
Comparisons are, of course, invidious, but a volume such as this invites them. Automatically one must compare it with the first publication of K.'s trans-
lution;¹ but since this has been reissued in OUP’s World’s Classics series it is also important to compare the volume with the various translations of Sophocles in the Penguin Classics and Methuen World Dramatists series, at whose market the World’s Classics series is squarely aimed.

To turn first to the comparison with the earlier publication, the translation is, of course, unaltered from one edition to the other, though the text is now numbered according to the lines of the Greek original rather than those of the translation, thus making it a rather more useful scholarly tool.² The content of K.’s textual notes has been largely subsumed into H.’s notes, which often go further than K. did in indicating where the translation deviates from the original Greek (e.g., at p. 29 n., or p. 105 n.). The gist of K.’s short comments on the mythological background to the plays has also been incorporated into H.’s text, and supplemented by further explanations of brief allusions.

The only thing that has been lost from K.’s original edition are his notes on the choral rhythms. This is regrettable, as it would be interesting to have retained in the text K.’s indications of the rhythm used, especially as K. wrote these translations for performance (noted by H. at pp. xxxii-xxxiii); these indications would not have been too distracting for the reader whom these matters do not interest. It is particularly sad that K.’s note “On the dance-rhythms used by Sophocles”³ could not have been preserved in the new edition, as that is one of the clearest brief discussions of tragic metres that I have read. H.’s notes go no further than an occasional brief notice (e.g., p. 21, p. 142) that a passage is to be sung or chanted.

In general, however, this new edition is more useful to the undergraduate than the 1962 publication, though perhaps less useful to the theatre director. How then does it compare with its rivals?

In one respect, this collection sidesteps any comparisons by virtue of its unusual selection. For usually the Antigone and Oedipus the King are included with the Oedipus at Colonus,⁴ whilst the Electra is left with the other non-thematically linked plays.⁵ H. makes a good case for the selection in this volume—“[b]y detaching Oedipus the King and Antigone from Oedipus at Colonus . . . the misleading latter-day myth of a Theban ‘trilogy’ or ‘cycle’ is exploded” (pp. x-xi)—even if one suspects the real reason for the choice is that K. happened to have translated these three plays for performances in Bristol University. One feels, however, that the selection may damage sales. The general public believes in the Theban trilogy.

²It might be noted that this approach is adopted only in the Methuen translation of Electra; the various Penguin translations confine references to Greek lines to the top of each page, whilst the Methuen translation of Antigone and Oedipus the King dispenses with numeration altogether.
and wants all three plays together; therefore they are more likely to turn to the Penguin or Methuen editions. A better solution to the problem is perhaps that of the more recent Penguin translation, where the three plays are presented according to the order of composition by Sophocles rather than the plays' internal chronology (i.e., placing *Antigone* at the beginning rather than the end).  

As noted above, H. supplies considerable commentary on the plays (pp. 155-178), dealing largely with textual or mythological points, which are difficult to fault on detail. In this respect the volume under consideration certainly scores over the Methuen translations (which have no commentary at all) or the Penguin translations by Watling (which provide no more than a couple of pages per play). The only serious rival in this respect—but it is a very serious rival—is the Penguin translation by Eagles of the Theban plays, which includes notes by Bernard Knox. Knox's notes are not significantly lengthier than H.'s; he does, however, tend to cover fewer points in greater detail. So, for instance, when dealing with the point that the punishment for burying Polynices is death by stoning, H. comments only that it was "a punishment associated particularly with treachery" (p. 155). Knox gets a nine-line note out of this, emphasizing that Creon has chosen a method that involves the whole state in the act of punishment. Knox is also clearly interested in different aspects of the plays than H.; where, as noted, H. mainly elucidates points of translation and mythology, Knox is far more interested in how the various choral odes advance Sophocles' tale, and in the psychology of the characters. This becomes even clearer if one compares the short (three to four page) introductions H. gives to each individual play to the much longer (fifteen to twenty pages) ones given by Knox.

To be fair, however, it might well be that the dense level of commentary provided by Knox is offputting to the generally-interested reader who lacks academic background either in the Classics or in drama. That reader might well find H.'s notes, based on her experience with the requirements of undergraduate students (p. v), much easier to deal with, especially as (unlike the Penguin editions) an indication that there is a note is included in the body of the text.

The only serious test for comparing translations, of course, is to compare how individual passages are treated. For example, here are the translations given for Antigone's first speech when confronted by Creon (*Antigone*, lines 450-455): by Watling, Eagles, Taylor and K.:

Yes.
That order did not come from God. Justice,
That dwells with the gods below, knows no such law.
I did not think your edicts strong enough
To overrule the unwritten unalterable laws
Of God and heaven, you being only a man.

Of course I did. It wasn't Zeus, not in the least,
who made this proclamation—not to me.
Nor did that Justice, dwelling with the gods

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1K.'s selection, it should be noted, also places the plays in compositional order.
beneath the earth, ordain such laws for men.
Nor did I think your edict had such force
that you, a mere mortal, could override the gods,
the great unwritten, unshakable traditions.

Yes, I did. Because it's your law,
Not the law of God. Natural Justice,
Which is of all times and places, numinous,
Not material, a quality of Zeus,
Not of kings, recognises no such law.
You are merely a man, mortal.
Like me, and laws that you enact
Cannot overturn ancient moralities
Or common human decency.
They speak the language of eternity,
Are not written down, and never change.

It was not Zeus who published this decree,
Nor have the Powers who rule among the dead
Imposed such laws as this upon mankind;
Nor could I think that a decree of yours—
A man—could override the laws of Heaven
Unwritten and unchanging.

Though K. does not depart from the Greek to the unnecessary extent that Taylor does, he is not as successful at injecting fury into the words, and he is not as close to the original as Watling or Fagles. γάρ τι is ignored (for all that translations such as “Yes” and “Of course I did” are unsatisfactory), as is μοι (which, to be fair, only Fagles properly incorporates). Nor is one altogether happy at the transformation of ἡ ξύνοικος τῶν κάτω θεῶν Δίκη into “the Powers who rule among the dead”, even if H. does add a note to the effect that the Greek text names Dike; one suspects K. felt that an audience might be confused by Justice that dwelt with the gods below, but his translation is misleading. The translation that best succeeds in matching the requirements of fidelity and poetry is that of Fagles.

Overall the general impression of the translation matches that given by this specific example. K.’s translations are less bland than those of Watling, but lack the power of Fagles or Taylor. Since the Fagles translation has the added benefit of Knox’s fuller notes for little more expense (the same price in the UK, $2.00 more in the US), one certainly feels that the recommended translation of the Theban plays for students will remain the Penguin edition, and also that the general reader will also continue to purchase that version. However, readers specifically interested in the Electra are in a slightly different position, and can have the volume presently under consideration recommended to them, as K.’s version beats Watling on all counts, and whilst it lacks the poetry of Kenneth McLeish’s Methuen translation, the presence of explanatory notes makes it more suitable for the undergraduate reader.
OUP’s World’s Classics series is of course something of a risky venture; the market for translations of classic literature is dominated by Penguin, who in the past decade or so have taken the opportunity of replacing or supplementing some of their creakier translations, at least in the field of Greek and Latin. Republishing a thirty-year old translation with new notes is a fairly cheap way of adding to the World’s Classics range, but one feels that it will not make too much of an impact upon Penguin’s monopoly. To do that OUP need to publish more works like Susan Braund’s Lucan translation—new translations of works that are in demand but for which a Penguin translation is either lacking or inadequate. For Sophocles, that would mean commissioning a new translation of the four non-Theban plays.

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