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Euripides , Heather McHugh (Translator) , David Konstan (Translator)

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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. Under the general editorship of Peter Burian and Alan Shapiro, each volume includes a critical introduction, commentary on the text, full stage directions, and a glossary of the mythical and geographical references in the play.

Brimming with lusty comedy and horror, this new version of Euripides' only extant satyr play has been refreshed with all the salty humor, vigorous music, and dramatic shapeliness available in modern American English.

Driven by storms onto the shores of the Cyclops' island, Odysseus and his men find that the Cyclops has already enslaved a company of Greeks. When some of Odysseus' crew are seized and eaten by the Cyclops, Odysseus resorts to spectacular stratagems to free his crew and escape the island. In this powerful work, prize-winning poet Heather McHugh and respected classicist David Konstan combine their talents to create this unusually strong and contemporary tragic-comedy marked by lively lyricism and moral subtlety.

Cyclops Details

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Author : Euripides , Heather McHugh (Translator) , David Konstan (Translator)

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From Reader Review Cyclops for online ebook

Will says

The only extant Satyr play, Cyclops is unique. It's hilarious. I actually laughed out loud at the whining satyrs, the drunken Polyphemus and Silenus, the taunting songs of the chorus of Satyrs, the sexuality jokes. Cyclops focuses around Bacchus' sacred wine, with hilarious results. Silenus, the old satyr, is drunk off his ass, making lewd jokes and fumbling around. Polyphemus confesses his love.

The juxtaposition of men being eaten and raucous drunken revelry is effective, and Euripides obviously knew what he was doing. Cyclops makes me wish more than one Satyr play was extant. Let's hope for a chance papyrus find.

AGamarra says

"Porque sentimos compasión de nuestra espalda y espinazo y no deseo echar fuera mis dientes por causa de los golpes, ¿eso lo llamas cobardía?"

Este drama satírico es el único conservado de los tres grandes: Esquilo, Sófocles y Eurípides, pues generalmente se presentaban 3 tragedias y 1 drama satírico sin embargo de los demás han quedado puras tragedias.

El tema obviamente narra el encuentro entre Odiseo y Polifemo, hay desde luego algunas variaciones a la historia de Homero para poder hacerla más divertida. En la isla del gigante habitan los sátiros supuestamente esclavizados. Sileno que es el padre de todos hablará permanentemente con Odiseo. A pesar de su estilo tiene aspectos serios al ser un drama, no es totalmente una comedia lo que la hace una pieza un poco extraña y sin mucha intensidad. Las burlas al Cíclope y al propio Odiseo son la parte más divertida pero en general no me gustó mucho.

Κωνσταντίνος Οδυσσεως says

Απο εκδ?σεις Στιγμ? το δι?βασα

Arkar Kyaw says

The Strong, The Weak, and The Noble.

Euripides celebrates the triumph of a civilized man over a strong and primitive nature of man, Cyclops. Polyphemus, relying on his strength and following only the natural law, is outsmarted by Odysseus. Polyphemus is shockingly similar to the modern man -- individualistic, self-indulging consumerist holding on to the idea of "everyone is entitled to their own opinion". He knows no civility, no community, and cannot recognize the simplistic and mischievous Dionysian revelry of satyrs. Odysseus being a man lives with his own self-imposed civility and morality and is the only sober character in the play. He knows when

to drink and when to sing. He knows when to be civil and when to be mischievous. σωφροσ?νη, δικαιοσ?νη is the victor in the end. The play is the celebration of the ancient Greek virtues after all! And the hero is no one other than Socrates himself, played by Odysseus.

This outward celebration of σωφροσ?νη at the Dionysian festival (above all as a satyr play!) might indicate the dawn of Hellenism. How little did Euripides know that his hero Socrates will become a cyclops himself later!

Katsuro Ricksand says

I prefer the story the way that Homeros wrote it.

J.M. says

So this is a satyr play. Vulgar, bloody, but lighthearted. Much of the grisly action has to take place offstage, though, as it's Odysseus vs. Polyphemus with the man-eating and the eye-burning and all that. But the principal dialogue is pretty funny, especially as the Cyclops gets drunker and drunker. The Chorus of Satyrs adds a nice, earthy, human touch.

I'd really like to see it on stage. Some highbrow college acting troupe, maybe, doing lowbrow Greek satyr plays. Have you got a prop phallus we can borrow? Oh, phalli? Say!

Steve says

The sole complete and extant satyr-play, read in the translation of William Arrowsmith.

Andrew says

This is comic version of the Odysseus / Polyphemus story. With a chorus of satyrs, you better believe there are plenty of dirty jokes to go around. It's worth reading just to discover the unfortunate fate of the no-good Silenus. This short play's a bit ridiculous, but that's kind of the point, considering it was meant to send the audience home on a lighter note after sitting through three tragedies. This makes me wish there were more surviving Satyr plays.

Ash says

My edition (not this one) also contains Sophocles' satyr play, *Ichneutai*, or *The Searching Satyrs*, which doesn't have its own goodreads entry, but would probably get three stars as well anyway.

Gastón says

Interesante y divertido acercamiento al mito de Polifemo mediante un drama satírico.

Jon Catherwood-Ginn says

First of all--if I can geek-out for a second--it was so refreshing to FINALLY read an ancient satyr play! For years, I've heard echoed again and again the symbolic value of Greek playwrights staging satyr plays--bawdy farces that served as short satirical finales to tragic trilogies--without having any concrete understanding of how said pieces played. While the concept always fascinated me, the unfortunate dearth of extant satyr plays--"Cyclops" is the ONLY one--has left the style exiled from the theatrical canon. After reading this, I can't help but ask: why? How else can fledgling theatre historians draw any tangible connection to the satyr play style if "Cyclops"--our one link to this world--is left off the required reading list?

Stepping down from my holy-shit-that's-nerdy soapbox, Heather McHugh's translation of "Cyclops" was outstanding! The contemporaneity of the translation was edgy enough to make the humor bite, without sacrificing the rich poetry to MTV-era "relevance." This, matched with the play's natural irreverence (drunken monsters, satyr's running around with erect donges, etc.) would make this play an instant hit with a modern audience. Also, I'm willing to bet this show would sell to a modern crowd because the gulf between contemporary readers' ignorance of ancient geopolitics and classical tragedies' bevy of timely (aka: obscure) references is MUCH slimmer in "Cyclops" than in most Greek tragedies. (Most people know about Odysseus, right?)

Focusing on the titular character, I couldn't help but draw a connection between Euripides' "Cyclops" and John Gardner's depiction of the Dragon in "Grendel." Both characters live in solitude, spurn such societal institutions as religion and government, and opt to satiate what they consider the only truly worthwhile god: their appetite. For each character, gluttony assumes a unique form--Polyphemus feeds his belly while the Dragon hoards wealth. However, in both cases, the author creates gobs of ironic humor by upending readers' expectations of how such "monsters" would behave; the reader comes to the text assuming the Cyclops and Dragon will act as brutish as their infamous reputations' dictate, only to find the characters pontificating eloquently on such issues as law, religion, government, and human desire. ". . . from the mouths of brutes . . ."

While it's unsurprising that Euripides would write a killer funny satyr play (considering the already tragicomic style of his "tragedies"), I wonder how Sophocles & Aeschylus pulled it off? The latter two tragedians--while wickedly skilled--are famous for their hyper-serious gravity. Could they cut loose like Euripides? Or was the humor in their satyr plays a bit. . . neutered? Might be worth tracking down the excerpts from their lost satyr plays to see how versatile they were.

David Sarkies says

A Drunken Retelling of the Cyclops Saga

11 November 2018

Well, once again that large collection of books containing a bunch of the world's classical works has come in handy. The reason being is that I don't seem to have another copy of this particular Euripidean play, so since I have been slowly making my way through all of the Greek plays (and other works) I haven't had to resort to scouring the internet to attempt to locate a copy, not that that would've been too much of a problem. Actually, it has come to my attention that Percy Shelley actually did a translation of the play, which somehow didn't surprise me in the least.

However, I wouldn't actually consider it to be what I would consider romantic. Then again, the romance poets probably were more interested in romance in the form of pertaining to Rome as opposed to romance in the form of Mills and Boon. In fact I do wonder at times how it is that the likes of Mills and Boon took the name Romance, since when we use the word Romance in connection to languages, it isn't that we are suggesting that the language itself is sexy (though some people would beg to differ) but rather that it originated from Latin.

I seem to be drifting a bit here so I better get back on track. I'm surprised that this play didn't appear in one of the four Penguin volumes of Euripides' plays, particularly since there is something very, very unique about it – it is the only extant copy of a satyr play that we have. Satyr plays are basically plays that would be performed after a trilogy of tragedies, and tended to be a lot more light hearted. I guess that should be expected, because if you had just spent the entire day watching three films like, say, *Apocalypse Now*, you probably would want to finish the day off with something a lot less serious, say *Dumb and Dumber*. Okay, I'm not suggesting that the *Cylops* is anything like *Dumb and Dumber*, particularly since these plays probably wouldn't be all that suitable for children (not that they actually had ratings back in the days of the Ancient Greeks).

The story itself is pretty straight forward, and would be familiar to those who know the *Odyssey*. Yes, it is basically the story where Odysseus lands up on the island of the cyclops and has to use all his skills to be able to escape. However, there is an added catch, a bunch of satyrs are here as well, and they have been bound by the cyclops to act as shepherds. The thing with satyrs is that they are happy go lucky types of individuals who like wine, women, song, and basically the good old party atmosphere. Needless to say these satyrs tend to also be pretty crude, you know the big phallus and all that, though this is not necessarily mentioned in the play, it is just that we are pretty well versed in what went on – Greek plays, like Shakespeare's plays, didn't have the detailed stage instructions that many of the plays today have.

In a way, this is a rather light hearted play, though I wouldn't consider it to be one of those laugh out loud types of plays that Aristophanes would write. However, there are parts that make us think, particularly the idea of law and order. Of course the cyclops, whom we aren't supposed to sympathise with, you know with the killing and eating of Odysseus' men and all that, argue that laws only exist to protect the weak from the strong. Well, in a way that is true, expect for the fact that when the strong get into power they have this habit of watering down the laws for their benefit. This happens all too often these days – how many politicians are ever prosecuted for corruption, or corporate leaders ever prosecuted for financial fraud and environmental violations.

Yeah, while we do live in a civil and ordered society, it only ever seems that it is the street criminal that ends up in gaol, and when they end up in gaol it only works to push them further into the arms of the criminal underworld. Then again, in that underworld there certainly is no law, and you will quickly find out that it is there that the strong certainly rule.

Katie says

But how am I supposed to review this properly? It'd be like asking someone to rank something within a new genre without ever experiencing it before.

As the only surviving satyr play, I guess there's nothing I can do about that. It's all a bit absurd. They're sillier shorter plays, so history tells us, with drunken satyrs dressed with erect phalluses as the chorus. (...Uh, okay.)

So the contrast here of this with Odysseus and his epic fight with a cyclops is certainly..novel. I can't call it good or bad without thinking a bit longer, but am glad to have learned more what the genre is about by experiencing it

Alex says

The Cyclops' only claim to fame is that it's the world's only complete surviving Satyr play. In Athenian drama festivals, each playwright submitted four plays: a tragic trilogy and a concluding satyr play, which is a retelling of a classic myth with the addition of a bunch of dudes dressed as satyrs. With boners. Boners were an integral ingredient of the satyr play.

Euripides' luckily-saved satyr play is, as you may have guessed, a retelling of the famous episode from The Odyssey where Odysseus fools the Cyclops and gets half his crew eaten in the process.

It's fairly entertaining, I guess. I mean, I think we can all agree that most stories would be improved by having a bunch of drunks prancing around in the background with their boners out, whether or not that has anything at all to do with the plot.

But it's not at all the best work Euripides did; it all seems pretty tossed off.

It also includes, by the way, a rape joke that gathered some attention a while back. (Context: Polyphemus the cyclops gets Silenus the satyr drunk and then rapes him.) Not because it's unusual - Greek drama is chock full of rape, both jokey and not - just because, I guess. Here's a piece about it. The author concludes,

I decided that Euripides, like Amy Schumer, was punching up. The Cyclops scene can be read as a trenchant joke digging into the intensely creepy origins of Athenian rape culture. It subtly calls into question the ethics of a common custom in Athens: the sexually-inflected mentorship of adolescents by older men. And the fact that the rape is preceded by a mock-symposium goes even further, skewering the common sympotic custom of singing songs about desirable young boys.

In other words, Euripides' rape joke works for me.

So anyway, a) ten points for comparing Euripides to Amy Schumer, b) trigger warning, and c) let's just confirm that this is the official progenitor of this.

I've been getting super sick of Paul Roche's translations, so I switched over to William Arrowsmith's for this one, and I liked it much better. I even skimmed Roche's afterwards for comparison. Arrowsmith wins,

although Roche's having ten plays in the same volume is still a pretty big advantage.

Dmk says

It was really interesting to read satyr-play. And that is basically all good that can be said. Play with too-well-known plot, without good poetry, without interesting argumentation. It is what it is. Relaxing, lighter and shorter play to be served after three gloomy tragedies. But if you read it on its own it's just lame.

Second reading:

Since I become more interesting in Satyrplays I decided to reread Cyclops. Although I must say I enjoy reading, being now more focused and informed reader still I felt it won't make play something it is not especially since now I know Homer's account of this episode from Illiad... it's so, sooo superior.

But yes, it was fun to read. Much more entertaining than Sophocles' Trackers or 'funny' part of Alcestis.
