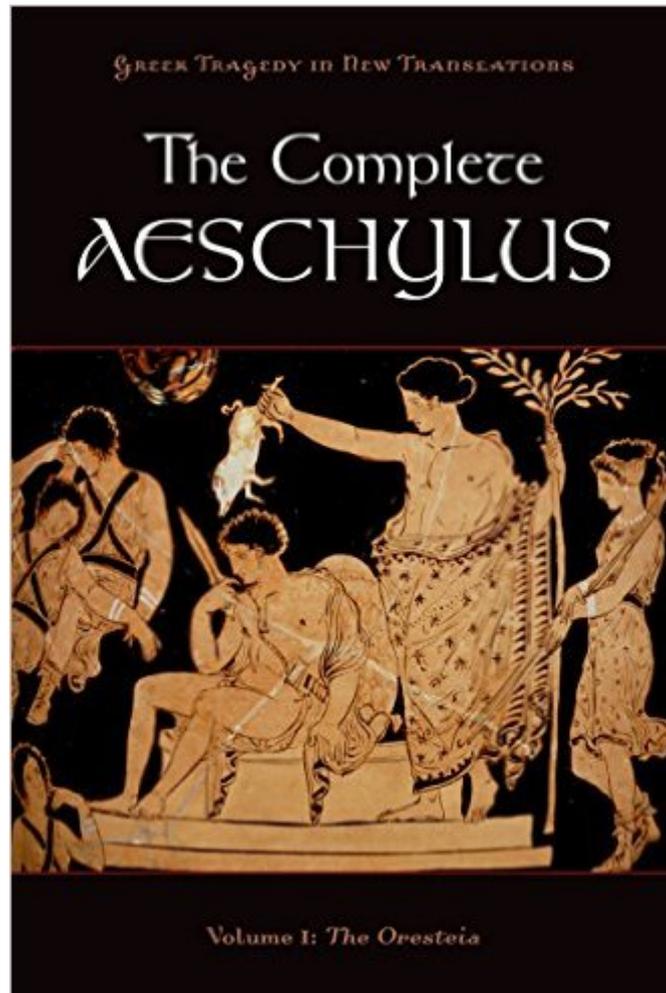


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The Complete Aeschylus: Volume I: The Oresteia: 1 (Greek Tragedy In New Translations)



Synopsis

Based on the conviction that only translators who write poetry themselves can properly re-create the celebrated and timeless tragedies of Aeschylus, Sophocles, and Euripides, the Greek Tragedy in New Translations series offers new translations that go beyond the literal meaning of the Greek in order to evoke the poetry of the originals. Aeschylus' *Oresteia*, the only ancient tragic trilogy to survive, is one of the great foundational texts of Western culture. It begins with *Agamemnon*, which describes Agamemnon's return from the Trojan War and his murder at the hands of his wife Clytemnestra, continues with her murder by their son Orestes in *Libation Bearers*, and concludes with Orestes' acquittal at a court founded by Athena in *Eumenides*. The trilogy thus traces the evolution of justice in human society from blood vengeance to the rule of law, Aeschylus' contribution to a Greek legend steeped in murder, adultery, human sacrifice, cannibalism, and endless intrigue. This new translation is faithful to the strangeness of the original Greek and to its enduring human truth, expressed in language remarkable for poetic intensity, rich metaphorical texture, and a verbal density that modulates at times into powerful simplicity. The translation's precise but complicated rhythms honor the music of the Greek, bringing into unforgettable English the Aeschylean vision of a world fraught with spiritual and political tensions.

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Customer Reviews

These plays are among the founding documents of Western Civilization, dramatizing the movement from bloody tribal revenge to a community of justice based on law. A good translation is essential to understanding them, and these translations are good. Compare the first lines of the Agamemnon from the older Lattimore version published by the University of Chicago: "I ask the gods some respite from the weariness of this watchtime measured by years I lie awake elbowed upon the Atreidae's roof dogwise to mark the grand processions of all the stars of night burdened with winter and again with heat for men. dynasties in their shining blazoned on the air, these stars, upon their wane and when the rest arise." with the same lines from that of Alan Shapiro in this Oxford University Press volume: "I beg the gods to deliver me at last from this hard watch I've kept now for a year upon the palace roof of the Atreidae, dog-like, snout to paws, night after long night, studying the congress of the stars, the unignorable bright potentates that bring down through the night sky to us here below, the summer now, and now the winter, eternal even as they wane and rise." I don't know which version is more faithful to the original, although I understand that Ancient Athenian Greek is so different from Modern English that any attempt at translation is highly problematic, some would even say impossible. Still, most of us aren't going to learn Ancient Greek, so if we are to read these plays at all we need translations, approximate as they may be.

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