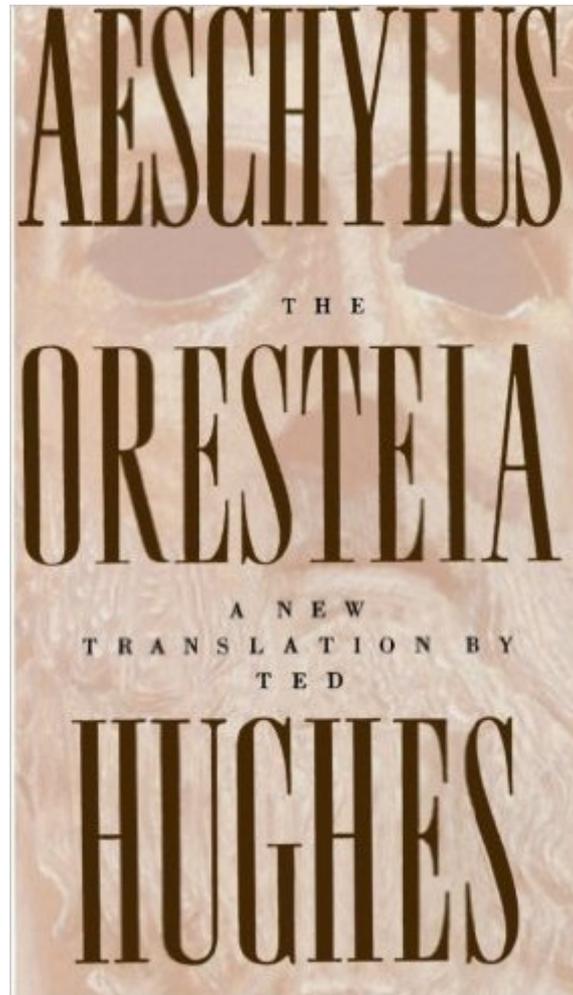


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# The Oresteia Of Aeschylus: A New Translation By Ted Hughes



## Synopsis

In the last year of his life, Ted Hughes completed translations of three major dramatic works: Racine's *Phedre*, Euripedes' *Alcestis*, and the trilogy of plays known as *The Oresteia*, a family story of astonishing power and the background or inspiration for much subsequent drama, fiction, and poetry. *The Oresteia*--*Agamemnon*, *Choephoroi*, and the *Eumenides*--tell the story of the house of Atreus: After King Agamemnon is murdered by his wife, Clytemnestra, their son, Orestes, is commanded by Apollo to avenge the crime by killing his mother, and he returns from exile to do so, bringing on himself the wrath of the Furies and the judgment of the court of Athens. Hughes's "acting version" of the trilogy is faithful to its nature as a dramatic work, and his translation is itself a great performance; while artfully inflected with the contemporary, it has a classical beauty and authority. Hughes's *Oresteia* is quickly becoming the standard edition for English-language readers and for the stage, too.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

No, the translation is not literal. If you want a literal translation, buy something written by a professor of Greek. Hughes has a different goal. He's a poet who wants to interpret this ancient literature into an idiom that modern audiences can understand and appreciate. I wouldn't even call this a translation. Let's call it an interpretation and skip over the problem of accuracy. That being said, his interpretation is extremely good. The free verse is both powerful and extremely readable. By putting these stories into a more familiar medium, Hughes recaptures the horror of these plays. By modern standards, the latter plays (*Choephoroi* and *Eumenides*) aren't

very dramatic. The main point is to watch the cycle of revenge play out to a conclusion. But the first play in the trilogy (Agamemnon) is close enough to modern taste to have a huge impact. I was very moved.

Without a shadow of the doubt this is most outstanding Oresteia I have ever read! Literal translation of great poetic art is a job for half-dead scholars, intended for half-dead readership, by delivering fully dead text. Hughes is a most lively, imaginative poet who rises to the task like no other. Indeed, the work could be described as bi-authored. It uniquely conveys the great Aeschylean art of condensing thought into a compelling, live image that immediately resonates with the reader/spectator. The economy and power of word is breath-stopping. I would give it more `stars' if I could. My only regret is that Hughes never took to Nietzsche; he would have been his most awesome translator!

THE ORESTEIA of Aeschylus, here presented in a translation by Ted Hughes, is a great trilogy on the continual tragedies in the house of Atreus and one of the most impressive creations of Greek drama. The work consists of the "Agamemnon", "Choephoroi", and "Eumenides". In the first play, Agamemnon the king of Argos returns home from the Trojan War only to be murdered by his wife Clytemnestra, long angry at him for the sacrifice of their daughter Iphigenia, and her lover Aegisthus desirous to seize the throne. In the second, named for the "libation bearers" who accompany the protagonists, Agamemnon's son Orestes and his living sister Electra avenge their father's murder by slaying Clytemnestra and Aegisthus. In the final play, Orestes is tormented by the Furies until a jury of Athenians led by Athena set him free and end the cycle of violence. The play is a statement on the terrible destiny of man to face divine retribution even when he has done a just deed, and tracks the development of Athenian justice from continual violence to temperance. Unfortunately, Ted Hughes' translation plays very loose with Aeschylus' work. Putting the play in modern language isn't quite so bad, although it is strange to hear of hurricanes (unknown in the Aegean) and people moving "like gypsies" (the Roma were still in northwest India when this was written). What is truly objectionable is that Hughes' adds content. For example, he has a character talk of the "curse" on the house of Atreus, but this distorts events. Hughes also does not seem interested in conveying Aeschylus' style, instead giving the reader the story in entirely his own poetry. Bottom line: read this if you really like the poetry of Ted Hughes. If you want a faithful translation of this Greek masterwork, look elsewhere.

I thought this book was most definitely an excellent translation of Aeschylus' Oresteia. It helped me understand the book much clearer than trying to decipher the actual Oresteia. I recommend it and especially because it's sale with a very reasonable price

I LOVE TED AESCHYLUS AND HIS BUFFED UP LINE, NOT ONLY HERE BUT AS TED RACINE, TED OVID, TED SENECA, TED EURIPEDES, TED LORCA AND TED WEDEKIND. HERE IS MUSCULAR TRANSLATION THAT BOUNCES WITH LIFE AND FLIES FEARLESS WITHOUT THE LEAST THREAD OF AN ACADEMIC SAFETY NET BELOW. SPELLBINDING!

I love this translation. It is astonishingly poetic and visceral. The scenes come alive with the feel of real experience and the characters are realized in ways that make them new and powerful.

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