

DOORS AND PERSPECTIVE IN *CHOE*.

There is evidently no skene in the early plays of Aeschylus and the locale changes easily.¹ But in the *Oresteia* (and afterwards) a skene fixes the locale, though only for what happens on the stage. In *Ag.* it represents an outer wall. In *Choe.* it is not at first in the arena of action and so not in the path of vision, but it represents the wall by 584 when Electra enters the house, or at least by 653 when Orestes shouts to a doorkeeper. In *Eum.* 1–234 the skene represents (unless I am mistaken) an inner wall; the stage is an interior; and when Apollo enters from the far side at 179 (to our surprise), he seems to be coming from the adyton. The orchestra is still a locale unbounded as it was before. The tomb of Agamemnon in *Choe.* 1–651 is thought an indefinite distance from the house, not merely a lion's leap away. A temple of Athene becomes the Pnyx at *Eum.* 566 and then the hill of Ares at 685.

It has seemed to A. W. Pickard-Cambridge, N. G. L. Hammond, and S. Melchinger,² as it seems to me, that there are three doors in the skene. The middle one (I believe) is a broad two-leaved gate, with a door cut into it, which may be opened while the leaves remain shut. At one side there is a door into the women's quarters (878); at the other side, a door into the men's (712). These may be in the same plane as the middle door, or they may be in paraskenia.³ E. Simon too favoured three doors, seeing that the door was a common motif in decoration, but held on the authority of Pollux (4.124) that the left-hand one was never used.⁴ Are not all three doors in use at *Choe.* 875–85? Or should we, from elsewhere in Greek tragedy, and from comedy as well, say that only two doors were needed, or even only one?

A servant appears (875), and then Clytemestra does (885), each of them no doubt through a door. He groans woe that Aegisthus is dead, and calls out, ἀλλ' ἀνοίξατε ὅπως τάχιστα, καὶ γυναικείους πύλας μοχλοῖς χαλάτε· καὶ μάλ' ἠβώντος δὲ δεῖ (877–8). Does he not mean that two doors are to be opened (besides the one he has just come through), or is he twice speaking of the same door? And does not the skene still represent the outer wall as it did when Aegisthus entered at 854, or is the locale now the interior of the house, with its men's and women's quarters, its courtyard, and its passageways from here to there? Can the perspective, upon what happens on the stage, have been refocused? Taplin, arguing for one door but allowing that two are possible, believes the action is now taking place 'outside the gates, although it might more realistically take place within the court'.⁵ Garvie, arguing for two doors but

¹ See O. Taplin, *The Stagecraft of Aeschylus* (Oxford, 1977), p. 453.

² Pickard-Cambridge, *The Theatre of Dionysus in Athens* (Oxford, 1946), p. 43; Hammond, 'Dramatic Production to the Death of Aeschylus', *GRBS* 13 (1972), 449; Melchinger, *Das Theater der Tragödie* (Munich, 1974), 155.

³ Pickard-Cambridge, pp. 43, 52, notes that a paraskenion with an entrance into guest chambers may be implied by *Alcestis* 546–9, and that paraskenia might be a hiding place for Orestes and Pylades at *Choe.* 20. The walls of paraskenia, making corners with the skene, could be regarded as internal walls and so make the interior of the temple, which I believe the audience looks into at *Eum.* 1–235, more realistic.

⁴ *The Ancient Theatre*, trans. C. E. Vafopoulou-Richardson (London, 1982), pp. 6, 25. There is an unused mosque (made for symmetry only, and not facing Mecca) opposite the one in use, beside the Taj Mahal.

⁵ A. M. Dale, *Collected Papers* (Cambridge, 1969), p. 269, spoke for a single door. She assumed the audience would expect a contemporary, not an ante-bellum house (one built before the Trojan War), and thought a change of locale could be as easily made in *Choe.* as in *Pers.* *Alcestis* 546 she understood (p. 268) as matter for the audience to hear, rather than for the

allowing three, believes similarly that 'the distinction between the courtyard and the exterior of the palace is simply blurred'.⁶

I believe the servant, coming through one door, truly means to say, as his words do say, that two other doors are to be opened. Since the door must open inwards, and since as Garvie remarks a man cannot have opened it every time a woman was to go out, what can the muscle—καὶ μάλ' ἡβῶντοζ δὲ δεῖ (878)—be wanted for? Not the protection of Clytemestra, which would require a weapon (889), not muscle. So the sense appears to be: 'force open the door from the outside'. But if the door from the women's quarters (a place of safety while intact) opens into the courtyard (a place of peril), why should the door be opened at all? The need and the cry would be for just the opposite. I believe the door from the women's quarters opens not into the courtyard, but out of the house (and away from the marauder inside). The servant, unless he has been shouting unseen, has come from behind the skene through a door onto the stage. I take him to have left the house by one door, and to have called to the world, and not to anybody in particular, for a second door to be opened (from the inside) and for a third—the women's door—to be broken through (from the outside). As he was leaving the house, his voice sounded within as well as without. Clytemestra heard the hubbub and has come out through the door from the women's quarters (not from the middle door: the assassin is there), and seemingly unaided (muscle was not needed to open the door from the inside). The perspective has not changed; there has been no refocusing; the audience has not altered its sense of the whereabouts; we are not looking into the courtyard; we are looking at the house as we were doing before. There are three doors, two of them used and the third spoken of, in 875–85. Of the two that are used, one is to the women's quarters. Is the other one the middle door (which Aegisthus had entered by at 854, if in this respect *Choe.* is parallel to *Ag.*) or is it the one to the men's quarters, the left-hand door?

Which door did the servant enter by and which one (besides the women's) does he speak of? If he came from the men's quarters and gives a shout at the middle door, we should assume that Aegisthus had been killed in the men's quarters (seeking the messenger who had told of Orestes' death, 851–4), and that the mayhem was moving from the men's quarters through the courtyard towards the women's quarters. But if the servant came from the middle door, there is no reason why he should want the men's quarters opened. He would not say, speaking of a second door and then of a third, 'Open up, and break the women's door', but would say nothing about any door other than the women's. So: the middle door is used by Aegisthus at 854, the door from the men's quarters by the servant at 875, and the door from the women's by Clytemestra at 885.

These are the unexpected, interesting happenings devised for the doors, as I understand the play. (i) Orestes, perhaps intending a degree of indirection, says he will knock at the ἐρκείους πύλας (561, 571), and calls the doorkeeper to hear his ἐρκείας

personae to enact. Taplin, *Stagecraft*, 350, assesses her work and, though with independence, is in general agreement. He would have the servant shout for the opening, and then for the forcing, of a single door only, one that changes its bearings.

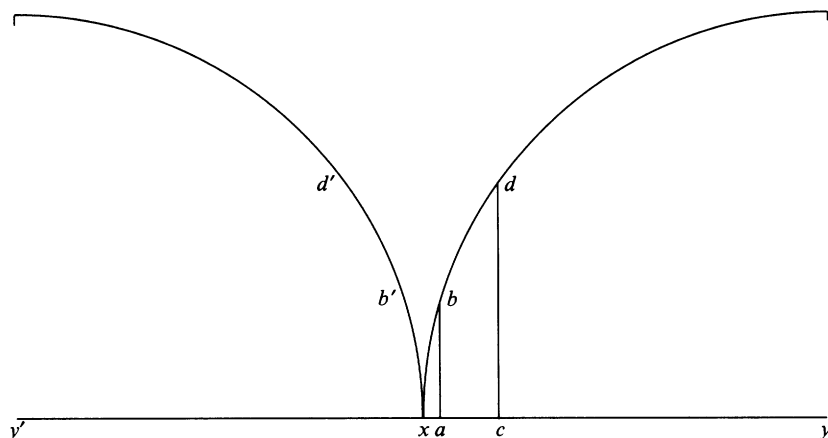
⁶ D. Bain, *Masters, Servants and Orders in Greek Tragedy* (Manchester, 1981), p. 59, holds that the locale has already been shifted into the courtyard when the servant appears, and that, having come through one door, he shouts for two others to be opened, one of them for him to go in by, the other from the women's quarters into the courtyard. A. F. Garvie (ed.), *Choephoroi* (Oxford, 1986), pp. l–lii and n. on 877–9, would have the servant shout only for the women to open the door from their quarters. (Bain discusses Blass and Diels, as well as Dale and Taplin; Garvie discusses Reinhard as well as Bain, and justly reports the views of many others besides. The Homeric parallels are misleading as always.)

κτύπον (652); the words suggest the middle door, onto the courtyard, rather than merely a door to the house as an enclosure; but actually Orestes has come to the door into the men's quarters; for it would be cumbersome if the doorkeeper and Clytemestra (657–73) were at the same door, and would be unseemly if the doorkeeper were at the middle door but Clytemestra at merely the door to the women's quarters. (ii) Clytemestra is at the middle door, as sovereign, when she tells the doorkeeper to show Orestes in, but comes out the women's door at the servant's alarum (the doorkeeper and the servant being played, in all likelihood, by the same actor, and perhaps being regarded as the same person). (iii) Aegisthus comes with his guard (838), contrary to what his summons was to be (770–71), and a confrontation with the companions of Orestes (713) would seem not unlikely, but then he does enter the house alone, after all. (iv) Aegisthus entered by the middle door, but the servant, crying havoc, comes out the men's door; we are given to think that the mayhem was in those quarters, and not in the courtyard (where, at the tableau though not before, it is revealed to have been). (v) Orestes entered, evidently with Pylades and other companions, into the men's door, but appears at the middle door (895) after the alarum has been raised (again, it would be cumbersome if he and the servant were at the same door, and beneath his dignity if his door were the lesser one). (vi) If Cassandra, as befitted her lowly degree, entered by the women's door, her being in the courtyard was unlooked for, and the difference between the way she entered and the way Clytemestra now does makes the sameness in the tableaux, completed I believe when the murder robe is spread (983), the more stunning.

R. D. Dawe⁷ has applied to Aeschylus the thesis of Tycho v. Wilamowitz that Sophocles, to heighten interest, sometimes did not fulfil his promises. Though elsewhere too, above all in *Choe.*, the poet leads 'the audience to expect things that actually turn out differently' (H. Lloyd-Jones, note on line 653 of his translation). The audience also suspects that talk is lies, as when Orestes says he bore his own baggage (675), or when Clytemestra makes Hecabe's appeal (896–8). The play is not one of enchantment like *Bacch.* or of grief like *Troi.* It is a pièce bien faite where word and deed are often at odds. How then did Aeschylus prepare for the second death tableau, the foremost spectacle in all drama? I believe he prevented the audience from foreseeing what lay ahead. There is mainly anti-parallelism, rather than parallelism, until the tableau has been revealed. Figures do not always use the door we thought they would, and they move from one area to another behind the wall, so that when the gate is opened they are elsewhere than we thought. And all has been done without

⁷ 'Inconsistency of Plot and Character in Aeschylus', *Proceedings of the Cambridge Philological Society* 9 (1963), 21–62. See also Garvie on *Choe.* on 479–584, and Taplin, 94–6. In arguing for anti-parallelism, so that there will be no presentiment (other than the dark prophecy of Cassandra, *Ag.* 1318–19) that the second tableau should exactly resemble the first, I may be in disagreement with Garvie (p. li, citing *Ag.* 1291) and Bain (p. 60), who impute sinister moment to the doors of death.

The use of a fourth (speaking) actor in *Choe.* is another surprise (see Garvie p. xlix, note 118). I would suggest that Pylades, with the voice of Cassandra and Apollo, is the third actor, and that the servant, here a fourth actor except that he is the third to speak, is elsewhere the spokesman for the group of armed men, if they have a speaking role in the satyr play. After the servant has delivered his ten lines in *Choe.*, the audience, from the three-actor 'rule', would be assuming, though casually rather than with a scholar's attention, that Pylades was a mute; that he should speak at all would then be a surprise, a special effect giving special force to his words. The use of a fourth actor in comedy—see K. J. Dover (ed.), *Ar. Clouds* (Oxford, 1968), pp. lxxvii–lxxix, and C. W. Dearden, *The Stage in Aristophanes* (London, 1976), pp. 86–94—is not of much relevance to Aeschylus.



the use, in the midst of an episode, of any turning inside-out, or refocusing, incompatible with high seriousness.⁸

How were the tableaux shown, and what were the dimensions, at *Ag.* 1372, *Choe.* 973? The courtyard was unroofed and beneath the sun as the audience looked southwards. I suggest the gateway was six metres in length, perhaps as much as a third of the skene (Hammond estimates the skene at 18 m long, 3 m high; West, at 30 m long, 2 m high).⁹ When a leaf 300 cm wide (xy) has been swung 84 cm (ab) inside the house, it is 24 cm (bb') from the other leaf, which is breadth enough for unshod feet resting on their heels, especially if the calves are crossed. When the leaf has been swung 180 cm (cd) inside, it is 120 cm (dd') from the other one. The figures in the tableaux are a shallow depth behind the skene. When the two leaves are opened fully, even those at the sides of the theatre, as they look into the courtyard, can see a good deal, their view of the tableaux being no worse than their view of much else.¹⁰ If an *ekklema* was used, it was not needed. Nor in my opinion would that contrivance have been worthy of the dramatist and his play.

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⁸ M. L. West, *Studies in Aeschylus* (Stuttgart, 1990), pp. 268–9, believes the locale in *Choe.* and *Eum.* changed with the use of screens that stagehands implaced or removed when the time came. My own view is the contrary: that persons (the furies in *Choe.* and *Ag.* and Hermes in *Eum.*) are seen, but the properties (the mound in *Choe.* and the omphalos and bretas in *Eum.*) are not.

⁹ For both estimates see Hammond, 'More on Conditions of Production to the Death of Aeschylus', *GRBS* 29 (1988), 11.

¹⁰ My opinion is entirely or mostly that of Pickard-Cambridge, *Theatre*, pp. 100–122, esp. 106–8, for whom I am making a rejoinder against Garvie, pp. lii–liii, who believes that if the door opened inwards the bodies could not be near by, but would be in shadow. Let me mention though that a former president of the American Philological Ass'n has written to me that Garvie's *Choe.* is the best edition of any Greek play.