

SHOULD THE READER REALLY PAY NO ATTENTION
TO THE STAGE DIRECTIONS SUPPLIED IN THE
TRANSLATIONS OF ANCIENT GREEK TRAGEDIES?
(THE CASE OF AESCHYLUS' *ORESTEIA* IN POLISH
RENDITIONS)*

by

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ABSTRACT: Some scholars claim that neither the reader nor the stage director should pay any attention to the stage directions supplied in modern renditions of ancient Greek tragedies because there were none in the Greek originals. Such an attitude, they claim, will get both the reader and the stage director closer to the interpretation intended by the author of the play in question. But is it really that simple? In my paper I would like to focus on the stage directions supplied by Polish translators of Aeschylus' *Oresteia* as a vehicle for the translators' alleged interpretation, the staging plan designed in a rendition, and the history of classical scholarship, and thus to show that when paying some attention to them, both the reader and the stage director may find relevant, interesting or unexpected information there.

1. INTRODUCTION

There were no stage directions¹ in ancient Greek tragedies. This is a well-known fact, together with the fact (brought to light thanks to the research and publications of Oliver TAPLIN) that these plays were devised by their authors – Aeschylus, Sophocles or Euripides – to be performed on an Athenian stage in the fifth century BC. Moreover, their authors were not only playwrights, but were actually the creators of the whole performance as they themselves were stage directors and stage managers of their plays. The plays were indeed theatre- and performance-oriented. Therefore, as some scholars claim², they should be

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¹ As understood today, cf. P. PAVIS, *Słownik terminów teatralnych*, transl. by S. ŚWIONTEK, Wrocław 2002 [*Dictionnaire du théâtre*, Paris 31996], p. 102.

² Cf. J. AXER, *Teksty tragików greckich jako scenariusze*, in H. PODBIELSKI (ed.), *Literatura Grecji starożytnej*, vol. I: *Epika – Liryka – Dramat*, Lublin 2005, pp. 647–668; R.R. CHODKOWSKI,