THE THRACIAN CAMP AND THE FOURTH ACTOR AT *RHESUS* 565–691*

Many scholars argue that only three actors were needed in this problematic scene.[1] I believe four are required. The case for a fourth actor can be made much stronger if we take into consideration the location of the Thracian, Trojan, and Greek camps as presented in the play. This argument has been overlooked in previous discussions of the passage.

Authorship and dating of the play are debated. Many scholars now reject Euripidean authorship for *Rhesus*, and favour a fourth-century date,[2] but the attribution to Euripides has also been reasserted.[3] In my opinion, Euripidean authorship is unlikely, but cannot be ruled out absolutely.[4] My argument assumes that the play is from the fifth or fourth century B.C.,[5] and follows the tradition of Athenian tragic theatre in matters of staging, even if it is idiosyncratic in some respects.[6]

The presence of a fourth actor is considered by some an argument against a fifth-century date.[7] I think it likely that a fourth actor was used in *Choephori* and *Oedipus at Colonus*,[8] and I do not consider the number of actors a decisive argument for dating *Rhesus* to the fourth century.

In the drama, much emphasis is placed on the fact that the camp of Rhesus is separate from the location of the Trojans. Rhesus arrives from Mount Ida (see 282–3, 291–3), from the side opposite to that of the Trojan and Greek armies (see 426–37). Hector then leads Rhesus to a separate camping place (see 519–20 δείξω δ' ἐγώ σοι χῶρον ἔνθα χρὴ στρατὸν / τὸν σὸν νυχεῦσαι τοῦ τεταγμένου δίχα). This means that

[1] So e. g. H. Kaffenberger, *Das Dreischauspielergesetz in der griechischen Tragödie* (diss. Giessen, 1911), 44; A. Pickard-Cambridge, *The Dramatic Festivals of Athens*, second edn, rev. J. Gould and D. M. Lewis (Oxford, 1968 [with addenda 1988]), 148; W. Ritchie, *The Authenticity of the 'Rhesus' of Euripides* (Cambridge, 1964), 126–9; O. Taplin, *The Stagecraft of Aeschylus* (Oxford, 1977), 366, n. 1; A. L. Burlando, *Reso: i problemi, la scena* (Genova, 1997), 81–2. Fuller doxography in Ritchie, 127, n. 1. Ritchie also lists scholars who believe a fourth actor was present; add K. Rees, *The Rule of Three Actors in the Classical Drama* (diss. Chicago, 1908), 41, 43; K. Schneider, s.v. ὑποκριτής in *RE* Suppl. VIII (Stuttgart, 1956), 187–232, at col. 191–2. Rees rejected the 'three actors rule' altogether: see G. M. Sifakis, 'The one-actor rule in Greek tragedy', in A. Griffiths (ed.), *Stage Directions: Essays in Ancient Drama in Honour of E. W. Handley* (*BICS* Supplement 66) (London, 1995), 13–24, at 13 and n. 2. V. Di Benedetto and E. Medda, *La tragedia sulla scena* (Torino, 1997), 230 consider the presence of a fourth actor as possible but not certain.
[2] So e.g. E. Fraenkel, *Gnomon* 37 (1965), 228–41, at 235; T. R. Bryce, 'Lycian Apollon and the authorship of the *Rhesus*', *CJ* 86 (1990–1991), 144–9, at 149; Pseudo-Euripide, *Reso*, introduzione e note di G. Paduano (Milano, 1991), 15; Burlando (n. 1), 127.
[3] The fullest defence of the traditional attribution is given by Ritchie, whose conclusions are accepted by G. Zanetto (Euripides, *Rhesus* [Stutgardiae et Lipsiae, 1993], vi). See also A. Pippin Burnett, '*Rhesus*: are smiles allowed?' in P. Burian (ed.), *Directions in Euripidean Criticism* (Durham, NC, 1985), 13–51 and 176–88 at 50–1.
[4] This is also J. Diggle's view on the matter: *Euripidis fabulae*, tomus III (Oxonii, 1994), vi.
[5] Ritchie (n. 1), 58 argues convincingly that, even if spurious, the play is probably not later than the middle of the fourth century.
[6] See the problems discussed by Ritchie (n. 1), 101–40.
[7] Ibid., 126–7.   [8] Cf. below, notes 41 and 42.

Rhesus left by the *eisodos* from which he came. Athena confirms this statement and reveals the arrangement of the camps to Odysseus and Diomedes at 613–15:

> ὅδ' ἐγγὺς ἧσται κοὐ συνήθροισται στρατῶι,
> ἀλλ' ἐκτὸς αὐτὸν τάξεων κατηύνασεν
> ʽΈκτωρ, ἕως ἂν νύκτ' ἀμείψηται φάος.

The chorus, Hector, and the charioteer all concur that it is impossible for a Greek to reach the camp of the Thracians without passing through the camp of the Trojans and the other allies:[9] see 696–709, 808–15, 843–51. Notice, in particular, what the Thracian charioteer says to Hector (846): σὺ πρόσθεν ἡμῶν ἧσο καὶ Φρυγῶν στρατός. Alexander has been informed that some spies passed through the Trojan camp (628–9, 632). This means that the Trojan camp was mid-way between the Greek camp and the stage.

This is the disposition of the forces implied by the drama (the left-hand side on the page corresponding to the left-hand side of the audience):

mountains   Thracian camp   *STAGE*   Trojan camp   Greek camp   sea
(*Hector's tent*)

Given that the sea is west of Troy I locate the Greek army conventionally to the right of the audience, imagining that the audience was looking at the action from the north. This matches east and west to the position of the theatre of Dionysus in Athens.[10]

The playwright took pains to make clear where the three camps were, and repeatedly stressed the opposition between the two directions. This corresponds to the information given in the *Iliad*: Θρήϊκες οἵδ' ἀπάνευθε νεήλυδες, ἔσχατοι ἄλλων (10.434).[11] The poet of *Rhesus* was careful to create a 'realistic' setting, and we must think that he used exits and entrances in a way consistent with it.[12]

We are now in a better position to discuss the scene with Athena.

At 564 the chorus leave the stage and exit to the right, towards the camp of the Trojans and their allies (the chorus are going to wake up the Lycians). Odysseus and Diomedes arrive from the right at 565. The stage action must have made it clear that

[9] Lines 138–9 imply that the Trojans and the allies (before the arrival of Rhesus) are all in one location. The position of the allies is explicitly clear if we keep συμμάχων at line 847: the Thracian charioteer knows that the Trojans and their allies are all in the same location. The word συμμάχων here needs to mean 'all who fight on your side', i.e. Trojans and the allies other than the Thracians—who have just arrived, and whose allegiance has been repeatedly questioned. Diggle (n. 4) obelizes συμμάχων, Zanetto (n. 3) keeps it.

[10] Cf. D. Wiles, *Tragedy in Athens: Performance Space and Theatrical Meaning* (Cambridge, 1997), 133–60. Wiles, p. 158 rightly argues that the Greek camp lies to the west in the play as in the *Iliad*, in correspondence to the audience's right.

[11] However, it seems that in the *Iliad* 'the Trojan dispositions . . . lie roughly on a north–south line' (B. Hainsworth, *The Iliad: A Commentary*, vol. III: *Books 9–12* [Cambridge, 1993], on *Il.* 10.428–31). The text of the *Iliad* only says that 'the Trojans' order of battle extends from a point 'on the side towards the sea' . . . presumably the Hellespont, to a point "on the side towards Thumbre"' (Hainsworth, ibid.). The poet of *Rhesus* could have taken the sea as the Mediterranean, or simply have left this detail out. A general overview of the problems in Homeric topography is given by J. M. Cook, 'The topography of the plain of Troy', in C. Emlyn-Jones and L. Hardwick-J. Purkis (edd.), *Homer: Readings and Images* (London, 1992), 167–74.

[12] Aristot. *Poet.* 1455a27–9 drew attention to what was apparently an accident involving a non-realistic presentation of exits and entrances in the *Amphiaraos* of Karkinos. The precise reconstruction of what happened on stage is disputed: see Snell in the apparatus to *TrGF* 70 F 1c and E. M. Craik, 'Arist. *Po.* 1455 a 27: Karkinos' *Amphiaraos*', *Maia* 32 (1980), 167–9.

Odysseus and Diomedes had not met the chorus.[13] Athena appears[14] at 595 and speaks to Odysseus and Diomedes. Odysseus leaves to the left at 625/626 (roughly), Diomedes at 637.

Alexander is seen by Athena while he is on his way but still offstage (627), and finally appears at 642. He arrives from the Trojan camp, i.e. from the right, and goes back to the same place (cf. 664 τάξιν φυλάξων εἶμι) when he leaves at 664/667. Athena disappears at 674.

The chorus arrive from the right at 675.[15] They see Odysseus *or* Diomedes, who arrive from the left, at 676 (τίς ἀνήρ; λεύσσετε [λεῦσσε Diggle]· τοῦτον αὐδῶ). Both Odysseus and Diomedes are captured at 681 (τοῦσδ' ἔχω, τοῦσδ' ἔμαρψα).[16]

If only three actors were used, the person who played Odysseus must have also played the role of Alexander.[17] There are about sixteen lines for the change from Odysseus to Alexander (from line 625 at the earliest to line 642 at the very latest). About fifteen lines are available for the reverse change of dress, from Alexander to Odysseus (from 664/667 to 681 at the very latest). However, in both cases the actor who played Alexander/Odysseus had to change costume *and* to go to the other side of the stage. The necessity to move from one side of the theatre to the other is ignored by those who postulate a quick change of dress and dismiss the presence of a fourth actor.[18] This factor would have made both changes of costume impossible to perform in the short time available.

Six ways of staging the scene can be envisaged:

1. The entrance of the chorus (675ff.) took a long time, more than we can imagine from the number of words that are assigned to them.[19] This gave the actor enough time to change back from Alexander to Odysseus; it is also assumed that the actor changed his costume very quickly from Odysseus to Alexander.
2. The play was for a small theatre.
3. Athena was not visible on stage.
4. The tent of Rhesus was located behind the *skene*.[20]
5. The role of Odysseus was split between two actors.
6. The part of Alexander was played by a fourth actor.

[13] Wiles (n. 10), 156-8 discusses possible ways for Odysseus and Diomedes to slip past the chorus.

[14] On her appearance see below, notes 34 and 36.

[15] Some manuscripts assign the part of the chorus at 675-91 to a secondary chorus of Lycians (cf. 543-5), but this (unlikely) suggestion would not affect the problems we are discussing here. This hypothetical secondary chorus would have to come from the side of the Trojan camp.

[16] Many scholars suggest that Diomedes does not reappear on stage after his exit at line 637: cf. e.g. *Euripides' Werke verdeutscht von F. H. Bothe*, fünfter und letzter Band (Berlin-Stettin, 1803), 265; Burlando (n. 1), 83; Euripides, *Iphigenia among the Taurians, Bacchae, Iphigenia at Aulis, Rhesus*, trans. J. Morwood (Oxford, 1999), 153, 233. I find this very unlikely. It would give the impression that Diomedes never left the tent of Rhesus. It also goes against the explicit words of the chorus, who take more than one prisoner: see τούσδε at line 681 and cf. perhaps also 678-9.

[17] Diomedes leaves too late: from 637 to 642 he has not enough time to change (G. Hermann, 'De Rheso tragoedia dissertatio' in *Opuscula, volumen tertium* [Lipsiae, 1821], 262-310, at 284).

[18] Ritchie (n. 1), 126-9 (with other references); Pickard-Cambridge (n. 1), 148.

[19] Ritchie (n. 1), 127: 'a little confusion in the entrance of the Chorus would add to the delay'. Ritchie also claims that a slight delay 'is indeed suggested in 673', presumably by τί μέλλετε;. This expression is however 'equivalent to an urgent imperative' (Euripides, *Phoenissae*, ed. D. J. Mastronarde [Cambridge, 1994], on 1146; cf. also Euripides, *Orestes*, ed. C. W. Willink [Oxford, 1989²], on 275-6) and does not imply a pause in the action.

[20] Wiles (n. 10), 158.

Solution (1) is strained. It is generally assumed that tragic poets did not leave the stage both silent and empty in the middle of a play.[21] This is a strong objection against solution (1). The poet of *Rhesus* could easily have written a slightly longer choral piece to accommodate the change of costume.

Without a pause, there is presumably not enough time for the change. All the other quick changes of costume are easier, as they do not require the actor to move from one side of the theatre to the opposite one. Taplin notices that an alleged quick change of dress in *Cho.* 886–99 would leave about twelve lines (with no singing, though) for the actor to change and 'this would probably be the quickest change in surviving tragedy'.[22] In *Choephori* things are made easier by the use of the *skene*. The same actor could enter the skene as Clytemestra's servant and come out a few lines later as Pylades. However, Taplin and others prefer to avoid this quick change.[23]

Ritchie, arguing for solution (1), refers to three passages for other 'lightning' changes of costume, but the parallels are either inappropriate or non-existent.[24]

(i) *Alc.* 740–7: Ritchie assumes that only two actors were needed: 'he who plays Admetus must change during these six anapaestic verses to the part of the Servant. But time would be occupied here in the departure of the Chorus from the orchestra, no doubt in a slow procession.'[25] However, Admetus was part of the same procession, and he could not really go much faster, or leave earlier. Moreover, the servant arrives on stage from the *skene* (cf. lines 765ff.), whereas Admetus exits by the *eisodos*. It is again very difficult for one actor to change *and* move from the *eisodos* to behind the *skene* in such a short time.[26]

(ii) *Med.* 204–14 is surely to be ruled out as a parallel: it is not possible, as Ritchie maintains, that the same actor would play both the nurse and Medea, as Medea is heard singing from inside the house while the nurse speaks to the chorus on stage (lines 96–204).

(iii) *Pho.* 88ff.: the scholium on line 93 argues that the same actor played both Jocasta and Antigone in this part of the play. However, we need two different actors when Jocasta and Antigone talk to each other on stage at 1270–83.[27] The staging envisaged by the scholium does not seem to have any particular authority, and is no more practical or rational than other modern suggestions.[28] In any case at line 88 Jocasta enters the *skene*, and Antigone appears above the *skene* at line 103. The *skene* would have made the change of costume easier, and the distance to be covered was not very long.

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[21] Cf. O. Taplin, 'Aeschylean silences and silences in Aeschylus', *HSCPh* 76 (1972), 57–98, at 57–8. Commenting on *Eum.* 33–4, Taplin ([n. 1], 185, 362) notes that between the exit and re-entry of the Pythia there is a hiatus: 'nothing happens. This is unique in surviving Greek tragedy, which generally abhors a vacuum, and nearly always preserves continuity.' In *Eumenides*, the hiatus is a suspense-building technique.

[22] Taplin (n. 1), 353.　　　　[23] See below, n. 41.

[24] Ritchie (n. 1), 126–9.　　　　[25] Ibid., p. 128.

[26] Pickard-Cambridge (n. 1), 145 and Di Benedetto and Medda (n. 1), 222–3 argue for the employment of three actors in the *Alcestis*, but do not raise the question of the direction of the exits.

[27] Cf. Mastronarde (n. 19), 16 and on lines 88–102; Pickard-Cambridge (n. 1), 147; Di Benedetto and Medda (n. 1), 228.

[28] The most persuasive reconstruction is in Di Benedetto and Medda (n. 1), 228: actor I: Jocasta, Menoiceus, Messenger B, Oedipus; actor II: Servant (lines 89ff.), Polyneices, Creon, Messenger A; actor III: Antigone, Eteocles, Tiresias. Mastronarde (n. 17), 17 and on lines 88–102 leaves the question open.

These passages do not provide the parallel we need for the quick change of dress.[29] If we consider the combined need to change dress and to move from one *eisodos* to the opposite one, it is very likely that a fourth actor was employed.

Solution (2) is also unlikely: there are a number of references in the play to the horses of Rhesus that are to be taken or are taken by the Greeks (lines 616–24, 671 ἵπποι τ᾽ ἔχονται, 797–8 οἱ [Odysseus and Diomedes] δ᾽ ὄχημα πωλικὸν / λαβόντες ἵππων ἵεσαν φυγῆι πόδα, 839–40), and Odysseus and Diomedes probably took them on stage after killing Rhesus (in the scene starting at line 677).[30] A small theatre would not accommodate this kind of rather grand stage business.

Solution (3) does not make things easier. Taplin and Burlando consider staging Athena as a disembodied voice,[31] and claim that this would solve the problem of the fourth actor.[32] However, even if Athena was never seen on stage, the director would still have needed an actor behind the scene to deliver Athena's lines. That would have made the speaker a fourth actor, in addition to the three who played Odysseus, Diomedes and Alexander. In fact Burlando has to argue for a lightning change of costume for the actor who played Odysseus.[33]

With many other scholars, I believe that Athena was visible to the audience, but conventionally invisible to all human characters because of the imaginary darkness, and also because probably positioned on high.[34] Odysseus identifies her by her voice, 'though in this case the failure [to see the goddess] may be due to the imagined darkness'.[35] Alexander never mentions visual contact with Athena.[36]

Solution (4) derives from the staging suggested by Wiles. He argues that

it might well be that Rhesus, having entered from the east, is directed through the *skene* door to make his camp, a signal that he is placed *behind* the Trojan lines. The chorus' hymn to Apollo Thymbraios would thus mark an implicit scene change to the sanctuary of Apollo.[37]

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[29] Di Benedetto and Medda (n. 1), 227 consider sixteen iambic trimeters insufficient to allow the same actor to play both the messenger and Athena at *I.T.* 1419–35: the actor had to change costume and to gain access to the *mechane* or to the top of the *skene*. On the possibility of a very quick change of costume in comedy (nine lines), cf. D. MacDowell, 'The number of speaking actors in old comedy', *CQ* 44 (1994), 325–35, at 327 and 335; even quicker and more difficult changes are discussed in Aristophanes, *Ecclesiazusae*, ed. A. H. Sommerstein (Warminster, 1998), 31 and n. 118.

[30] The horses are not explicitly mentioned in lines 675–91, but I think they must have been present. Heath, Musgrave, and other earlier scholars had no doubts about their presence: cf. *Euripidis opera omnia* (Glasguae–Londini, 1821), vol. 5, 378–9. They were right to do so: cf. the chariots on stage in *Persians, Agamemnon, Trojan Women, Iphigenia in Aulis* and in the *Electra* of Euripides. See Taplin (n. 1), 75–9; Di Benedetto and Medda (n. 1), 95–6. It is possible that Rhesus entered on his chariot at line 380: Taplin (n. 1), 77.

[31] The suggestion was originally made by F. Vater (*Euripidis Rhesus* [Berolini, 1837], p. LV n. *). If Athena was not actually seen on stage, the scene would be unparalleled. When voices are heard from within in tragedy, it is always clear that the speaker is inside the house, even at *Ba.* 576–95. The speaker is never a disembodied spirit: see Di Benedetto and Medda (n. 1), 58–65, 69. Unlike Taplin (n. 1), 366–7, I think Clytemestra was visible at the beginning of the *Eumenides* (cf. Aesch. *Eum.* 103).

[32] Taplin (n. 1), 366 n. 1; Burlando (n. 1), 81–2.   [33] Burlando (n. 1), 82.

[34] See D. J. Mastronarde, 'Actors on high: the skene roof, the crane, and the gods in Attic drama', *CA* 9 (1990), 247–94, at 274–5 and 284.

[35] Ibid., p. 275.

[36] Athena pretends to be Aphrodite in order to deceive Alexander, but I disagree with the scholars who imagine that she changes her costume on stage. There is no mention of a change of costume in the text. See Burnett (n. 3), 39–40.

[37] Wiles (n. 10), 158.

In this staging, Odysseus and Diomedes would go inside the *skene*, and the actor playing Odysseus would have a slightly easier task in changing costume.[38] However, the *skene* clearly represents the tent of Hector (lines 1–14) at the beginning of the play, and it still does at the end, apparently (739–40, 877). The hymn to Apollo is not enough to mark a change of scene, as Thymbraios is only one of many cult epithets used for him: Θυμβραῖε καὶ Δάλιε καὶ Λυκίας ναὸν ἐμβατεύων Ἄπολλον, ὦ Δία κεφαλά, μόλε τοξήρης (lines 224–7). It would also be unique if the space behind the *skene* were not to be identified with the *inside* of the building represented by the *skene* itself, but with a space that lies behind it. I think this staging can dismissed.

Solution (5) was advanced by Kaffenberger.[39] He accepts that the actor that played Odysseus at 565ff. must play the part of Alexander. That actor does not have enough time to come back as Odysseus. It is the actor who played Diomedes who comes back (from the right) as Odysseus, accompanied by a new 'Diomedes' played by a silent extra. However, the 'original' Odysseus would not have enough time to reappear as Alexander from the opposite side of the theatre in the sixteen lines or so that were available to him, and I am skeptical of role-splitting in general (cf. n. 40).

We are left with solution (6): the use of a fourth actor. I do not regard the use of a fourth actor as impossible in the fifth century.[40] I think it probable that the role of Pylades in the *Choephori* was played by a fourth actor who delivered the crucial lines 900–2;[41] *Oedipus at Colonus* probably required four actors.[42] If, as I argue, a fourth actor was used in *Rhesus*, he need not have had more than the part of Alexander to play. Alexander delivers only fourteen lines.

This would correspond to the use of the fourth actor in comedy. According to Dearden, 'Aristophanes seems, on occasion, to have required and used four performers without difficulty, but the parts directly assigned to the fourth remain small.'[43] The use of the *third* actor in tragedy might have started with small parts for extras.[44]

MacDowell, discussing the number of comic actors, maintains that four was the rule, and that the rule was rigid.[45] Dramatic and choral competitions in Athens 'were keenly contested', and rival *khoregoi* would object to extra actors being used.[46] However, singing parts for children were admitted in addition to the three actors in tragedy (see e.g. Eur. *Andr.* 501–746). It is also clear that some rules were flexible.

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[38] Wiles does not discuss the problem of the fourth actor, and does not draw this inference from his staging.

[39] Kaffenberger (n. 1), 44.

[40] *Pace* Burlando (n. 1), 81, n. 43.

[41] Cf. C. F. Hermann, *Disputatio de distributione personarum inter histriones in tragoediis Graecis* (Marburgi, 1840), 65, n. 48; Taplin (n. 1), pp. 353–4; Di Benedetto and Medda (n. 1), 218–19.

[42] Cf. Taplin (n. 1), 185, n. 2; Di Benedetto and Medda (n. 1), 222. The alternative is an elaborate role-splitting: Pickard-Cambridge (n. 1), 142–4 (discussing earlier suggestions) and J. C. Kamerbeek, *The Plays of Sophocles. Commentaries. Part VII. The Oedipus Coloneus* (Leiden, 1984), 23. Sifakis (n. 1), 19–21 argues that role-splitting was quite common in Greek tragedy, but I am not persuaded by his arguments.

[43] C. W. Dearden, *The Stage of Aristophanes* (London, 1976), 92. See the discussion at 88–94. Similar explanations in Pickard-Cambridge (n. 1), 149–52, Sifakis (n. 1), 18, 24, and in the works quoted by MacDowell (n. 29), 325 n. 3.

[44] Taplin (n. 1), 186.

[45] MacDowell (n. 29), 335, arguing against the possibility, accepted by some scholars, that a fifth actor could be occasionally required to play 'barbarians, children, or small parts'.

[46] Ibid., p. 326.

Secondary choruses were occasionally allowed in tragedy[47] and comedy.[48] A small part for an extra actor could have been allowed on some occasions in tragedy.

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[47] Pickard-Cambridge (n. 1), 236–7; cf. J. Carrière, *Le choeur secondaire dans le drame grec* (Paris, 1977), 6–9, 50–9.

[48] The only certain example is the chorus of frogs, which probably appeared on stage: Aristophanes, *Frogs*, ed. with introduction and commentary by K. J. Dover (Oxford, 1993), 56–7. Carrière (n. 47), 9–12, 59–64 discusses other possible secondary choruses.