

## APOLLO'S LAST WORDS IN AESCHYLUS' *EUMENIDES*

When exactly does Apollo leave the stage for the last time in the *Eumenides*? Even in a play whose staging is as notoriously anomalous as is the case in this one (and in which Apollo's first and second entrances too have been the object of vigorous discussion<sup>1</sup>), the question of the precise timing of the Delphic god's final exit is particularly perplexing. The last lines assigned to him by name in the Mediceus occur in the sets of paired trimeters with which he and the *coryphaeus* accompany and comment on the voting by the human jurors (711–34).<sup>2</sup> But of course the assignment of speakers in M is woefully inadequate, and no editor feels much constrained by its lack of indications in the following lines or elsewhere. Orestes invokes Apollo anxiously at 744, and no one doubts that Apollo is still there on stage to be addressed by him. At 748 M indicates solely with a *paragraphos* (the Triclinian manuscripts have no mark here) the first of four lines in which care is urged in counting the votes and is justified with a formally balanced gnomic reflection. Although Wellauer assigned 748–9 to Orestes and 750–1 to the chorus,<sup>3</sup> the particle  $\delta'$  in 750, especially in a gnomic context in which it is not indispensable, must surely mean that whoever spoke that line must also have spoken the preceding one and hence that all four lines belong to the same speaker. Given that Athena intervenes as a new speaker at lines 752–3 in order to announce the result, that the *coryphaeus* is hardly likely to be worried at the moment about the danger of a single vote destroying a household (751), and that the tone of the gnomic lines is far too serene for the speech to be assigned to Orestes,<sup>4</sup> all editors are almost certainly right to have followed Victorius<sup>5</sup> in giving the four lines to Apollo. But they seem to be his very last words: after 751 no edition or translation shows Apollo saying anything further.

When, then, does Apollo leave the stage? Whether or not we assign lines 676–7 to Apollo,<sup>6</sup> it is impossible to imagine him exiting before the verdict has been announced (especially if it is he who has urged care in counting the votes at 748–51 just before that announcement is made). So he must leave sometime after 753. But when? And in any case why does he leave without a single word of farewell? In Greek tragedy,

<sup>1</sup> I hope to return to these other two questions soon in a separate study.

<sup>2</sup> In fact, in this exchange M only indicates Apollo by name at lines 713, 717, and 725; lines 721 and 729 are only marked by a *paragraphos*, but there can be no doubt that Apollo is their speaker and is being indicated as such.

<sup>3</sup> A. Wellauer, *Aeschyli Tragoediae II* (Leipzig, 1824), 283.

<sup>4</sup> Pace F. J. A. Wieseler, *Coniectanea in Aeschyli Eumenides* (Göttingen, 1839), 151, and O. Taplin, *The Stagecraft of Aeschylus. The Dramatic Use of Exits and Entrances in Greek Tragedy* (Oxford, 1977), 403, n. 3.

<sup>5</sup> P. Victorius, *Aeschyli tragoediae VII* (Geneva, 1557).

<sup>6</sup> So H. Weil, *Aeschyli tragoediae* (Leipzig, 1907<sup>2</sup>), and R. P. Winnington-Ingram, *Studies in Aeschylus* (Cambridge, 1983), 219. The assignment is supported by the archery metaphor of 676, which might be expected from Apollo, and by the reference to the sanctity of oaths in 680, characteristic of the Erinyes. But M, impossibly, assigns both 676–7 and 679–80 to the chorus, and the editors disagree: *Aeschyli septem quae supersunt tragoedias*, ed. D. L. Page (Oxford, 1972) follows Weil and Winnington-Ingram; M. L. West, *Aeschylus Tragoediae* (Stuttgart, 1990) follows S. Karsten, *Aeschyli Agamemnon* (Utrecht, 1855) in assigning 676–7 to the chorus and 678–80 to Apollo.

speakers do not simply walk off without explicitly announcing to the other characters that they are doing so, for the benefit of the audience and of future directors<sup>7</sup>—above all when the speakers are ones of the dramatic and theological importance of Apollo. Did Aeschylus choose to violate this norm in the present case, and if so for what purpose?

The difficulty has been well analysed by Taplin.<sup>8</sup> Five approaches have been taken to resolving it, but none of these is really plausible:

1. Does Apollo exit between 753 and 754, just after Athena's announcement of the result of the vote and before Orestes' long speech of thanks? Many editors and commentators think so.<sup>9</sup> But what advantage could Aeschylus possibly have gained by having the god leave the stage immediately at this point without a word of thanks or farewell to anyone? Apollo is not a courtroom reporter who must rush off to file his story as soon as the verdict has been made public: yet what other reason could he have for such a precipitate departure? Would we not expect him to thank Athena and the Athenians, who had welcomed him to their city and who together had saved Orestes? Would not considerations of the courtesy customary among gods mean that Apollo's departure without some kind of formal salutation to Athena could only be interpreted as a deliberate affront to her? Might we not expect Apollo at the very least to bid farewell to Orestes, whom he had protected until now but whom he would be leaving forever without even a word of farewell? Verrall suggested that the audience's focus upon Orestes' excited response to his acquittal would have distracted them from Apollo's silent departure;<sup>10</sup> but this sort of clever trick could be excused only if Aeschylus were obliged for some reason to make Apollo leave unnoticed (but no such reason can be imagined here), and even so it is far from certain that the spectators would not instead have been far more distracted and confused by the sight of the magnificently attired and accoutered Delphic god suddenly and silently slinking off. Sommerstein argues that Orestes' final speech, which thanks Athena and Athens far more effusively than Apollo, makes more sense if Apollo is no longer present;<sup>11</sup> but in fact Orestes' gratitude is an immediate response to the announcement of his acquittal and therefore is directed quite understandably above all to those who by their vote were most directly responsible for the favourable verdict, and his reference to the divine triad of Athena, Apollo, and Zeus (758–60) will seem extremely odd if—unlike Athena (who has been on stage now since 566 and will remain there until the end of the play) and Zeus (who has not been seen through the whole trilogy but whose ultimate responsibility for all the action has been stressed repeatedly since the parodos of the *Agamemnon*)—Apollo, alone of the three, has left just a few moments before without a word of explanation. Indeed, if Aeschylus wanted to distract the audience from Apollo's departure, why did he have Orestes mention him at all?

<sup>7</sup> Taplin (n. 4), 8–9. In tragedy, there are indeed some cases in which the exit is not immediately signalled verbally, but these are not exceptions to the rule because they occur under specifiable conditions (e.g. just before a choral song) which do not obtain here, and because the precise moment of the exit is always easy to establish. In comedy, of course, matters are different.

<sup>8</sup> Taplin (n. 4), 403–7.

<sup>9</sup> So *inter alia* A. W. Verrall, *The Eumenides of Aeschylus* (London, 1908), 136–7; P. Groeneboom, *Aeschylus' Eumenides* (Groningen, 1952), 206; A. H. Sommerstein, *Aeschylus Eumenides* (Cambridge, 1989), 234; V. di Benedetto et al., *Eschilo, Oresteia* (Milan, 1995), 535–6, n. 124.

<sup>10</sup> Verrall (n. 9), 136–7, followed by di Benedetto (n. 9), 536, n. 124.

<sup>11</sup> Sommerstein (n. 11), 234. See too Taplin (n. 4), 405.

2. Alternatively, does Apollo leave upon the conclusion of Orestes' speech, exiting together with him between 777 and 778? This suggestion has also met with considerable favour.<sup>12</sup> After all, in this case Apollo would at least be present to receive Orestes' thanks in line 758. But then why does Apollo not say anything himself, to Orestes or to Athena and the Athenians, but simply troop off in silence together with his protégé? Orestes' long speech of thanks and farewell would make Apollo's silence, by contrast, all the stranger. As Taplin observes, when a linked pair of characters exits, it is the more important one to whom the words of farewell are assigned;<sup>13</sup> and even if it is obvious that by this point in the play Athena has become more significant for its meaning and dynamics as a whole than Apollo, it is not after all with Athena but rather with Orestes that the pertinent comparison must be made, and it is no less obvious that Orestes is no more important from this point on than Apollo is. Apollo is, after all, a major Olympian god and is in no sense less important than Orestes—Apollo is not Orestes' henchman.

3. Or does Apollo leave at some point during the course of Orestes' speech, sometime between 754 and 777? So Wilamowitz, and a few who have followed him.<sup>14</sup> But as Taplin remarks, this compromise solution combines all the disadvantages of the first two ones examined.<sup>15</sup> There is no passage in Orestes' speech which indicates that this specific moment is one in which Apollo could exit appropriately, and in the absence of such a clear signal it would seem extraordinarily odd, indeed quite rude, for the god simply to walk off stage in the middle of Orestes' words.

4. Might Apollo have stayed on in silence beyond Orestes' exit until the very end of the play, exiting then as part of the final procession, together with Athena, the Eumenides, and their human escorts? Although this was suggested by Scott and is considered possible by Podlecki,<sup>16</sup> it can surely be ruled out. Not only is there no parallel in all of Greek tragedy for such a sustained presence of a silent protagonist ('Aeschylean silences' are quite different). What is more, on this view Apollo would unaccountably be ignored, despite his presence, by the Erinyes, who would indeed have good reason to launch their tirades not only against Athena and the Athenians but also against him. Above all, Apollo is quite irrelevant to the final section of the play, which deals only with Athenian religion and institutions with which the god of Delphi has nothing in common: why then should he remain?

5. Finally, Taplin suggests that a farewell speech of Apollo might have fallen out of the text in a hitherto undetected lacuna.<sup>17</sup> But he offers the suggestion only tentatively and himself acknowledges that such a postulated lacuna has left absolutely

<sup>12</sup> So *inter alia* G. Hermann, *Aeschyli tragoediae* (Leipzig, 1852), 2.631, *ad v.* 769; A. Sidgwick, *Aeschylus Eumenides* (Oxford, 1902<sup>3</sup>), 47; N. Wecklein, *Äschylos Orestie* (Leipzig, 1888), 306; A. J. Podlecki, *Aeschylus Eumenides* (Warminster, 1989), 15, 183.

<sup>13</sup> Taplin (n. 4), 405.

<sup>14</sup> U. von Wilamowitz-Moellendorf, *Aeschyli tragoediae* (Berlin, 1914), 320 *actio*, *ad v.* 778, and *Griechische Tragödien II. Orestie* (Berlin, 1904<sup>4</sup>), 287, followed e.g. by P. Mazon, *Eschyle* (Paris, 1949<sup>4</sup>), 2.161.

<sup>15</sup> Taplin (n. 4), 406.

<sup>16</sup> W. C. Scott, 'Lines for Clytemnestra (*Agamemnon* 489–502)', *TAPhA* 108 (1978), 259–69, at 265, n. 18; Podlecki (n. 12), 15, 183.

<sup>17</sup> Taplin (n. 4), 406.

no trace in the text.<sup>18</sup> This is clearly an *ad hoc* hypothesis invented only so as to explain away this difficulty, and it is not supported by any evidence at all.

Given the complexity of this problem and its apparent recalcitrance to any easy solution, it is not surprising that some scholars, attempting to make a virtue of necessity, have tried to explain the oddity of Apollo's exit as the expression of a judgement on his character that Aeschylus would have us make. Thus Wilamowitz suggested there was something supernatural and awe-inspiring in Apollo's disappearance;<sup>19</sup> but it is inexplicable on this view why no one on stage should comment upon such a marvellous exit, and anyway, given the constraints of Aeschylus' theatre, Apollo could not have exited in any other way than by foot, quite unmiraculously.<sup>20</sup> Symmetrically, those who think Aeschylus wants us to view Apollo here as a shady character, as a sophisticated and rather hysterical shyster, sometimes try to find evidence in support of this view in the difficulties involved in ascertaining Apollo's exit;<sup>21</sup> but the question of how a character leaves the stage is of a completely different order from that of his moral quality—the former is a matter of staging, the latter of ethical interpretation, and the entrances and exits of even the most evil characters in Greek tragedy are properly announced—so that even if this general interpretation of Apollo were cogent (it is not) it could not find support in such a dramaturgical issue or contribute anything towards resolving it.

But there is in fact a very simple solution to this problem, one that as far as I know has been proposed only once, by Taplin in a footnote in which he immediately discarded it,<sup>22</sup> and which since then seems to have been entirely forgotten. In fact, it was for insufficient reasons that Taplin rejected this solution, and it is supported crucially by an additional argument which he did not recognize: given that it solves both this difficulty and another, recently discovered one elegantly and simply, it is surely time to propose it anew and to argue for it more fully.

We need only assign what are transmitted as the last three lines of Orestes' speech instead to Apollo. The result is the following:

[illegible]

<sup>18</sup> Taplin (n. 4), 407.

<sup>19</sup> U. von Wilamowitz-Moellendorf, 'Die Spürhunde des Sophokles', *NJb* 29 (1912), 449–76, at 455 = *Kleine Schriften*. I. *Klassische griechische Poesie* (Berlin-Amsterdam, 1971), 356 and n. 1; cf. his *Aeschyli tragoediae* (n. 14), 320 *actio*, ad v. 778 ('Orestes exit; Apollo antea evanuerat.') and *Griechische Tragödien* (n. 14), 248.

<sup>20</sup> So Taplin (n. 4), 404.

<sup>21</sup> Winnington-Ingram (n. 6).

<sup>22</sup> Taplin (n. 4), 406, n. 1.

ἀμηχάνοισι φάρξομεν δυσπραξίαις  
 ὁδοῦς, ἀθύρους καὶ παρόρνιθας πόρους 770  
 τιθέντες, ὡς αὐτοῖσι μεταμέλη πόνος·  
 ὀρθουμένων δέ καὶ πόλιν τὴν Παλλάδος  
 τιμῶσιν αἰεὶ τήνδε συμμάχῳ δορί,  
 αὐτοῖσιν ἡμεῖς ἔσμεν εὐμενέστεροι.  
 Ἀπ. καὶ χαῖρε, καὶ σὺ καὶ πολιτισσοῦχος λεώς· 775  
 πάλαιμ' ἄφυκτον τοῖς ἐναντίοις ἔχοις,  
 σωτήριόν τε καὶ δορὸς νικηφόρον.<sup>23</sup>

Palaeographically, all we have done has been to restore a missing *paragraphos* in the margin next to line 775: we have not emended the text of Aeschylus at all but have only added to it a marginal sign which often gets lost in transmission. But by doing so we now have, first, a speech of gratitude by Orestes in which he announces his departure, expresses thanks to Athena and her city for saving him in his hour of need, and promises in exchange that in the future, should Argos for some reason ever decide to attack them, they will find that his hero cult will protect them; and, then, a speech of farewell by Apollo in which he salutes the goddess and her people, and expresses the wish that they may indeed benefit from Orestes' promised help. Once Apollo has said goodbye, Orestes and he can leave together.<sup>24</sup> With the *καί* with which he begins, Apollo associates himself with the speech of his protégé and provides it with his own continuation and conclusion; and once Apollo has said good-bye, Orestes need not do so himself—indeed it would be impolite and anticlimactic for him to do so after a god has spoken—and he can leave, accompanied by his divine sponsor.

This solution is so simple that it is surprising that it was not proposed long ago. Taplin rejects it because 'the prayer-like sentiment is more fitted to a mortal, and the phrase *καὶ χαῖρε* (775) is particularly common just before the end of a farewell speech.'<sup>25</sup> Neither objection is cogent. I shall return to the former in a moment. As for the latter, it is entirely true that this phrase is a common feature of farewell speeches, appearing towards their end in order to introduce a final section—but only in Euripides. Bond, whom Taplin cites, lists eight passages in Euripides' works.<sup>26</sup> But Taplin does not note that the phrase never occurs at all in Sophocles, and occurs only in this one passage in all of Aeschylus' transmitted works.<sup>27</sup> Clearly, *καὶ χαῖρε* used in this way is a stylistic mannerism peculiar to Euripides, with which he signalled to his (perhaps restive) audience that long speeches of farewell were now coming to a close. There is no reason whatsoever to suppose that Aeschylus' use of the phrase need have been at all like Euripides', and no reason to discard this solution simply because Euripides used the same phrase differently.

The question of what Taplin calls the lines' 'prayer-like sentiment' is more complex,

<sup>23</sup> I print West's text (n. 6), without his unnecessary conjectures at lines 765–6.

<sup>24</sup> Oddly, Taplin (n. 4), 406, n. 1 supposes that, if lines 775–7 are assigned to Apollo, Orestes must be thought to leave after 774. This is not necessary and not at all likely. Orestes does not say good-bye; it would be strange for him to walk off without doing so. And it would be no less strange for Apollo to wait for him to exit and then to say the last three lines on his own.

<sup>25</sup> Taplin (n. 4), 406, n. 1.

<sup>26</sup> G. W. Bond, *Euripides Hypsipyle* (Oxford, 1963), 126, refers in his note on *Hypsipyle* fr. 759a.1588 (67) Kannicht to seven other passages in Euripides: *Alc.* 1149, *Phoen.* 1453, *Or.* 1068, *Ion* 1363, *Hipp.* 1437, *Heracl.* 600, *Erechtheus* fr. 362.33 Kannicht. To this list should be added *Ion* 1604, *IT* 708, *Hel.* 1686, *IA* 1625. In Euripides the phrase also occurs at *Hel.* 592 in stichomythia and at *Tro.* 354 with a different meaning.

<sup>27</sup> Nor is it found in the *PV* nor in the *Rhesus*.

and in fact opens the way to demonstrating that this remedy is not only useful but in fact indispensable. Taplin is clearly referring to the optative *ἔχοις* in line 776. Is it indeed prayer-like, as he suggests? Grammatically, we can take it either as an optative expressing a wish or as a milder form of the imperative. But, as West seems to have been the first to notice,<sup>28</sup> in neither case does it make any sense for Orestes to speak this sentence. Orestes has just asserted at some length, in considerable detail, and in a tone of absolute certainty, that he will provide effective defensive help for Athens after his death: note the permanence and indubitability of *τὸ λοιπὸν εἰς ἅπαντα πλειστήρη χρόνον* | *ὀρκωμοτήσας* (763–4), the personal guarantee of *αὐτοὶ γὰρ ἡμεῖς ὄντες ἐν τάφοις τότε* (767), the confirming repetition of *τάμὰ . . . νῦν ὀρκώματα* (768) after *ὀρκωμοτήσας* (764), and the personal pronoun and present tense of *ἡμεῖς ἐσμεν* (774) which lend greater reality, concreteness, and emphasis to the close of his speech. After all this, for Orestes to utter a wish in the optative that Athena might have what he has just offered as guaranteed is not only hopelessly anticlimactic but also quite illogical. Suppose you have received the following email: 'Congratulations! You have just won €10,000,000.00 in the Greenland national lottery. We have done all the testing and controlled all the results, and we confirm to you with our most secure guarantee that you are certainly the winner. So good-bye for now, and we hope you have really won this prize.' Would you not be suspicious? So this cannot be an optative expressing Orestes' pious wish; but by the same token it cannot be an imperative either—what sense would it make for anyone to tell someone to 'have' precisely what one has just said one will certainly bestow?

Given these difficulties, it is quite understandable that West should have contemplated emending *ἔχεις* for *ἔχοις*.<sup>29</sup> But the conjecture is less than fully satisfactory,<sup>30</sup> and West can certainly be forgiven for having confined it to his apparatus rather than introducing it into the text. For the problem can be solved far more elegantly by simply assigning lines 775–7 to Apollo. Of all the characters on stage, it is he who can best express the well-meaning wish that the promise made just now by a mortal (whose knowledge of the future can only be partial at best) will indeed turn out later to be effective—his optative expresses not doubt, but benevolence.

Thus reassigned, Apollo's three final lines provide a fitting conclusion to this part of the tragedy. In lines 754–74, Orestes, understandably, emphasizes his relief and gratitude, first by indicating what his acquittal means for him personally, then by recompensing his benefactors by promising help to them in the future. The first half of his speech (754–61) points to his future life as a mortal, but the second half (762–74) broadens the temporal perspective beyond his death to include his future efficacy as a dead but potent hero. Thereby is further reinforced a transition, already initiated in the thanks to the divine triad of 758–60, from the here and now into a religious dimension. This leads naturally from the mortal Orestes as speaker to the god Apollo who alone can fittingly close this section of the play (as he had already alone been able to open the dialogue with Orestes at its beginning, line 64).<sup>31</sup> In his last words, with befitting brevity and dignity, Apollo bids farewell for both Orestes and himself to his divine half-sister Athena and to the people of her city, expressing

<sup>28</sup> M. L. West, *Studies in Aeschylus* (Stuttgart, 1990), 289; cf. his edition (n. 6), 384.

<sup>29</sup> West, *Studies* (n. 28), 289, cf. his edition (n. 6), 384.

<sup>30</sup> With *ἔχεις*, Orestes' final words would be a superfluous repetition of his offer of help; and for him to describe that help as a *πάλαισμά' ἄφυκτον* would seem fulsome or overweening. The future might be preferable but is excluded by the metre.

<sup>31</sup> I hope to return to this controversial question too in another context.

the wish that the help offered by Orestes will keep it safe in the future. Then Apollo and Orestes leave together by the same *eisodos*, concluding the Argive and Delphic portions of the *Oresteia*, and the purely Athenian climax of the trilogy can commence—with a dangerous new divine threat to Athens' safety which only Athena herself will be able to ward off.

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