

MULCROY (D.) (trans.) *Aeschylus: the Oresteia. Agamemnon, Libation Bearers, and The Holy Goddesses. A Verse Translation with Introduction and Notes*. Pp. xx + 234. Madison, WI and London: The University of Wisconsin Press, 2018. Paper, US\$19.95 (Cased, US\$39.95). ISBN: 978-0-299-31564-1 (978-0-299-31560-3 hbk).

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Wisconsin Studies in Classics published M.'s translation of the *Agamemnon* in 2016; this volume offers the complete *Oresteia* in an energetic verse translation, with a series of helpful appendices. M.'s brief introduction summarises the plot of the trilogy, sketches the implications of its final clash between chthonic and Olympian deities, and argues that we should see the 'transgressive character' of the text as enhancing its effect. He also explains and defends his use of metre, the principal area where his translation differs from others.

M. has rendered all iambic trimeter passages into English iambic pentameters, a natural choice made by numerous other translators. M.'s register in these passages is excellent, and overall they are forceful and eminently readable. Clytaemestra's (as M. spells her name) vision of fallen Troy (*Ag.* 320ff.), to take a single example, is clear and moving, while retaining the darkly suggestive undercurrents of the Greek. The language will be engaging to students and effective on stage.

M.'s rendering of lyric metres into rhyming stanzas presents more difficulties. In the appendix on metre he explains that he used the rhyme to suggest song to English readers. Indeed, the song-like aspect of M.'s lyric passages is their most attractive feature; getting students to remember that the overall dramatic power of the dramas was in part a function of music and dance is always challenging. M.'s renderings of those lyric passages that are most explicitly sung (the long ritual invocation in the *Choephoroi*, for instance, or the binding song of the Furies in *Eumenides*) are the most successful; they offer an aesthetic distinct from any other translations of the work I am familiar with, and one that is arguably closer to its feel in the original.

In other places, particularly where M. uses shorter lines, the rhyming stanzas can be less effective or even distracting (to my ear sections of the parados of *Agamemnon* evoked Lewis Carroll or Edward Lear). To maintain rhyme and metre, the craggy ambiguity of Aeschylus gets smoothed over. Compare the Greek of lines 154–6 in *Agamemnon*, with its compound nouns and abstract depth of meaning, to M.'s 'Beware! A cunning steward waits, / an Anger who'll avenge the child.' / Thus Calchas roared their fates'.

Five appendices follow the translation, with synopses of the three plays and information on Aeschylus' biography, the mythical background (helpfully giving the ancient sources), the political context in 458 BCE, an argument for re-titling the *Eumenides* as *The Holy Goddesses*, details on metre in the original and the translation, and conventions of the Greek stage. M.'s pronunciation guide will be much appreciated by any readers unfamiliar with the names (Coryphaeus, which he uses for the choral leader throughout, is oddly missing). Footnotes to the text are full and very helpful, although inevitably not everything is glossed that could be: Athena's entrance 'with eleven jurors' and thus her tie-making vote is presented as a simple fact of the text rather than a hypothesis.

Overall this is an interesting and fruitful addition to the many available translations of the *Oresteia*.

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