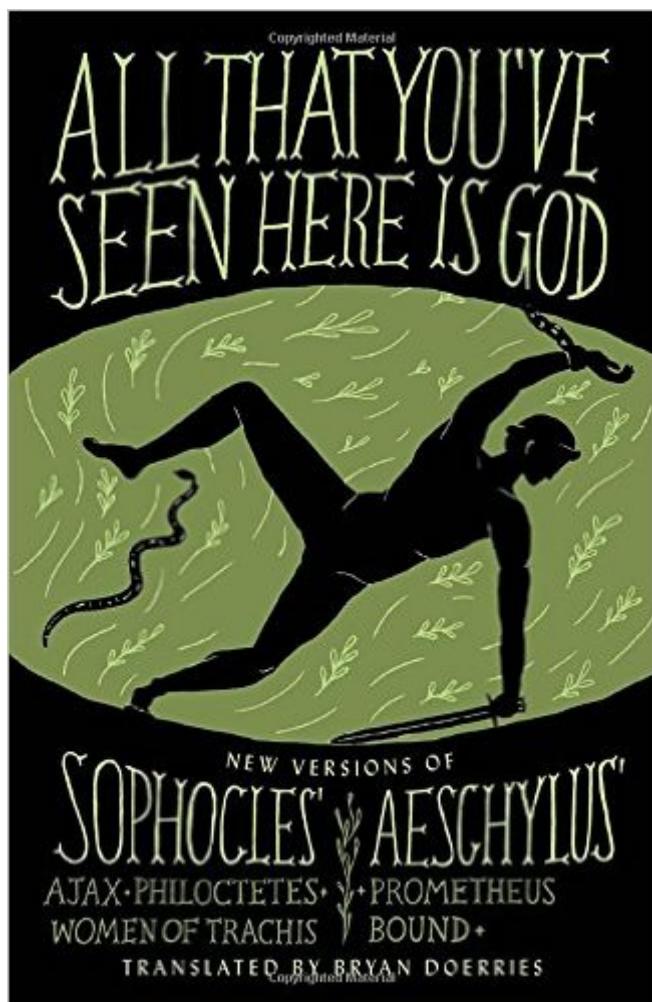


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# All That You've Seen Here Is God: New Versions Of Four Greek Tragedies Sophocles' Ajax, Philoctetes, Women Of Trachis; Aeschylus' Prometheus Bound (A Vintage Original)





## Synopsis

These contemporary translations of four Greek tragedies speak across time and connect readers and audiences with universal themes of war, trauma, suffering, and betrayal. Under the direction of Bryan Doerries, they have been performed for tens of thousands of combat veterans, as well as prison and medical personnel around the world. Striking for their immediacy and emotional impact, Doerries brings to life these ancient plays, like no other translations have before.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

I am hardly ever emotionally moved by introductions. In fact, I never used to read them. But in recent years I have started to take them more seriously. Sometimes reading them just to honor the author; and sometimes to just learn a little more about where the author is coming from and a little bit more about what's bopping around in his/her head. The introduction to this book touched me. The author describes his own revelations as his works were presented to an audience of military families. He talks about how the meaning of Sophocle's words opened up to him as soldiers and family members, some of whom had never known of the plays previously, spoke with such familiarity about the themes. They had lived them. They understood them on a visceral, gut level.

**TRANSLATION** Most students of any ancient language (and some modern ones) understand that there are two basic forms of translation. There is transliteration, where one just translates the words from language x into language y in the most accurate way possible, regardless of grammar; AND there is the literate translation. This latter requires more understanding of the first language

because what one does is take the essence of what was meant by the original author, and one rephrases it to one's best ability for the modern target audience. This author has chosen the second approach. He has rewritten the plays for we modern readers. THE PLAYS Readers need not fear these plays. The author gives a brilliant introduction to them, and then he presents them in modern language. I've read Sophocles at various times in my life (student and not), but I have to say that this is the first time I've delighted in him.

The translations in this volume are explicitly presented as intended as therapeutic experiences for audiences of returned veterans or others who have suffered traumatic experiences in violent or military situations. As such, these are a valuable effort and worthy of praise for their good intentions. I have heard a performance of this adaptation of Ajax, presented for an audience of wounded warriors, and I can believe that there may well be some therapeutic value for such an audience. It must be said, however, that the translator has chosen to use a style that is frequently cliched, or flatly colloquial, and that such a style necessarily loses much of the poetic power and drama of the plays, even though it probably makes them more accessible for the intended audience and enhances the intended perceptions of similarities between the ancient tragic situations and experiences and our contemporary violent world. Again, for these reasons, the translations are worthy of praise and attention. Even so, there are a number of very fine translations of these plays, and in recent years, many poets have taken the freedom of using a vocabulary and style that reflects their own backgrounds melded with the original works. Most obviously, poets such as Seamus Heaney, whose versions of Philoctetes and Antigone offer great poetic re-creations of those plays with a distinctive Heaneyish (Irish) lilt. Others have managed similar adaptations without losing the poetic power of the original. It is also somewhat difficult to understand the choice of printing the works in very short lines (mostly) when it is not clear what connection those short lines have with the rhythm, diction, or expression of the lines so translated.

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