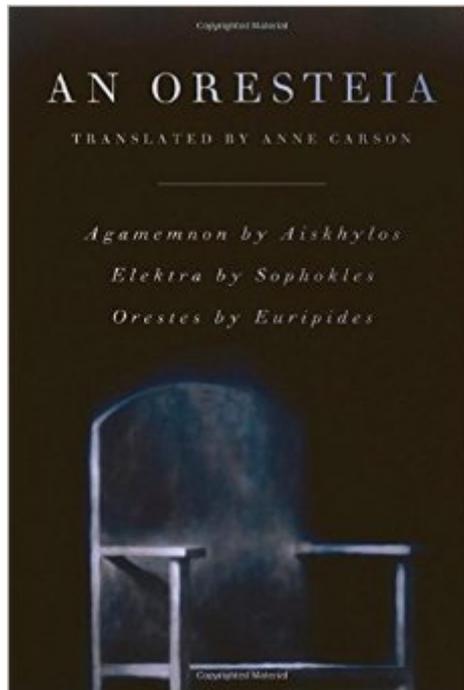


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An Oresteia: Agamemnon By Aiskhylos; Elektra By Sophokles; Orestes By Euripides



Synopsis

In *An Oresteia*, the classicist Anne Carson combines three different versions of the tragedy of the house of Atreus — Aiskhylos' *Agamemnon*, Sophokles' *Elektra* and Euripides' *Orestes*. After the murder of her daughter Iphigeneia by her husband, Agamemnon, Klytaimestra exacts a mother's revenge, murdering Agamemnon and his mistress, Cassandra. Displeased with Klytaimestra's actions, Apollo calls on her son, Orestes, to avenge his father's death with the help of his sister Elektra. In the end, Orestes is driven mad by the Furies for his bloody betrayal of family.

Condemned to death by the people of Argos, he and Elektra must justify their actions — or flout society, justice and the gods. Carson's translation combines contemporary language with the traditional structures and rhetoric of Greek tragedy, opening up this ancient tale of vengeance to a modern audience and revealing the essential wit and morbidity of the original plays.

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Customer Reviews

Anne Carson's *An Oresteia* (Aiskhylos' *Agamemnon*, Sophokles' *Elektra*, and Euripides' *Orestes*) is an ingenious idea that makes for a completely different trilogy than THE (Aiskhylos') *Oresteia*, and provides a sample of the style and voice of each of the three big Athenian tragedians. The "trilogy" spans events from Klytaimestra's discovery that Agamemnon is finally returning from Troy to the *deus ex machina* that resolves the outrageous standoff between Orestes, condemned to death for the matricide that avenged his father's death, and Menelaos, who has shrewdly declined to support him in the Argive assembly. Along with Carson's previous translations of four plays by Euripides (*Grief Lessons: Four Plays by Euripides* (New York Review Books Classics)), these are the most

vivid, moving, and even shocking, translations of Greek tragedy I have ever read. Although I cannot read Greek and cannot offer any authoritative comment on the translations as such, my impression from studying other translations and their scholarly notes is that Carson's achievement in English is not at the expense of the Greek; indeed, far from it. Her own introductions to the plays are also marvels of insight and impact. Carson's rendering here of the extended exchange between Cassandra and the Chorus in Agamemnon is as hypnotic and simply visceral as any I know. The text is set on the page in striking arrangements (which I cannot reproduce in the review form) befitting the chaos of Cassandra's visions.

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