔρρει is right, line 573 clearly cannot remain unaltered (whatever Tucker thought). Grammar could be restored after a fashion with μολόντ’ (L. Kayser): ‘If … I find him (sitting) on my father’s throne or indeed subsequently coming face to face with me …’. But ‘I find him coming’ is not logical and the

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1 So A. Nijk, JHS 136 (2016), 104-5. For other examples see Kühner-Gerth 1.138.
need to take ἐπειτὰ μοι κατὰ στόμα with the participle makes the line feeble than ever. Deletion is obviously preferable.

Aeschylus would have spelt ἔρρει with a double ρ but the word was very easily misread as ἔρει, coming as it does between two future tenses. An editor then saw that ‘he will speak’ made no sense in the apodosis and decided that it must belong in the protasis (presumably taking the καὶ of 574 as ‘even’). So something had to be supplied to connect ἔρει with ἐὑρήσω and the editor concocted ἢ καὶ μολῶν with an eye on later developments (though the foreshadowing is unsuccessful as Aegisthus will not speak to Orestes); then he filled out the rest of the line with words that helped to cloak the bareness of ἔρει.

To be sure this, together with my καὐτίκ’ and Martin’s βαλών, makes a complex solution, but what alternative is there? A simpler route to an acceptable text is Wecklein’s proposal to delete 573-4, but why should anyone insert such a senseless pair of lines?

322-3: C. W. Marshall, Aeschylus: Libation Bearers (London, 2017), 87-92, argues as I do that Orestes and Pylades do not exit before the song 585-652 but goes further by suggesting that they remain beside Agamemnon’s tomb. I do not feel that this staging is necessarily required for Orestes’ approach to the palace (653) to mirror Agamemnon’s (Ag. 958-72) but it could be right. If so, they must keep their packs with them when they emerge from hiding at 212.

356: For ἔιατρός at 699 I thought of ἄτρος, ‘unwounded’, but it is not a very welcome metaphor; or ἄρρηκτος, ‘unbroken’ (cf. Ag. 505), but it is a drastic change.

399, 423: I should have mentioned that in the final scene Orestes’ hands, as well as his sword, are visibly bloody (1055), as they will still be at Delphi (Eum. 41-2). Logically, then, they should already be bloody at 892. Although Aegisthus’s blood is far less significant than Clytemnestra’s, it is not wholly insignificant since even after a justifiable homicide a killer was felt to need purification.

400-1 on 896-8: Clytemnestra’s purpose in baring her breast is radically misunderstood by A. Bierl, ‘Klytaimestra Tyrannos: Fear and Tyranny in Aeschylus’s Oresteia (with a Brief Comparison with Macbeth)’, Comparative Drama 51.4 (2017), 528-63, at 546.

We may guess that the breast remains exposed as long as Orestes hesitates but no longer. The actor, then, lets it slip back inside his costume after 903.

413, ‘the [dochmiac] metre may have been felt to suit any strong emotion’: Note however L. P. E. Parker, The Songs of Aristophanes (Oxford, 1997), 205-6: ‘Dochmiac does not become a metre for rejoicing until the late fifth century. The chorus’s use of it at Cho. 935ff. = 946ff. reflects the distraught and ambiguous character of their song of triumph.’

423: E. Bakola, ‘Seeing the invisible: Interior Spaces and Uncanny Erinyes in Aeschylus’ Oresteia’, in A. Kampakoglou and A. Novokhatko (eds.), Gaze, Vision and Visuality in Greek Literature (Berlin, 2017), 163-86, argues at 171-4 that the robe is spread out not by attendants but by the Chorus, who visually evoke Erinyes and are identified with them at 1048-50 (δῆμῳ γυναικῶν being retained).

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2 Double consonants were in general use by about 480: L. Threatte, The Grammar of Attic Inscriptions 1 (Berlin, 1980), 511.

3 For the use of ‘Kensington gore’ there see A. L. Brown, JHS 102 (1982), 31.
I think she is wrong. Choruses are not generally entrusted with mechanical tasks; this chorus’s handling of the libation jars is an exception but it is given a degree of emphasis and motivation that is lacking here. At 983 the imperative without a vocative or transitional formula is normal in instructions to attendants and Bakola cites no parallels for it in an address to a chorus. At 1048 the idea (for which Verrall should have been credited) that Orestes identifies the Chorus as Erinyes is hardly in line with what its leader has just said (1044-7) and is anyway illogical since he would not then call them ‘servant women’.

427-8: The suggestion that the passage 997-1004 is an afterthought by the poet prompts comparison with _Eum_. 858-66 as treated by Sommerstein 1989a. The two passages are of similar length (eight lines and nine). Both come in epirrhematic exchanges and help to make the speeches that contain them much longer than others by the same character in the same scene. Each also fits badly in its immediate context, failing to connect with the lines that precede it and being followed by a line (Cho. 1005, _Eum_. 867) which does connect with them. Both are detachable (in the sense that, if they were absent, we would not suspect that anything was missing) but both are very difficult to assign to an interpolator (though Dindorf’s deletion of _Eum_. 858-66 is accepted by Taplin and others) and both are striking and highly wrought ‘set pieces’ which Aeschylus and his admirers might have been keen to preserve.

The passages differ in that an alternative place can be found for Cho. 997-1004 (preferably after 982, less well after 990 or 1013) but hardly for _Eum_. 858-66 (it would fit better after 912, as Weil saw, but would be fairly intrusive even there). It is possible, however, that neither passage was designed to fit anywhere in the text that we have. Perhaps both are additions made in the margin before Aeschylus had decided how to integrate them (whether or not he later did so) or perhaps they are relics of an early draft, belonging in a context that does not survive. We might certainly expect that any noticeable textual wrinkles would have been ironed out in the version performed at the Dionysia of 458 but unfortunately we have no guarantee that that is the version passed down to posterity.

In practical terms it may still be best for the editor of _Libation Bearers_ to transpose 997-1004 to a position where it fits reasonably well. If, however, we had a special sort of bracket to place round passages which cannot plausibly be assigned to an interpolator but do not belong in the transmitted text, we might fairly employ them for Cho. 997-1004 as well as _Eum_. 858-66 (they would also come in useful for _Eum_. 104-5 and perhaps for the Oceanus scene _PV_ 284-396).

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4 She is decidedly wrong at p. 172 n. 46 to enlist Taplin 1977, 358, in support of her view that no attendants are present. She had only to read the previous page.


6 Admittedly the passage has no shortage of internal difficulties. I find it hard to believe with Sommerstein that 864 can mean ‘Let there be external war, and plenty of it’. The Greeks’ attitude to war certainly differed from ours but does any of them (let alone Aeschylus) ever express such an extreme sentiment? Sommerstein himself cites Hdt. 8.3.1 for ‘the normal Greek attitude’. (Also ἑξετασθέντος is better taken as predicative, ‘Let war be external’.) It is not for nothing that some critics want οὐ μόλις παρὼν to be parenthetic, ‘and there is plenty available’. If this is not compatible with the paradosis, we could consider writing (οὐ μόλις πάρων); but better sense would be made by οὐ μόλις παρὼν (acc. absolute) followed by e.g. <θύραζες ἐρίζεισθαν παντί καρφετῷ λόγῳ>: ‘as there is ample opportunity <to fight abroad for every staunch brigade> in which there is any fierce passion for glory’.
ERRATA

80, app.: for ‘44’ read ‘42’.

97, 1st line of Electra’s speech: delete ‘who’.

100: incorrect line number at 300.

120, app. on 568: for δόμοις read δόμοισ

135, line 757: for ‘the innards of children’ read ‘children’s young innards’.

160, app. on 1041a-b: for ἐποσύνθη read ἐπορσύνθη

188, on 73-4: indent (further) the line χερομὺς ἁδροτὸν φόνου.

190, on 83: after ‘West’ add ‘1978’.

228, 10th line from bottom: after ‘found’ insert ‘in’.

232, line 20: for ‘on the hands’ read ‘in the hands’.


260, line 14: for ‘possible’ read ‘possibly’.

383, on 819: for ‘πλοῦτον, ‘wealth’’ read ‘πλοὺτον (sic: πλοὺτος is ‘wealth’).

400, 12th line from bottom: for ‘12067’ read ‘1206-7’.

420, on 965-71: for ‘1900’ read ‘1990’.

434, on 1007-9: for ‘Orestes’s’ read ‘Orestes’.

437, line 8: for ‘on them’ read ‘on it’.

469, Argonauts: for ‘635,7’ read ‘635-7’.

476, Nisus: add 619.