

S K E N È

Journal of Theatre and Drama Studies

3:1 2017

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ISSN 2421-4353

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SKENÈ Theatre and Drama Studies

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Collaborating with Aeschylus (and Sophocles and Euripides and a Director and Cast)

Abstract

In Terence Rattigan's *The Browning Version* the crusty old Classics master disdainfully describes interest in elegant translation as mere "collaborating with Aeschylus". Yet translators must surely collaborate with the author, to create equivalent words that will resonate with their audience as the Greek dramatists' words resonated with theirs. An added dimension in translating Greek drama is that, unless the translation's purpose is only to elucidate the Greek, the collaborative net must encompass directors, designers, actors, and audience. Since the translator(s) have agonized over the *mot juste* or over transforming or removing a Greek expression for greater accessibility, they can view their final version not only as an end product, but also as the best version. In effect, their translation stands almost on the level of the original, at least in the relationship they hope that it will have with an audience. From the perspective of the director and actors, who have probably not been privy to the translators' discussions, the words are only the beginning. Nothing, even the stage directions that some translators insert in hopes of preserving their vision, is sacrosanct. One of the translators' goals is probably retention of a clear connection to their original text, if not exactly fidelity to it. But for some directors, the much-performed genre of Greek drama by definition needs a dose of originality to confound audience expectations of 'the Classics' with actors in bed-sheets. For them, the translators' product is far from fixed and can be manipulated or even undermined by the director's vision. Translators and directors can learn much from one another, and since 2012, I have worked with undergraduates and a director colleague to create and perform translations of Greek tragedy. This paper will discuss our process and products, and especially the multiple relationships possible between translators' and director's visions.

KEYWORDS: translation, pedagogy, critical thinking, performance, Greek tragedy

Introduction

This article primarily concerns the author's experiences in working with groups of undergraduate translators to create contemporary translations of Greek tragedies for performance. While it refers to some aspects of translation theory, it mainly explores the practicalities of translating and performing tragedy within the framework of a university class setting, in the hope that our experiences will encourage others in similar endeavours. The end of this paper will address the pedagogical advantages and disadvantages of my approach as compared with more traditional classes in translating Greek drama.¹

¹ Warmest thanks are due to the anonymous reader whose unvarnished but highly constructive criticism greatly improved the clarity of my thinking. Any remaining problems are, of course, due to my own obstinacy.

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In Terence Rattigan's play *The Browning Version*, Andrew Crocker-Harris, the crusty old Classics master, is displeased when his student shows interest in translation as an art, rather than as a mere classroom exercise in understanding Greek grammar, admonishing him, "I feel I must remind you that you are supposed to be construing Greek, not collaborating with Aeschylus" (Rattigan 1955: 230). As teachers of ancient languages, we do not always think clearly about this distinction. Indeed, given the constraints on us of semester and syllabus, we cannot always give the question the attention it deserves, but "construing Greek" is certainly very different from translation. Construing Greek in the classroom is at most a kind of triangle, consisting of the text, the person attempting to decipher and pin down that text's meaning, and a third person (usually an instructor) judging the accuracy of the construer's attempts. It is an essentially private process, of most benefit to the construer, and probably has little use to anyone outside the triangle. By contrast, translators stand at the centre of a web of connections moving outwards from the text, and look both back at the text and forward to the audience with whom they hope to communicate (Walton 2006: 2-25). As the link between text and audience, the translator's job is collaboration with the author for whose words and thoughts she or he is in effect now responsible,² to get not only into the author's mind but also the minds of the audience, by creating language that will attempt to approach the elusive, but attractive goal of conveying to a new audience some elements of the original words of an author distant from them in time, cultural background, and language.³ A dimension particular to translating Greek drama is that the net of collaboration becomes potentially much wider if the translation is destined for performance.⁴ The collaborative web will now encompass directors, designers, actors, and perhaps musicians or dancers, as well as the audience.

Collaboration does not imply simple agreement between the collaborators on the form or content of the text or production because different collaborators have different perspectives. Translators agonize over the *mot juste* or over transforming or removing a Greek expression for greater accessibility or liveliness for the audiences that they envision and for whom they are trying to convey as much as they can of what is in the original text.⁵ Although the 'perfect' translation cannot exist, at some point, translators will have to agree that a particular version of their translation renders the Greek as a complete text and is their final product (Rabassa 1989: 7-8). That said, for some translators, especially the less experienced undergraduates with whom I have worked, the act of having created a finished product can sometimes become the belief that they have in fact created the best version, at least for

² Rutherford (2006: 77), a translator of *Don Quixote*, even goes so far as to describe himself as a "co-author" with Cervantes; cf. Farrell 1996: 46; Laskowski 1996: 198.

³ Schwartz and de Lange 2006: 16-17; Bell (2006) and Josek (2006) discuss this problem as it affects translation from other contemporary modern languages into English.

⁴ Walton 2006: 52-61. On the relationship between drama and translation, see also Bassnett 1985 and 1998b and, for an illuminating account of the practical relationship between translation and performance, see especially Ewans 1989.

⁵ Even that simple phrase conceals significant complexity: what elements of the original text will predominate in translation? The 'general sense' of what the original author meant as one translator sees it? The literary style of the poetry of the drama? Its metre and sound?

the particular performance envisaged, because they have given the details of their work so much attention, often relating to minor issues whose importance is only accessible to the 'initiated'. Those to whom the translators will be handing their finished product have not put so many hours into it. Those are yet to come, and if the translators feel possessive about their efforts, some tension between translators and performers may enter into the collaboration. The translators have experienced their own collaboration with an ancient playwright, in which they have attempted to get as close as possible to their original source to convey something of its essence to a modern audience: because so much is inevitably lost in even the most acclaimed translation, translators can only hope to capture some essence of the original, whatever that elusive concept is deemed to be in individual cases. But to have created a piece which is (in its creators' minds) imbued with that essence of, say, Aeschylus, is to have created a piece which must stand almost on the level of the original, the closest thing to Aeschylus without actually being Aeschylus.⁶ Translators may feel quite protective towards their creation, and collaboration with directors and actors with a different relationship to the text may generate a degree of discomfort when they first begin to work with each other.⁷

If the director and actors have not been privy to the translators' vacillations between words, additions or deletions, the text is simply their starting point,⁸ and nothing, even the stage directions that some translators insert in hope of controlling what they want to happen on stage⁹ is sacrosanct. One of the translators' goals is likely to have been retention of significantly clear connections to their original text, whatever compromises they have made to make it meaningful to a contemporary audience. But for some directors, the much-performed genre of Greek drama by definition needs a dose of originality to confound audience expectations of 'the Classics' with actors in tunics and sandals. For them, the translators' product is far from fixed and can be manipulated, enhanced, or even (in the translators' eyes) subverted or undermined by the form of the production. Both translators and directors should be aware of their different perspectives if their collaborations are going to achieve the most success.

⁶ Bassnett 1998a: 25; Ahl 1989: 173-5. While my experience in translating for performance has exclusively been with undergraduate translators, some of their experiences are similar to those of professionals. Compare the claim of Rutherford (2006: 79): "Now that I am being immodest, I will add that some of my jokes and poems are better than those of Cervantes".

⁷ Hence the anxious words of one undergraduate translator of the *Bacchae* (2016) writing after our translation was complete but before the production had got under way: "it will probably be a bit challenging to watch them take our script and bring it to life because they have no connection to the Greek or to Euripides and don't necessarily feel the same pull to 'keep it Greek'". Several others used metaphors of parenthood to describe their role in the translation process. One expressed some concern about watching "our baby being ripped apart" (noting, however, that such an act of violence was appropriate in light of Pentheus' fate), while another in an account of a rehearsal just before the production was about to go public, wrote: "The play was already in high school, almost ready for graduation".

⁸ Walton 2006: 16. Although, as Biguenet and Schulte (1989: x) state, in the act of literary translation itself, "the words of the original are only the starting point; a [literary] translator must do more than convey the information".

⁹ For criticism of this practice, see Walton 2016: 10, 54, 158; Bassnett 1991: 104-5.

Since 2012, I have worked with undergraduate translators and a director colleague at the University of North Carolina at Asheville, a small public liberal arts college in Western North Carolina, to create and perform translations of Greek tragedy to undergraduate and community audiences,¹⁰ and these introductory remarks originate from my experiences and increasing understanding, with each production, of the processes of creating a translation for performance.¹¹ Each production had a slightly different process and resulted in different types of productions, some more successful than others in various dimensions, but certain elements were common to all three. The undergraduate status of the translators significantly influenced our process. Up to this point in their studies, they had typically been construing in the Crocker-Harris sense rather than translating, so that early work on each of the three translations was devoted to discussing the goals of our translation and how it might differ from what they had considered translation in previous classes. From more conventional classes, students were used to making their primary aim their own comprehension of the Greek while keeping as closely as possible to the original language. In these classes, however, they were encouraged to focus on how to determine, and then convey what they considered the essence of a text to a primarily non-specialist audience. Not without some resistance, they had to be encouraged to consider the necessity of balancing comprehension, accuracy and a communicative focus, and to understand that the relative roles of these three desiderata are not fixed, since different moments of the play may demand a focus on one over another. Instead of considering familiar questions such as “What is this form? Why is this verb in the aorist here?”, translators addressed questions such as, “What do I need to convey here in the bigger context of the play? How are the audience likely to understand this language? Do I need to simplify names, or add glosses, or boil every ‘Achaean’ or ‘Dardanian’ down to ‘Greek’ or ‘Trojan’?”¹² The rest of this paper will discuss our process and productions, paying particular attention to the collaborative relationships between translators, audience, and director.¹³

¹⁰ To the best of my knowledge, while undergraduate productions of Greek tragedy are relatively common, undergraduate translations are not. Boshier (2007) discusses the process of teaching Greek tragedy to Theatre Studies majors, which has some similarity to our process, but Boshier and her students used published translations rather than creating their own, and focused on ancient techniques of staging.

¹¹ When I first started these productions, I knew little about the techniques involved in translating for performance, but have learned from each of our productions. Now that I am also more familiar with the field of translation studies and theory, I am struck by how closely the knowledge gained from my practical experience with undergraduates aligns with that of professional translators and translation theorists, some of whose works are cited throughout this article.

¹² Rudkin (1996) discusses such problems in the context of translating Euripides’ *Heracles*.

¹³ My thanks are due to Nicholas Stemkowski and Mary Ewing (translators, *Oresteia*, 2012); Daniel Hammack, Alyssa Horrocks, Joe Kellum, Courtney Miller, Kinsey Steere, Maria Welch, Weston Woodard (translators, *Philoctetes*, 2014); Elizabeth Hunt, Patrick Lebo, Giacomo Riva, Alden Roberts, Caleb Taylor (translators, *Bacchae*, 2016); all the actors in the 2016 *Bacchae*, but especially Justin Day, Ryan Miller, and Ginny Shafer; and above all, Professor Robert Berls, a brilliantly creative director, general collaborator and valued friend.

1. Aeschylus' *Oresteia*

Our first production was Aeschylus' *Oresteia* (2012), and this ambitious beginning created a template for our subsequent productions in many ways. Our audiences, like the translators, have been primarily undergraduates, and their presumed expertise and expectations have significantly influenced the types of translation possible for us, creating texts which emphasize clarity and correspondingly focus less on replicating in English the high poetic style of tragedy, especially in the choruses.¹⁴ The *Oresteia* is an extremely complex text, some 3000 lines long, and any full production of the trilogy lasts at least five hours, a theatrical baptism by fire for an audience relatively ignorant of the language and conventions of Greek tragedy, and so, from the beginning we were aware that we would have to shorten and simplify the original text for our envisaged audience.¹⁵

Since our translation had to be completed in eight weeks so that it could be performed at the end of the semester, and since the production itself could not last the full five hours that a complete version of the trilogy would take, we used a common domain translation of the trilogy and cut it down to what we decided were the parts of the text that were essential for conveying the dramatic arc of the trilogy. We then returned to the Greek text to create our own translation of those parts. Our eventual *Agamemnon* was just 711 lines long, down from 1673, while the *Choephoroi* comprised only 469 lines, mostly through the expedient of omitting the *kommos*. *Eumenides* proved harder to cut and was allowed 709 lines. The combination of our envisaged audience and the time constraints on our translators made for a very particular version of the play, geared to its performance conditions, that could be called an 'all-action *Oresteia*', since our cuts were strongly determined by the action of the play. Passages that did not seem to us to contribute to the progress of the story tended to be cut in favour of those that propelled it.

Such an exercise also enabled a different sort of collaboration with Aeschylus, in that it helped us consider the process of turning a mythological narrative into a play – what is included, what is omitted, what is emphasized or minimized from an existing story. Any mythological narrative suitable for moulding into a comprehensible story with a clear plot is composed of a series of actions, each causally dependent on the last, and the author makes his (or her) mark on the dramatic tradition in establishing how the action gets from A to B. Any abridgement of the *Agamemnon* needs a Clytemnestra who shows that she is in command while her husband is away, the return of Agamemnon, some exchange between the two, his murder, and Clytemnestra lording it over the bodies. Such a bare-bones version contains everything strictly necessary for a comprehensible play, but in such

¹⁴ Bassnett (1998b: 93-4) posits a sliding scale in dramatic translation: "one extreme, where no attempt is made to acculturate the source text that may result in the text being perceived as 'exotic' or 'bizarre', through a middle stage of negotiation and compromise, and finally to the opposite pole of complete acculturation". Our texts have all tended towards the latter of these poles; see also Venuti 2008: 13-19 on the complexities, political and other, of this kind of 'domesticated' translation.

¹⁵ Goldhill (2007: 158) considers this "one coherent response to translating Greek tragedy: reduce, control, streamline".

a compressed form that it damages the grandeur, slowness and menace that are so essential to Aeschylus' *Agamemnon*. Because it is a trilogy of connected plays, the action of the *Oresteia* takes place over a longer time (both in terms of the lives of Agamemnon and his family and of actual time spent in a theatre) than an individual play could, and the *Agamemnon* in particular is notable for containing long choral sections which bring the audience to reflect over time on the fall of Troy, Agamemnon's actions, and the justice of Zeus at work in the universe. A major deficiency of our abbreviated version was that it de-emphasized the impression that Aeschylus gives us through his leisurely pacing of the action, that an unseen but all-powerful Zeus lies behind the action of the play and works human fate out on a divine, rather than a human, time-scale.¹⁶ In our production there was never a very long wait for the next action and much of the play's complex imagery was sacrificed. Even so, we did retain largely intact elements such as the carpet scene and Cassandra's scene: they might not be strictly essential in their entirety to a purely plot-driven *Agamemnon*, but their absence vastly diminishes the play because of the visual and dramatic power for the audience of watching Agamemnon walk down the red carpet to his doom, or of experiencing Cassandra's unsettling power to know the past of the house of Atreus and predict its future.

Although we simplified syntax and vocabulary in pursuit of our goal of clarity, a point of diminishing returns became increasingly clear. Aeschylus' Greek is notoriously complex, as even his contemporary Aristophanes complained (e.g. *Frogs* 1254-77),¹⁷ but we soon learned that simplifying his language in the interests of clarity for a contemporary audience could lead to over-simplification, creating a horribly banal, or even comic, text from which we swiftly retreated.¹⁸ So our initial emphasis on clarity and simplification was modified as we realized the importance of trying to convey something of Aeschylus' formal and uncolloquial Greek through our words.¹⁹ Though for Aristotle (*Po.* 1450a38-39) the action of a tragedy is its most important element, and at first we focused quite narrowly on the action of the *Oresteia*, it became clear that language and individual images or scenes that strictly speaking do not advance the plot are significant elements in creating a compelling translation for performance.

Our production omitted the role of the watchman and the translation began with the *parodos*, cutting its original 217 lines to 147, by omissions such as Aeschylus' speculations on the nature of Zeus (159-83). Such an omission obviously changes the theological framework of the play and was a loss. However, the conscious focus on narrative details enabled the death of Iphigeneia to be left intact, because its imagery and descriptive detail are horrific, effective and easy for an audience of non-specialists to grasp. As a result of these decisions, which were large-

¹⁶ See, for example, the chorus' words at Aesch. *Ag.* 367-75, part of a very long *stasimon* (355-488).

¹⁷ The famous parody of Aeschylus by A.E. Housman (1901) in his "Fragment of a Greek Tragedy" also captures something essential of the difficulties of working with these texts.

¹⁸ Cf. Goldhill 2007: 158-9, 169; Edney (1996: 230-1) discusses a similar process in translating Molière.

¹⁹ Green (1960: 207) effectively summarizes the difficulties inherent in Aeschylus: "violent metaphors . . . compound adjectives . . . the pattern of his plays is stiff and ritualistic".

ly driven by our perceptions of the needs of the audience, our *Agamemnon* began with this version of the *parodos* (40-67): “Ten years since the great enemies of Priam, the lords Agamemnon and Menelaus, who were sent from Zeus to sit upon two thrones, each with a scepter and bound in everlasting honor, journeyed away from this land with a thousand ships of the Argives, to aid their cause in battle. They uttered a loud war-cry from their hearts, just as when eagles scream in lonely grief for their lost chicks. Any of the higher powers, Apollo, or Pan, or Zeus who hear the shrill screaming clamor of the eagles which travel in their realm, sends the Furies who bring retribution late. Thus, mighty Zeus sends the sons of Atreus against Paris, for the sake of promiscuous Helen, into many wrestling matches that make Trojan and Greek limbs sore”. Our translation then omitted lines 67-109, in which the chorus lament their age and question Clytemnestra about what has happened – a logical outcome of having omitted the watchman’s part. The translation picked Aeschylus’ words up at l. 109, joining it to l. 67 with “And so, the mighty two-throned Achaeans, with like minds, command the youth of Greece, sent with avenging hand and spear against Troy, by birds of omen, appearing to the king of the ships”. Calchas’ prophecy was retained mostly completely all the way to l. 155, but repeated revisions led us also to omit ll. 160-84. This was a loss, given that ll. 176-84 contain Aeschylus’ programmatic statement that learning comes through suffering thanks to the “rough grace” (χάρις βίαιος) of the gods (182), but once the previous strophe and antistrophe had been excised, so had all the context for this strophe, rendering it suddenly out of place.

Our other major excision was that of the entire *kommos* of the *Choephoroi*. Here, we elided ll. 291-8, “The oracle says that the guilty must not take part in libation offerings or sacrifices on the altars; no one will invite them into their homes or sleep under the same roof as them. Shrivelled up, dishonoured and friendless, they die. How can I not trust oracles such as these? Even if I don’t, the deed must be done”, with l. 514: “But we are not far off course by asking why my mother sent this offering here, and why she finally decided to offer atonement after so long”. Again, this cut was drastic but logical within the framework of our focus on balancing respect for the dramatic arc of the trilogy with the needs of audience and translators for a more streamlined *Oresteia*. This cut also had ramifications for the trilogy as a whole since its effect – whatever one thinks the purpose of the *kommos* in Aeschylus is – was to make a much more decisive Orestes who had essentially made up his mind to kill his mother and Aegisthus as soon as he met Electra.

Throughout the process, it took time for students to leave the mode of translation that had become second nature to them in classes where accuracy and grammar were all, and also for me to begin to view the text as potentially malleable rather than an unassailable whole. Through the process of conscious adaptation and abridgement, I came to see the hitherto sacrosanct text more as a director would do, as a flexible entity rather than the fixed ideal born of a strictly philological training, and to broaden my own sense of what translation might mean.²⁰

As the examples from our text show, the linguistic register we used for our *Oresteia* retained quite a formal quality, to reflect the difficulty of Aeschylus’ lan-

²⁰ Boswell (1996: 149-50) discusses some similar experiences with directors and translators.

guage and avoid the dangers of banality that we discovered while moving towards too colloquial a tone. This language was reflected in the visual aspects of the production: actors were dressed in generic Greek costume of tunics and sandals and the set consisted of a Greek temple-like structure. Although there was little contact between translators and director and performers after the text was handed over to them, there was no particular conflict between how each side imagined the performance. The relationship between language, translation and performance is evident here. It is hard to imagine a version of this trilogy whose language is consistently colloquial,²¹ so that its length and linguistic complexity may therefore have an unusually strong influence on the types of production that it is likely to attract. Length and a more formal linguistic register will influence production issues such as setting, costume and so on by director and designer.²²

2. Sophocles' *Philoctetes* (2014)

Many of the constraints on the translators and practices resulting from them in 2012's production shaped our 2014 offering, but different tragedies generate different difficulties both in collaboration and translation. *Philoctetes* poses particular problems for translators because of its multiple and varied expressions of pain, which are relatively lacking in English.²³ All too soon, translations become thick with 'alas!', 'wretched', 'woe is me' and similar 'translatorese', more or less acceptable in construing, but not in translating.²⁴ Our central goal was once more accessibility to a non-specialist audience, and this translation as a whole was more colloquial than our rendition of Aeschylus. Although Sophocles' language is undeniably poetic, Sophocles himself, according to Plutarch (*Mor.* 79b), came in time to reject Aeschylus' "heaviness" and "harshness and artificiality" of style, and this difference in style between the two may be the reason why, even at the start of our process, we had less trouble balancing a close relationship to the text with rendering it relatively idiomatically in English. However, as we revised and polished our translation, we became bolder about moving its language further from that of the original text as we came to consider translation as more than a purely linguistic exercise.

In particular, the translators explored some relationships between text and stage action to see how some words of lamentation, which never sounded entirely natural in English, could be better rendered by stage directions. For example, at l. 364, Sophocles' Greek reads: οἱ δ' εἶπον, οἴμοι, τλημονέστατον λόγον. Having ban-

²¹ Burian (2000) and Brouwer (1974) discuss some translations of the trilogy, all of which tend to a more formal style, a tendency questioned by Ewans (1989: 120).

²² Compare the remarks of Ewans (1989: 134) on the Peter Hall version of the *Oresteia* on the "mutual interaction" between Tony Harrison's "neo-Beowulf" text, Harrison Birtwhistle's music and the "stylized hieratic" acting which worked together to create a "remote, massive, and primitive" Aeschylus.

²³ On the non-verbal common sounds in tragedy, to denote grief and other emotions such as surprise see Walton 2006: 79-84; cf. Walton 2016: 151-3.

²⁴ Bartlett (1996: 69) discusses similar difficulties with translating Racine.

ished ‘alas’ from their vocabulary, the translators started out with, “They said (*gut wrenching wail of pain*), most arrogant speech”. On review, they decided that this made Neoptolemus’ reaction too violent, and decided instead to render οἶμοι simply through action on stage. Their final text read: “They said (*Neoptolemus kicks angrily at a rock*) most arrogant words”.²⁵

In this production, another collaboration emerged that had been absent from the *Oresteia*, as our translators engaged with the scholarly commentary on the play by Seth Schein (2013), which offers helpful material on the multiple Homeric resonances in *Philoctetes*.²⁶ Schein’s material inspired the translators to try to render some of these in slightly more archaic language. While none of these made their way into the final production because we decided that our audience would find them jarring and not understand their purpose, the process generated some important discussions about audience collaboration: to what degree and when should audience expectations be accommodated, and in what ways can translators – the middle term between text and audience – fulfill their duties to both sides?²⁷

The multiple versions of the play that we created moved gradually from renditions that retained a close connection to the syntax of the Greek text to those that took on a life of their own. A few examples will show the process. First, in ll. 26-39, our first pass at the Greek is not totally unidiomatic, but certainly seems in some places, such as l. 30’s “lest”, slightly stilted and to bear the marks of the syntax of its original language.

ΝΕΟΠΤΟΛΕΜΟΣ	ἄναξ Ὀδυσσεῦ, τοῦργον οὐ μακρὰν λέγεις; δοκῶ γὰρ οἶον εἶπας ἄντρον εἰσορᾶν.	
ΟΔΥΣΣΕΥΣ	ἄνωθεν ἢ κάτωθεν; οὐ γὰρ ἔννοῶ.	
ΝΕΟΠΤΟΛΕΜΟΣ	τὸδ’ ἐξῦπερθε; καὶ στίβου γ’ οὐδεὶς κτύπος.	
ΟΔΥΣΣΕΥΣ	ὄρα καθ’ ὕπνον μὴ καταυλισθεὶς κυρεῖ	30
ΝΕΟΠΤΟΛΕΜΟΣ	ὀρῶ κενὴν οἴκησιν ἀνθρώπων δίχα.	
ΟΔΥΣΣΕΥΣ	οὐδ’ ἔνδον οἰκοποιός ἐστί τις τροφή;	
ΝΕΟΠΤΟΛΕΜΟΣ	στιπτή γε φυλλὰς ὡς ἐναυλιζόντι τῷ.	
ΟΔΥΣΣΕΥΣ	τὰ δ’ ἄλλ’ ἔρημα, κούδέν ἐσθ’ ὑπόστεγον;	
ΝΕΟΠΤΟΛΕΜΟΣ	αὐτόξυλόν γ’ ἔκπωμα, φλαουρουργοῦ τινοσ τεχνήματ’ ἀνδρός, καὶ πυρεῖ ὁμοῦ τάδε.	35
ΟΔΥΣΣΕΥΣ	κείνου τὸ θησαύρισμα σημαίνεις τόδε.	
ΝΕΟΠΤΟΛΕΜΟΣ	ιοῦ ἰού; καὶ ταῦτά γ’ ἄλλα θάλλεται ῥάκη, βαρείας του νοσηλείας πλέα.	

[NEOPTOLEMUS Lord Odysseus, your plan won’t have to wait long. I think I see the sort of cave you spoke of. // ODYSSEUS From above or from below? For I can’t see. // NEOPTOLEMUS From above, and I don’t hear him hobbling about. // ODYSSEUS Be

²⁵ Schwartz and de Lange (2006: 12) discuss a case in which an English translation has to use physical action to express an idea that the original text of a modern French novel expresses linguistically.

²⁶ A reversed process, in which a translation for production generates a commentary, is also possible: see Ewans 1989: 127-9.

²⁷ On the possible relationships between translators and audiences, see also the discussions of Walton 2016: 11-12, 53, 88; Apfelthaler 2014; Brunette 2000: 177-9; Nord 1997.

careful entering the cave, lest he is asleep. // NEOPTOLEMUS I see a dwelling place that is completely empty of any human beings. // ODYSSEUS Are there some supplies therein that make a comfortable home? // NEOPTOLEMUS Yes – I see a bed of trodden down leaves as if someone were sleeping here. // ODYSSEUS Is the rest empty, and is there no one inside? // NEOPTOLEMUS There’s a wooden cup, the work of a shoddy craftsman, and this firewood of the same material all together. // ODYSSEUS You show me this treasure store of that man. // NEOPTOLEMUS Hey – these other rags are being dried, drenched with heavy pus.]

Here is our final version, with an inside joke at line 39 for those who know the Greek (“Eww” for “ιοὺ ἰοῦ”):

NEOPTOLEMUS	Commander Odysseus, it’s not far off. I think that I see the cave you spoke about.
ODYSSEUS	From above or from below? I can’t see it.
NEOPTOLEMUS	From above, and there’s no sound of footsteps.
ODYSSEUS	Be careful – he may be asleep in there!
NEOPTOLEMUS	The cave’s empty as far as I can see.
ODYSSEUS	Are there any supplies in it to make a comfortable home?
NEOPTOLEMUS	Well, yes, I see a hard bed of leaves as if something lives here.
ODYSSEUS	Is the rest empty, and is there no one inside?
NEOPTOLEMUS	There’s a poorly-crafted wooden cup, and some firewood.
ODYSSEUS	That’s quite a treasure trove he’s got!
NEOPTOLEMUS	Eww – here are some pus-drenched rags drying out!

A demarcation between translation, direction and performance seemed absolutely fixed to us at the beginning of our process, but our translation over time began to transcend the process of rendering words and phrases from one language into another as felicitously as possible and to take on a life of its own in the translators’ imaginations beyond the page and on the stage. Stage directions, and directions for how the speeches should be delivered, began to come to them, and so lines 1397-405 read very differently in their final incarnation from earlier versions, both syntactically and in the translators’ determination to impose their own vision on the text. In particular, they began increasingly to use gesture and action either to supplement words or heighten for dramatic effect what is at most implicit in the Greek text: at ll. 1402-3, they envisaged Philoctetes falling and being supported physically by Neoptolemus, while at l. 1405, they imagined Philoctetes speaking in a reassuring, fatherly tone:

ΦΙΛΟΚΤΗΤΗΣ	ἔα με πάσχειν ταῦθ’ ἄπερ παθεῖν με δεῖ: ἅ δ’ ἦνεσάς μοι δεξιᾶς ἐμῆς θιγών, πέμπειν πρὸς οἴκους, ταῦτά μοι πρᾶξον, τέκνον, καὶ μὴ βράδυνε μηδ’ ἐπιμνησθῆς ἔτι Τροίας. ἄλλις γάρ μοι τεθρήνηται γόοις.
ΝΕΟΠΤΟΛΕΜΟΣ	εἰ δοκεῖ, στείχωμεν.
ΦΙΛΟΚΤΗΤΗΣ	ὦ γενναῖον εἰρηκῶς ἔπος.

ΝΕΟΠΤΟΛΕΜΟΣ	ἀντέρειδε νῦν βάσιν σήν.
ΦΙΛΟΚΤΗΤΗΣ	εἰς ὅσον γ' ἐγὼ σθένω.
ΝΕΟΠΤΟΛΕΜΟΣ	αἰτίαν δὲ πῶς Ἀχαιῶν φεύξομαι;
ΦΙΛΟΚΤΗΤΗΣ	μὴ φροντίσης.
ΝΕΟΠΤΟΛΕΜΟΣ	τί γάρ, ἐὰν πορθῶσι χώραν τήν ἐμήν;
ΦΙΛΟΚΤΗΤΗΣ	ἐγὼ παρῶν . . .

[PHILOCTETES Let me suffer what I must suffer! What you promised me, when you took my right hand... (*trails off, reflecting on his decision and the events that have just come to pass, then pauses in thought, but finally picks up speaking again by exclaiming in anger, drastically changing his tone*) But – send me home! Do this for me, my boy! Do not delay, and do not make any more mention of Troy! (*After his sudden outburst, his tone becomes solemn*) I've had enough of singing dirges and wailing for myself. // NEOPTOLEMUS (*in resignation*): If it seems best, then let us go! // PHILOCTETES How nobly you have spoken! (*Philoctetes begins moving toward Neoptolemus and stumbles*). // NEOPTOLEMUS (*Holding out arm to Philoctetes*) Support yourself against me now as you walk. // PHILOCTETES (*Leaning against Neoptolemus*) As long as I have strength to. // NEOPTOLEMUS (*Troubled, as if something terrible just occurred to him*) How will I avoid the anger of the Greeks? // PHILOCTETES Just do not worry. // NEOPTOLEMUS What if they ravage my homeland? // PHILOCTETES (*Speaking in a reassuring tone*) I will be there.]

But what translators attempt to fix on paper is not necessarily what they will get in performance. The value of collaboration between translators and directors became very clear to us in the next phase of the production. As with the *Oresteia*, we completed our text, finalized as it was in every way in our opinion, and handed it over to the director and cast, never to see it again until its performance. This had worked well with the *Oresteia*, but less well for *Philoctetes*. This was in some important ways the fault of the translators themselves. We had not spent enough time reading our whole translation aloud, so that sentences that sounded perfectly fine on the page proved stilted in performance. More seriously, the goal of accessibility to our audience through a relatively colloquial rendition of the text, along with our deliberate detachment from the practical part of the production backfired. The director and cast chose to emphasize what they saw as comic elements in their text, notably in the treatment of Philoctetes' howls of pain: the audience actually laughed at some of these, causing some pain to my translators at what they saw as a violation of their work. After their initial shock, they were persuaded to see the value of learning the limits of their control over their own words, but in discussing with them how the experience could have been improved, we agreed that having relatively little contact between translators and performers had been a mistake.

3. Euripides' *Bacchae* (2016)

The mistakes that we felt that we had made in 2014 strongly informed the production of Euripides' *Bacchae* (April 2016), in which we fostered a much closer collaboration between translators, director and cast, and also our Drama department. Both the *Oresteia* and *Philoctetes* had been performed without the full resources of the Drama de-

partment or other major funding, and in our director's elusive spare time. The production of the *Bacchae* was the department's final mainstage production of the academic year. More money was available for the production, our director was able to devote ample time to its details, and more performances were offered to the public. The increased resources enabled increased attention to material aspects of the play such as costumes and lighting. These had been decidedly basic for our first two productions, but the addition of money and time brought greater sophistication to the production and influenced its appearance and action. Most notably, Pentheus was clad in a sleek, highly masculine and authoritative costume of black leather armour, and wielded an impressive sword all the way until his initial seduction by Dionysus, when his outer garments were removed to reveal a flowing black dress underneath and his sword was confiscated.

For the translators, it was an extraordinary privilege to see what they had created come to life on stage, in the process of rehearsals, as the production gradually gained momentum, and then for the four public performances. The translators were engaged with the director and cast throughout the creation of the production. I attended rehearsals regularly and was available to help with pronunciations, and occasional interpretative matters. My student translators were also required to attend at least two rehearsals and to write several reflective pieces: first, a reflection on our process after we had completed the translation, then a short piece on the rehearsal process, and finally a post-performance reflection. These discussions offered me significant food for thought and I have quoted from them throughout this paper.

Two of the translators auditioned for parts in the play and became part of the chorus. They were always on hand to explain, and sometimes change the text in cases where what had seemed entirely clear to us in class proved not to be so to the 'uninitiated' of the cast. A comment from one translator/actor offers a very clear explanation of the benefits of this sort of collaboration: ". . . we were standing up in our . . . formation and trying to recite the 'happy is he . . . to reach the other side' section of one of the last choral odes (902-6). We were having a lot of trouble . . . because nobody could remember the words. When [the director] prompted them as to why this particular paragraph was so much more troublesome than the others they responded that . . . it didn't make any sense". Once the translators had explained that "reaching the other side" meant death, "suddenly the whole chorus had a much easier time remembering . . . and within ten minutes it was fine".

Our translation again prioritized our assumed audience's need for clarity. The long dialogue scenes between Pentheus and Dionysus (e.g. 461-508, 802-46) contain multiple extended sets of questions and answers. Such passages are mostly rendered in *stichomythia*, whose Greek is relatively unadorned with compound adjectives or complex imagery, so that they lent themselves particularly well to conversational, colloquial renditions. Moreover, the humorous elements in parts of the *Bacchae* have long been noted, for example by Seidensticker (1978), and our translators enjoyed bringing these out, ably assisted by our Pentheus, who got a laugh every night for his drawling response to Dionysus' demand that he put on women's clothing: "You want me to do *what?!*" While we chose to write our dialogue in a fairly naturalistic manner, simplifying the text, often by stripping it of many

proper nouns,²⁸ we used a different technique for the choral poetry, translating it in a basic metre of four beats per line, and keeping the dreamlike, associative quality of its words by retaining many proper nouns and references to mythology with which our audience was not necessarily familiar, and did not need to be.

As with our *Oresteia*, translators' linguistic choices and the choices of the director and designers influenced one another. The costumes and set combined contemporary and ancient elements, so that the chorus were dressed in tunics and at certain points in the story wore half-masks, but the show was also enhanced by multi-media projections and other contemporary technology, such as a fog machine to signify Dionysus' presence as a divinity. In an analogous mixture of contemporary and more formal, the translators' dialogue was relatively colloquial in register but retained a higher linguistic register for the poetry of the choruses.

One notorious problem in the *Bacchae* is the end of the text, where lines are clearly missing, especially in the apparent gap between the one line that Agave speaks in the transmitted text (1329) and l. 1330, which evidently comes towards the end of a speech by Dionysus as *deus ex machina*. The text as it is transmitted makes the end of the play incoherent, and different translators have coped with the problem in various ways. Our solution was a kind of collaboration with Euripides based on the attempt of Charles Willink (1966: 46-50) to fill in the gap, with the dual aim of keeping our additions to a minimum, while also reflecting our understanding of Dionysus' motivation for what he does to Thebes. Our additions read thus: "I am here."²⁹ And I am truly a god. Perhaps you understand that at last, now that I have inflicted just punishment on you, just as I said I would. You wouldn't listen to me and now you have got exactly what you deserve. Agave, you of all people insulted your own sister, my mother, by saying that not Zeus, but some mortal man was her lover. Cadmus – at first, you treated me with more respect, but even you were corrupted by their lies in the end [cf. Eur. *Ba.* 333-6]. And you, Pentheus – I gave you every opportunity to change your mind and worship me, but in the end I had to make an example of you. (*Indicating Pentheus' remains*) Pentheus' sufferings are over. Here he lies, bloody and torn. (*Turning to Cadmus and Agave*). But your punishment is not over yet. Agave, you must go into exile immediately: a mother who murdered her own son must not pollute her own town".

One important lesson learned from the previous production is the importance of negotiating between the Greek and the modern.³⁰ As translators, we consciously attempted to mediate between the fifth century BCE text and the twenty-first century audience, but inevitably, we looked behind us more often than we looked in front. For the director and cast, the fifth century was distant from their vision of the play. I, and to some degree my translators, had to lay aside our fifth-century-centred view of what the play should be, once the translation was out of our hands and in theirs.

²⁸ For example, Eur. *Ba.* 1024-6 reads: ὦ δῶμ' ὃ πρὶν ποτ' εὐτύχεις ἀν' Ἑλλάδα, / Σιδωνίου γέροντος, ὃς τὸ γηγενὲς / δράκοντος ἔσπειρ' Ὀφειος ἐν γαίᾳ θέρως, translated literally as "Home of the Sidonian old man who sowed the earth-born crop of the serpent Ophis in the earth, you who were once happy in the sight of Greece". Our final version read, "Oh, Theban house, until today you were fortunate throughout all of Greece".

²⁹ Repeating our translation of the first word of this play, ἦκω.

³⁰ For Eco (2003), the heart of translation is negotiation.

In retrospect, it is clear that we came to the play with some unspoken assumptions about authenticity, based on our shared understanding of fifth-century Athenian theatrical practice, of which director and cast were relatively free. But had I been asked as the production began, about how important it was to reflect fifth-century BCE performance conventions in the performance, I would certainly have responded that a contemporary production in English should be free of such concerns. It never occurred to us, after all, to expect an all-male, masked cast, and we were content and even excited that the costumes and set would have so many modern refinements. But two pieces of news disturbed our insouciance about the importance of authenticity: first, the director had divided the role of Dionysus into two distinct characters, one the actual god and the other his mortal representative for most of the play; second, the latter Dionysus was to be played by a woman. For me, at first hearing, somehow those innovations seemed too much, inauthentic, and unnecessary. And some people who came to the play with no knowledge of the story did find its beginning confusing, as the divine (male) Dionysus spoke half the prologue before handing it over to the female Dionysus.³¹ Following my policy of trust in the director, however, I said nothing and kept an open mind.

In fact, these elements turned out generally very well. The male actor who played the divine Dionysus brought a degree of beautiful and menacing power to his role while the woman who played Dionysus formed an outstanding collaboration with the actor who played Pentheus in the chemistry that developed between their two roles. Perhaps *because* she did not have a classical background, she had fewer preconceptions about her role and could make it her own without self-conscious concerns about authenticity. Her performance even created a new and unforeseen thread in the web of collaboration by adding a few of her own ad libs to our text, which heightened the text's unsettling mixture of humour and horror.³² For example, in the scene between the crazed Pentheus and Dionysus (912-76), our script's stage directions had already imagined the tone of some of Dionysus' words to Pentheus as resembling a parent humouring a little child, in our attempt to mingle the humorous and the sinister, and she amplified this aspect of them. So to Dionysus' warning, "We don't want to destroy the shrines of the Nymphs and the groves where Pan has his pipes" (*Ba.* 951-2) our Dionysus added, "You know how he gets about his forests!". Again, the parent-child dynamic was expanded at the end of the scene. After Pentheus states, "I will get what I deserve" (ἄξιόν μὲν ἄπτομαι, 970) and exits, the next line of the text that we had translated from Euripides

³¹ After the production was over, one translator/actor commented: "Dividing Dionysus into two parts and giving the mortal Dionysus role to a woman made the attraction between Dionysus and Pentheus more heteronormative, and made it difficult to combine the mortal and divine versions of Dionysus. Dionysus is a god of contradiction and duality, and I feel like we weren't able to emphasize that enough with the way we split the character and [staged] everything. Had we [arranged] the show in such a way that only one Dionysus was on stage at any time, and we were able to do transitions in which one Dionysus steps behind something on the set and the other Dionysus walks out, that would have helped to emphasize the gender fluidity and duality of Dionysus, rather than to confuse it. More traditionally, we also could have stuck to a single Dionysus, avoiding dividing his duality entirely".

³² Edney (1996: 231-2) discusses some modern theatrical examples of actors' contributions to a translated text.

pides was Dionysus' comment, "Extraordinary. You will suffer extraordinarily and find fame towering to heaven . . ." (*Ba.* 971-2). Instead, however, after Pentheus' prophetic statement, our Dionysus spoke to Pentheus like an encouraging parent – "Bacchae? Wanna go see the Bacchae?" – and at Pentheus' gleeful assent, the pair ran off, while the divine (male) Dionysus entered and spoke his final speech. Our translators are currently revising our text for potential publication, and we are considering whether or not to include some of these 'extras' as part of our script. To what extent would additions created for one specific production of the play by one specific actor close the door to other, very different styles of *Bacchae*?

Conclusion: Pedagogical Positives and Negatives

The 'Crocker-Harris method' of construing is arguably unavoidable in the Classics classroom. Indeed, it is necessary and desirable, at least in a less austere form. If students are to be truly successful, they must acquire, with each successive course in Greek, a linguistic competence and comfort that can most efficiently be gained from a focused emphasis on Greek syntax and morphology. The time constraints inherent in creating a translation for performance in a half-semester of eight weeks or so mean that traditional elements of testing students' grammatical competence through tests and quizzes may be under-emphasized, so that this kind of exercise cannot be applied universally to advanced Greek translation courses. Yet the Crocker-Harris method also keeps Greek imprisoned in our classrooms in the triangle of text, learner and instructor discussed at the beginning of this article, and students purely as pupils, laying little emphasis on the critical thinking and close engagement with the meaning of a text that is necessary if their translation is to be offered to an audience beyond the classroom. Through the choices, sacrifices and compromises students are forced to make in translating for performance, they are encouraged to reflect on the incompleteness and imperfection of every translation and the essentially contingent nature of translation, an important corrective to beginners' courses in Greek which will naturally, if misleadingly, have concentrated on learning grammar and vocabulary as a process of more literal one-to-one equivalents between Greek and English.

In more traditional classes, we typically work through a text and rarely if ever return to passages translated earlier to reconsider their meaning and the best way to render it in English. In the kind of class I have described in this article, continuous re-reading and re-drafting is central: students are not always enthusiastic about revisiting their work to improve upon it, but the prospect of offering it to an audience of several hundred people has been a powerful stimulus for focused work and has often brought out creativity that I would not have imagined from some of their previous work. Some students are more gifted as linguists than others, but everybody in these classes has been able to make improvements to successive versions of the translation to make it sound 'right' within their chosen idiom.

The value of experiential learning is increasingly recognized both in the schools from which our students come and in contemporary higher education (Kolb and Kolb 2005; Kuh 2008). In a time when the discipline of Classics, and especially an-

cient Greek, is vulnerable in the academy, the acquisition of knowledge through ‘applied’ ancient Greek, creating a translation for performance and collaborating with actors, director and an audience gives students a greater sense of mastery in their discipline, and also the sense that they are doing something special, as the inheritors of a long literary and cultural tradition, through the possession of an increasingly rare kind of knowledge in which they can take pride. My students care about winning my approval for the translations they make in the classroom, but this can hardly compare with the excitement of seeing their hard-won knowledge of a taxing and arcane language bring a text to life and engage audiences. The quotations I have chosen from student reflections throughout this article are full of this excitement and the last word should go to one translator/actor in 2016’s *Bacchae*: “There is something very different about collaborating with Euripides by performing his work and attempting to bring his vision to life . . . It’s like when we read it out loud in Greek as opposed to just reading it in Greek. There’s a power and a magic to spoken language that I felt very profoundly sitting on the floor in a circle with the Bacchae holding hands with our eyes locked on the person across from us chanting the metrical stanzas. And there was a sense of accomplishment and amazement that we made that magic; that those were our words creating this power in the air and transporting the listeners into the story of Dionysus and the Maenads”.

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