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## IX

FIONA MACINTOSH

### THE 'REDISCOVERY' OF AESCHYLUS FOR THE MODERN STAGE

On 5 January 1856, *L'Orestie* of Alexandre Dumas opened at the Théâtre de la Porte-Saint-Martin. This was the first modern production of Aeschylus' trilogy, albeit heavily adapted and described on the title page in the published edition that year as a verse tragedy in three acts "imitée de l'antique".<sup>1</sup> Indeed, Dumas' version of the *Oresteia* is heavily dependent on Seneca from its first two scenes, when the importance of the episode at Aulis as well as the character of Aegisthus are seen as prime motivations for Clytemnestra's unoxorous feelings towards her absent husband. But from the third scene onwards, with the arrival of the messenger (here called by the name familiar from elsewhere, Talthybius), we are offered Aeschylus' tragedy right down to the episode ending with Cassandra's exit into the palace. The Senecan imprint is part of Dumas's effort to redeem Clytemnestra by allowing her to vacillate until reminded by Aegisthus of Agamemnon's sacrifice at Aulis; but it serves principally to vilify Aegisthus. When the horror literally spills out of the house as Cassandra tries to flee the scene that she has witnessed offstage, Aegisthus delivers the first blow to Cassandra onstage. The brutality of this Aegisthus is brought out absolutely in the final scene of Act 1, as the corpses of Agamemnon and Cassandra are revealed in tableau from behind

<sup>1</sup> A. DUMAS, *L'Orestie* (Paris 1856).

the set — Agamemnon on a bed, sword stuck in his chest, Cassandra on the surrounding steps, with an axe protruding from her skull; and the stage directions read: “Les deux assassins regardent, à moitié cachés par un rideau rouge”.<sup>2</sup>

There are two related points of interest about this production in 1856: the first concerns this culminating tableau of Act I; the second, more generally, relates to the timing of the production. The cowering figures of Clytemnestra and Aegisthus behind the red curtain in the tableau would have been a recognisable set-piece image to many members of Dumas' audience, alluding as it does to Guérin's painting of 1817 [fig.1]<sup>3</sup>. This image of imminent regicide was widely known and much discussed in the mid-nineteenth-century revolutionary world: a few years earlier in 1847-8 the English novelist, William Makepeace Thackeray had deliberately alluded to the painting in order to align his anti-heroine with the Aeschylean Clytemnestra in one of his woodcuts which accompanied the text of his novel, *Vanity Fair* [fig.2]. In 1850 the distinguished French engraver, Honoré Daumier had deliberately alluded parodically to Guérin's painting of the murderous Clytemnestra in a lithograph, in which Daumier's comic Clytemnestre is armed with a vast needle which she is about to inject into the somnolent figure of Agamemnon/Charivari (the title of the satirical journal to which he often contributed) [fig.3]. In a second lithograph some eighteen years later, Daumier recalls the one-act burlesque opera by Hervé, *Agamemnon, ou le chameau à deux bosses*, which was performed at the Folies-Nouvelles on 24 April 1856 in the wake of Dumas' *L'Orestie*. Here

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, 42.

<sup>3</sup> Pierre-Narcisse Guérin's painting “Clytemnestre hésitant avant de frapper Agamemnon endormi” (1817) is in the Louvre, Paris. The pre-Guérin iconographic tradition of Agamemnon is very rich. See E. HALL and F. MACINTOSH, *Greek Tragedy and the British Theatre 1660-1914* (Oxford 2005), 209 *sq.* for Romney's chalk ‘cartoons’; and F. MACINTOSH, “Viewing Agamemnon in Nineteenth-Century Britain” in *Agamemnon in Performance 458 BC to AD 2004*, ed. by F. MACINTOSH, P. MICHELAKIS, E. HALL and O. TAPLIN (Oxford 2005), 143 for Flaxman's engravings.

Daumier depicts a terrifying Clytemnestra who openly murders her husband in full company; and in his caption he takes Hervé comically to task for "correcting" antiquity both in his *Agamemnon* and in his opera *Chilpéric*. Hervé's Clytemnestra is a thoroughly Aeschylean active agent, rather than the passive Senecan victim she remains in Dumas's tragedy; but the important point is that in the first half of the nineteenth century, both the Aeschylean and Senecan versions are being deliberately played off against each other in the iconographic and theatrical traditions.<sup>4</sup>

In this final scene, then, Dumas is invoking Guérin's famous painting in his reference to the red curtain and the characters' partial concealment in order to place this moment in the action within a well-established iconographic tradition. Dumas is emphasising the fact that even after the murders, Aegisthus (like his Aeschylean counterpart) remains a cowardly assassin, not directly guilty of regicide, but of the barbarous slaughter of an innocent concubine. His Clytemnestra may be culpable, but she is clearly incapable of committing an act of impiety without the ambition of her consort and without being reminded of her need to avenge her daughter. Dumas' Clytemnestra is very far from the Aeschylean Clytemnestra who gloats over the corpse of her victim and relishes the murder in a lingering, graphic and sensual evocation of its consummation (Aesch. *Ag.* 1372 *sqq.*). This mitigated Clytemnestra places Dumas' trilogy, like most adaptations before the last part of the nineteenth century, within a domesticating tradition, where appropriation of ancient female figures involves a radical refashioning in accordance with modern, normative values.<sup>5</sup>

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, 139-162. Daumier's first lithograph is in the Fine Arts Museum of San Francisco and is reproduced at <http://www.calliope.free-online.co.uk/iphig>. The second was published in *Charivari*, 11 December 1868 and is reproduced in L. DELTEIL, *Le Peintre-graveur illustré* (Paris 1906-30), vol. 28, n° 3679.

<sup>5</sup> E. HALL "Aeschylus' Clytemnestra versus her Senecan Tradition", in *Agamemnon in Performance 458 BC to AD 2004* ed. by F. MACINTOSH, P. MICHELAKIS, E. HALL and O. TAPLIN (Oxford 2005), 53-75.

What is most striking, however, about this production is its timing — a decade after the 1844 Paris production of the Mendelssohn *Antigone* and the same year in which Ernest Legouvé's *Médée* premiered in Paris.<sup>6</sup> This was the year when Greek tragedy could be said to have been finally 'rediscovered' on the stages of modern Europe: Aeschylus now joined both Sophocles and Euripides in the European repertoire. But unlike the Mendelssohn *Antigone* or the Legouvé *Médée*, Dumas' *L'Orestie* did not travel. It was not until the later French adaptation by Leconte de Lisle entitled *Les Erinnyses*, first performed in 1873 at the Paris Odéon, that an *Oresteia* was to prove durable. *Les Erinnyses'* success over the next three decades in Paris and in the Roman Theatre at Orange may well have been due to its less unwieldy two-act structure and its omission of *Eumenides*. No one but Wagner, it seems, was yet quite ready for the trilogy's full epic sweep; and the practical limitations of the proscenium theatre as well as institutional practices may well have militated against materialising that idealised vision beyond Bayreuth.

If Aeschylus had arrived in the theatrical repertoire by 1856, this paper seeks to chart the path that led up to that 'arrival'. We often hear that Aeschylus was 'rediscovered' by the Romantics; and like all generalisations this one is open to question. Indeed, it is important to be reminded that this 'rediscovery' began considerably earlier in the century in both Britain and France. The impact of James Thomson's *Agamemnon*, which was first performed at the King's Theatre in 1738 against a background of new censorship legislation in London, reverberated throughout the century in both France and Germany. In 1780 Thomson's version was performed in a French translation by Henri Panckoucke in Paris;<sup>7</sup> and it served as one of the models behind the French revolutionary *Agamemnon* (1797) of Népomucène Lemercier. Thomson's text also had a

<sup>6</sup> E. HALL and F. MACINTOSH, *op. cit.*

<sup>7</sup> A. WARTELLE, *Bibliographie historique et critique d'Eschyle et de la tragédie grecque, 1518-1974* (Paris 1978), 24.

considerable impact on Alfieri's *Agamennone* (1778) and his *Oreste*, and in turn indirectly influenced many nineteenth-century versions of Aeschylus' tragedy. Lessing was a great admirer of Thomson and began to translate his *Agamemnon* into German. What he admired in the English version was its resistance to any neo-classically determined narrow definition of tragedy: instead he divined here the model for a new (German Romantic) kind of tragedy that opened up to new (occasionally violent and definitely passionate) realms of feeling.<sup>8</sup>

No less important in bringing about Aeschylus' 'rediscovery', however, was the publication of the first complete vernacular translation of his plays, which appeared anonymously in 1770 but was soon recognised to be by the playwright, author, magistrate, and Fellow of l'Académie française, Le Franc de Pompignan. Overlooked and indeed sometimes dismissed as downright incompetent,<sup>9</sup> this volume merits serious consideration. There are significant reasons why this first translation should have been marginalised and even dropped from histories of classical scholarship altogether, for Le Franc de Pompignan clashed with the fiercest adversary of the eighteenth-century pamphlet wars, no lesser luminary than Voltaire himself. Commonly known as "un ennemi de Voltaire", Le Franc was trivialised, denigrated and sent into permanent exile.<sup>10</sup> Indeed had Pompignan not fallen foul of Voltaire, Aeschylus' plays may well have entered the European theatrical repertoire considerably earlier than 1856.

<sup>8</sup> E. HALL and F. MACINTOSH, *op. cit.* (n. 3), 99-127.

<sup>9</sup> E.g. by M. DELCOURT, *Étude sur les traductions des tragiques grecs et latins en France depuis la Renaissance* (Bruxelles 1925), 222-228. More sympathetic is the very good discussion in C. CHEVALIER, *L'invention d'une origine. Traduire Eschyle en France, de Lefranc de Pompignan à Mazon: le Prométhée enchaîné* (Paris 2007), 127-202, esp. 127, where Le Franc's translation of *PV* is described as "une étape essentielle dans la découverte du Prométhée enchaîné".

<sup>10</sup> T.E.D. BRAUN, *Un ennemi de Voltaire. Le Franc de Pompignan: sa vie, ses œuvres, ses rapports avec Voltaire*, (Paris 1972).

### *Dacier versus Brumoy*

In Henry Fielding's mock-epic novel, *Joseph Andrews* of 1742, one of the signs of Parson Adam's eccentricity is that he carries a copy of Aeschylus' text in his pocket. No one, we infer, was reading Aeschylus directly at this time. Stanley's 1663 text and commentary, which remained standard for a long time,<sup>11</sup> was accompanied by an easy Latin translation of Aeschylus; and it was this no doubt that provided the main source for Thomson in his Senecan/Aeschylean *Agamemnon* of 1738. But if it was Stanley's Latin crib that aided Thomson, it may well have been the publication of Pierre Brumoy's pioneering three-volume, *Le théâtre des Grecs* (1730) that had led Thomson to Aeschylus in the first place. For the avowed aim of Brumoy's text was to bring the ancient plays out from the shadows; and even though he didn't risk translating any Aeschylean play in its entirety, he explained how "Ce père de la Tragédie a été celui des trois que le Tems a le plus maltraité".<sup>12</sup>

In many ways, Brumoy's study was a 'corrective' to André Dacier's enormously influential commentary on the *Poetics* (1692), which was immediately followed by a companion volume containing his translations of what he identifies as the two exemplary Greek tragedies, Sophocles' *Electra* and *Oedipus Tyrannus*.<sup>13</sup> Dacier's method resembled that of his subject; like Aristotle, his account of ancient tragedy is largely prescriptive. In his edition of the *Poetics*, he seems to be laying down the gauntlet to modern practitioners and some, it appears, rose to his challenge.<sup>14</sup> In his commentary on chapter 10 of the *Poetics*,

<sup>11</sup> M.L. CLARKE, *Greek Studies in England 1700-1830* (Amsterdam 1986).

<sup>12</sup> P. BRUMOY, *Le Théâtre des Grecs*. 3 vol. (Paris 1730), IV; XVI.

<sup>13</sup> A. DACIER, *La Poétique d'Aristote... Traduite en français avec des remarques d'André Dacier* (Paris 1692); ID., *L'Œdipe et L'Électre de Sophocle. Tragédies grecques, traduites en françois avec des remarques* (Paris 1692); and later in one volume, ID., *Tragédies grecques de Sophocle traduites en françois, avec des notes critiques, et un examen de chaque pièce selon les règles du théâtre* (Paris 1693).

<sup>14</sup> E. HALL and F. MACINTOSH, *op. cit.* (n. 3), 153-162.

for example, he holds up *Electra* and *Oedipus* as the best models for *peripeteia* and recognition (praising *Electra* for its double recognition, first by Orestes of Electra and then Electra of Orestes). Dacier goes on to note that modern playwrights tend mistakenly to avoid recognition — either, he infers, because it is not inherent in their chosen subject-matter or because they find it difficult to effect. But recognitions, he adds, have “des effets merveilleux sur le Théâtre” (as Sophocles’ *Electra* shows us): “M. Corneille en convient, la reconnaissance, dit-il, est d’un grand ornement dans les Tragédies, mais il est certain qu’elle a ses incommodeitez”.<sup>15</sup>

If Dacier focuses on the paradigmatic tragedies, Brumoy’s intention was to provide a wider conspectus of the Greek theatre consisting not only of all the tragedians but the comic playwrights as well. Additionally, and most importantly, his discussion included a comparative approach; but unlike Dacier, this did not serve to highlight the shortcomings of contemporary practice rather to show how the ancient plays, no less than those of Rome and neo-classical Europe, were the products of particular historical milieu. This new historical awareness of Greek tragedy enabled him to go so far as to imply that Greek tragedy provided, for its fifth-century BC audiences, an object lesson in the evils of kingship. In his *Discours sur le parallèle des Théâtres*, he explains that even though the plays regularly eulogise Athens, kings are routinely humiliated owing to the fifth-century Athenian “liberté Républicaine”.<sup>16</sup>

Brumoy translates seven plays — in addition to Dacier’s two Sophoclean paradigms, he includes Sophocles’ *Philoctetes*, Euripides’ *Hippolytus*, *Alcestis*, *Iphigenia in Aulis*, *Iphigenia amongst the Taurians*, and *Cyclops*. All the other plays receive synopses, some discussion and occasional passages of translation. Explaining why he hasn’t attempted to translate Aeschylus, Brumoy does not seek in any way to defend his subject; on

<sup>15</sup> A. DACIER, *op. cit.* [1] (n. 13), 155.

<sup>16</sup> P. BRUMOY, *op. cit.* (n. 12), I, cxvii.

the contrary, he insists he has saved his readers from the initial shock and disgust they would experience at encountering the playwright's serious shortcomings. Aeschylus is too ardent for Brumoy's liking.<sup>17</sup> He goes on to claim (quoting Le Fèvre) that it would be impossible to render "la hardiesse de ses épithètes ... en notre langue sans lui faire violence".<sup>18</sup> Brumoy introduces his readers not only to the idea of Aeschylus the primitive; he also popularises the now familiar *topos* that Aeschylus necessitates violence to the host language. At the end of the nineteenth century, Robert Browning proclaimed in the Preface to his "transcript" (as he called it) of the *Agamemnon* that he had translated Aeschylus' text in "as Greek a fashion as English will bear" without doing it "violence". In the view of many reviewers, however, Browning's translation precisely proved Le Fevre's point.<sup>19</sup>

Brumoy's text ran into a number of editions and was translated into English by Charlotte Lennox in 1759.<sup>20</sup> The French edition of 1785-89 was expanded considerably to include thirteen volumes containing translations of all the extant plays and a new critical apparatus. The new editor, André Charles Brotier, chose to reorder the playwrights chronologically so that the reader could witness "dans cet ordre naturel la marche de l'esprit humain, qui, dans tous les arts, s'avance d'abord à grands pas vers la perfection, et penche ensuite vers sa décadence".<sup>21</sup> This Vico-esque, tripartite pattern was to remain the standard view

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*, I, XVI; CLIV. Brumoy states that Aeschylus' "extrême simplicité et ses défauts auroient pû d'abord dégoûter les lecteurs". He is "trop fougueux...".

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*, XVI, citing M. LE FÈVRE, *Abrégé des Vies des Poètes* (Paris [s.d.]).

<sup>19</sup> M.M. BOZMAN (ed.), *R. Browning, Poems and Plays (1871-1890)* (London 1940), vol. 4. See, e.g., the review by A. WEBSTER "A Transcript and a Transcription", in *A Housewife's Opinions* (London 1879), 66-79.

<sup>20</sup> P. BRUMOY, *op. cit.* (n. 12); ID., *Théâtre des Grecs, nouvelle édition revue, corrigée et augmentée par le P. J.-FR.-J. FLEURIAU*. 6 vol. (Paris 1763); ID., *Théâtre des Grecs. Nouvelle édition, enrichie ... et augmentée de la traduction entière des pièces grecques...par MM. DE ROCHEFORT et DU THEIL, etc., [ed. par A. CH. BRO-TIER]*. 13 vol. (Paris 1785-89); CH. LENNOX, *The Greek Theatre of Father Brumoy*. 3 vol. (London 1759). The 1763 edition has a very few corrections, but is substantially the same text.

<sup>21</sup> P. BRUMOY, *op. cit.* [3] (n. 20), I, vii.

of tragedy up until the end of the nineteenth century when Euripides' achievements were fully acknowledged. Now Greek tragedy in the revolutionary period is proclaimed in an appended essay by de Rochefort to be avowedly political, and especially so in its early Aeschylean incarnations.<sup>22</sup> De Rochefort criticises Dacier for invoking Aristophanes' criticisms of Aeschylus; and he defends the ancient playwright (especially in his treatment of the chorus) as both the creator and perfecter of the art. Veritable praise for Aeschylus's grasp of all the principles of the art of tragedy apart, de Rochefort maintains that it is the "secrets" of the art form that elude Aeschylus, which Sophocles alone knew.<sup>23</sup>

The close prose translations of Aeschylus in the new edition are by La Porte du Theil, but in the editor's notes there are references to earlier comments by Le Franc de Pompignan, whose own prose translation of the complete plays of Aeschylus had appeared some fifteen years previously.<sup>24</sup> Why, one may ask, were Le Franc's translations not used on this occasion? Although La Porte du Theil was a member of l'Académie Royale des Inscriptions et Belles Lettres and had published a translation of *Les Choéphores* as early as 1770,<sup>25</sup> Le Franc's complete translations had already met with critical acclaim. Abbé Maury praised (the then deceased) Le Franc's translations in his *Discours de réception à l'Académie française* 1785. Le Franc's text, Maury explains, allows the reader to read Aeschylus "sans penser jamais au traducteur qui, à force d'art, s'efface lui-même et disparaît".<sup>26</sup> Three years later excerpts from the

<sup>22</sup> G. DUBOIS DE ROCHEFORT, "Sur l'objet et l'art de la tragédie grecque", *ibid.*, I, 234.

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.*, I, 253 *sq.*

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.*, I, 296 n.1; II, 13 n.1.

<sup>25</sup> *Oreste ou Les Choéphores* (Paris 1770). La Porte du Theil appears to have abandoned translating Aeschylus for some years after, when he was in Rome. See C. CHEVALIER, *op. cit.* (n. 9), 141-2. I have not been able to trace the 1770 translation by La Porte du Theil.

<sup>26</sup> Cited in L'ABBÉ FR. A. DUFFO, *J.-J. Le Franc, marquis de Pompignan: Poète et magistrat (1707-1784). Étude sur la vie et sur ses œuvres* [Th. Toulouse] (Paris 1913), 304 *sq.*

translations, together with much of Le Franc's commentary, were reprinted in a volume devoted to the Greek dramatic poets, which appeared in a series published by the *Bibliothèque universelle des dames*.<sup>27</sup> The decision to omit Le Franc from the third expanded edition of Brumoy's text, it seems, was part of a deliberate effort to sideline his work; and it had, we will see, considerable bearing on Aeschylean reception in the theatre.

### Voltaire versus Le Franc de Pompignan

When Voltaire began working on his *Œdipe* in 1715, he relied heavily on Dacier's translation;<sup>28</sup> it proved an invaluable guide and an excellent sounding board for Voltaire during the composition of his other tragedies as well. But whilst he followed many of the recommendations in Dacier's commentary, he took particular exception to the claim that Oedipus' inquiring mind was a problem. For Dacier, Oedipus' rashness and blindness are the causes of his misfortune, not the crimes of parricide and incest. Dacier's guilty Oedipus was in many ways a response to Corneille's ultimately 'redeemed' protagonist, who was regularly appearing on the stage at the Comédie Française (and did so until 1730);<sup>29</sup> and it was in part against Dacier's limited 'moralising' reading of Sophocles' play that the most important French eighteenth-century re-working was cast.

In Voltaire's damningly literalist reading of Sophocles' tragedy, it was the fifth-century Oedipus' curiosity alone that impressed the eighteenth-century philosopher. For the enlightenment mind, Oedipus' dogged pursuit of the truth in the scene with the Theban shepherd is the only reasonable action

<sup>27</sup> ANON., *Poètes dramatiques grecs* [=Bibliothèque universelle des dames, tome 10] (Paris 1788).

<sup>28</sup> For details, see P. HOFFMANN, "L'Œdipe de Voltaire: une tragédie de la liberté", in *Le théâtre antique et sa réception. Hommage à Walter Spörri*, éd. par J. SÖRING, O. POLTERA, N. DUPLAINE (Berne 1994), 109, n.1.

<sup>29</sup> A. JOANNIDÈS, *La Comédie-Française de 1680 à 1920. Tableau des représentations par auteurs et par pièces* (Paris 1921), s.v. Corneille and *Œdipe*.

performed by the Sophoclean Oedipus.<sup>30</sup> And whilst Voltaire (unlike Dacier) is generally rather dismissive of the Sophoclean chorus on the grounds that it moralised excessively and intruded unnecessarily,<sup>31</sup> what we witness in his *Œdipe*, albeit in rudimentary form in Act III — when Philoctète wrongly accused of the regicide of Laius appears before the High Priest and a chorus of two who represent the people — is the beginning of the French eighteenth-century interest in the Greek chorus as representative of *le peuple*.<sup>32</sup>

Even though Voltaire much admired Brumoy's edition,<sup>33</sup> he was cast (as playwright at least) in the Dacier mould absolutely. He strove throughout his career to prove that he was the Sophocles of the Enlightenment; and each of his tragedies is an attempt to rewrite the 'perfect' (*Oedipus* and *Electra*) plots. Brumoy's influence is rarely detectable in his practice; indeed it is elsewhere, especially in the work of his adversary, Le Franc de Pompignan, that we can see Brumoy's imprint.

Like many enemies, Voltaire and Le Franc had much in common: they were both educated at the famous Jesuit Collège Louis-Le-Grand under Père Porée. As a young magistrate, Le Franc had written openly and strongly against the abuse of sovereign power and was initially considered by Voltaire as an ally in the *cause philosophique*.<sup>34</sup> The turning point can be dated from the success of Le Franc's first play *Didon* (1734); and especially when his next play, *Zoraïde* was sent off for a second reading by the Comédie Française after having been apparently accepted. *Zoraïde* anticipated much of the subject matter of Voltaire's *Alzire*, and the obvious inference was that Voltaire's intervention had led to the second reading. However, it seems

<sup>30</sup> VOLTAIRE, *Œdipe, Tragédie (avec Lettres écrites par l'auteur)* (Paris 1719), 103.

<sup>31</sup> "Lettre VI qui contient une dissertation sur les choeurs", *Ibid.*

<sup>32</sup> On the chorus in eighteen-century France, see C. BIET, *Oedipe en monarchie: tragédie et théorie juridique à l'âge classique* (Paris 1994).

<sup>33</sup> J. BOYLE, "Preface" to CH. LENNOX, *op. cit.* (n. 20).

<sup>34</sup> T.E.D. BRAUN, *op. cit.* (n. 10).

that Le Franc managed to exact some sweet and immediate revenge on his rival by refusing to allow Mlle Dufresne, his mistress at the time, to take the part of *Alzire*, even though she was Voltaire's expressed choice for the role.<sup>35</sup>

This rivalry seems to have cooled shortly after but came to a head some years later in 1760 when Le Franc delivered an excoriating attack on *les philosophes* in his *discours* on being elected to l'Académie française. He spoke of "ce siècle enivré de l'esprit philosophique et de l'amour des arts, l'abus des talents, le mépris de la religion et la haine de l'autorité".<sup>36</sup> This opened the floodgates for Voltaire, who published the first in a string of biting satires in response, *Les Quand, notes utiles sur un discours prononcé devant l'Académie française, le 10 mars 1760*. The pamphlet war was long and hard; and even though Le Franc rarely defended himself publicly, when he was charged with impiety, he felt compelled to enter the fray to defend his reputation. But he never recovered and spent the rest of his career in exile, writing and translating, surrounded by an extensive collection of antiquities and a vast library.<sup>37</sup>

The principal consequence of this bitter dispute is that the lesser known figure has suffered caricature and character assassination and enjoyed only the occasional attempt to redeem his character.<sup>38</sup> Yet Le Franc's range of interests, and especially his readings of Greek tragedy, are worthy of attention because, in marked contrast to Voltaire, he seems to have built upon Brumoy's pioneering volume and made some startlingly innovative insights of his own. Deeply musical himself, he not only wrote

<sup>35</sup> *Ibid.*, 85.

<sup>36</sup> Cited in L'ABBÉ FR.A. DUFFO, *op. cit.* (n. 26), 347.

<sup>37</sup> ANON., *Chefs-d'œuvre de De Belloy et de Le Franc de Pompignan*, 2 vol. (Paris 1810), II, 15-17. For discussion of his Latin translations, see G. ROBICHEZ, *J.-J. Lefranc de Pompignan: un humaniste chrétien au siècle des Lumières* (Paris 1987).

<sup>38</sup> See D.M. MCMAHON, *Enemies of the Enlightenment: The French Counter-Enlightenment and the Making of Modernity* (Oxford 2001), for an account of the general neglect of those involved in the counter-Enlightenment movement in France.

ballets and operas, he also sought to develop *opéra/tragédie lyrique* with Greek tragedy as his guide.<sup>39</sup> In this sense, his work and comments could be said to anticipate the separate and collaborative practice of Gluck and Noverre later in the century in their creative use of Greek tragedy.<sup>40</sup> Le Franc's *œuvre* could also be said to have to run in parallel with, and even perhaps in response to, debates about the chorus that were taking place in Britain at this time.

### Le Franc's Aeschylus

Brumoy had given considerable space to discussion of the ancient chorus.<sup>41</sup> Whilst Voltaire had included a token two members for his chorus in *Œdipe*, he generally considered them to be an intrusive band of moralisers. As early as 1737 Le Franc drew attention to the prominence granted to the ancient chorus in Greek tragedy. According to him, the chorus pronounces only the purest maxims, sides with the innocent and most reasonable party, condemns the intemperate and rises up against the impious and the criminal.<sup>42</sup> Although this may sound as if Le Franc has not yet closely read, say, either Sophocles' *Antigone* or Euripides' *Medea*, he is in fact providing the reader

<sup>39</sup> *Ibid.*, 6. The theatre works by Le Franc that were staged are: *Didon*, tragedy, premiered 21 June 1734 at the Comédie Française and was regularly revived into the first part of the nineteenth century; *Les Adieux de Mars*, comedy premiered 30 June 1735 at the Théâtre Italien; *Le Triomphe de L'Harmonie*, ballet héroïque with music by Grenet, premiered 1 May 1737 at L'Académie Royale de la Musique and revived and expanded in 1746 and 1748 and 1775; *Léandre et Héro*, tragedy (sometimes referred to as an opera) premiered 5 May 1750 at L'Académie Royale de la Musique with music by le Marquis de Brassac.

<sup>40</sup> See the essays in *The Ancient Dancer in the Modern World*, ed by F. MACINTOSH (Oxford forthcoming 2010).

<sup>41</sup> P. BRUMOY, *op. cit.* (n. 12), I, CXIV-CXLVI.

<sup>42</sup> J.J. LE FRANC DE POMPIGNAN, "Preface to *Janus*", in *Œuvres de M. Le Marquis de Pompignan*, 4 vol. (Paris 1784), III, 114. See P. EASTERLING, "Le choeur dans la tragédie grecque d'après les commentateurs anciens", in *CRAI* (juillet-octobre 2006), 1585-1597, for details of the ancient commentary on the chorus, which Le Franc and his contemporaries seem to be following here. I am indebted to Professor P. Easterling for drawing these parallels to my attention.

with a pretty accurate account of the Aeschylean chorus, which clearly serves as his principal model. For him, the Athenians were a people civilised by justice and by religion; and his avowed aim with his three-act tragedy *Janus* was to offer, in direct imitation of Greek tragedy, “une Tragédie philosophique, un Opéra moral” with a view to ‘civilising’ his audience by way of the Greek example.<sup>43</sup>

Le Franc may have been unusual in France in being interested in Aeschylean choruses at this time, but there was a growing fascination with the ancient chorus, and Aeschylus’ use of it in particular, in Britain from the mid-century onwards. During his first exile in the provinces, Le Franc had learned English and he appears to have travelled to England on a number of occasions.<sup>44</sup> Amongst his studies of English literature is an *Étude sur Milton* — the most Aeschylean of English poets; and in his *Vie d’Eschyle*, appended to the 1770 translations, Le Franc singles out for praise a certain (unnamed) English author of *Observations on the Greek and Roman Classics, in a series of letters* (London 1753) for his laudatory assessment of Aeschylus.<sup>45</sup> The author in question turns out to be the actor and physician, John Hill, whose failure to become admitted to a Fellowship of the Royal Society in 1741 led him to conduct a series of satirical attacks on its Fellows. One admirer of these attacks was the eminent Celtic scholar William Stukeley, whose parallels between the ancient Britons and the Greeks in his study of Stonehenge, and especially in his discussions about the Druidical ritual of circular choral singing, prompted wide interest in the ancient chorus.<sup>46</sup> A year before Hill’s study, the poet William Mason had published his play *Elfrida* which included a participating chorus; and in 1759 Mason published his second Greek-tragic-inspired musical drama, *Caractacus*

<sup>43</sup> J.J. LE FRANC DE POMPIGNAN, *op. cit.* (n. 42), III, 114.

<sup>44</sup> T.E.D. BRAUN, *op. cit.* (n. 10), 125 *sqq.*

<sup>45</sup> J.J. LE FRANC DE POMPIGNAN, *Tragédies d’Eschyle* (Paris 1770), xxiv.

<sup>46</sup> W. STUKELEY, *Stonehenge: A Temple Restor’d to the British Druids* (London 1740).

which played to great acclaim later in the century.<sup>47</sup> What Mason's plays created, amongst other things, was an environment in which Aeschylus, and Aeschylean choruses in particular, could be accepted and understood.

Hill's *Observations* are very much a product of this new environment. He praises Aeschylus' use of the Furies as a participating chorus; and he maintains that had Aeschylus written Odes, he would have far outstripped Pindar. In many ways, says Hill, Aeschylus is not difficult; he is just is too big for his chosen sphere:

Take his soul and genius, in some degree, along with you, and his thoughts become, as it were, your own; they rise in a natural succession and instead of being perplexed, one runs always with him.<sup>48</sup>

What is most astonishing about Hill's discussion, however, is his privileging of Aeschylus over the other two tragedians and especially over Sophocles. According to Hill, Sophocles is too laboured: his expression is that of a "scholar", "finished and studied" in comparison to a "consummate" "grace" which he detects "in the wild beauties of Aeschylus". Today, says Hill, dramatists focus on plot and character; in antiquity, by contrast, poetry and sentiment are primary and make Greek tragedy analogous to "a great moral poem".<sup>49</sup>

The religious overtones here are significant — the advocates of the ancient chorus, and of Aeschylus in particular, in Britain at this time were very often clergymen. The numinous dimension of great poetry, and especially that found in Aeschylean choral odes, was being held up as a model for eighteenth-century tragedy which had become fossilised in a straitjacket of rules and neo-Aristotelean prescriptions; and it was this quality

<sup>47</sup> See further, E. HALL and F. MACINTOSH, *op. cit.* (n. 3), 183-214.

<sup>48</sup> J. HILL, *Observations on the Greek and Roman Classics, in a series of letters to a young Nobleman ... To which are added, Remarks on the Italian language... in a letter from...Joseph Baretti* (London 1753), 204.

<sup>49</sup> *Ibid.*, 205.

that was especially important to Le Franc in what he saw as the increasingly secular world of the French Enlightenment.

In the Preface to his translations, Le Franc says how the ancient tragedies merit translation as much as the epics;<sup>50</sup> and his interest in tragedy springs directly from its mixture of song, dance and the spoken word. He had already sought to capture some of this in his own practice in his operas and ballets; and he identifies Aeschylus as the ideal playwright because he took responsibility not just for his text, but for the spectacle, the décor, the stage machinery, the dance and the musical accompaniment.<sup>51</sup> Like Hill, Le Franc is overwhelmed by the power of the chorus of *Erinnyes*; and he considers the trial scene in the *Eumenides* to be the most theatrical scene in all tragedy. His close reading of this scene leads him to a discussion of its contemporary relevance, in which he repeats many of the observations about his own century which had led to his banishment:

Ce siècle est, dit-on, le siècle de la philosophie et de la vertu. C'est aux effets et non pas aux discours à le prouver. Quoi qu'il en soit, on punit très rigoureusement les crimes, mais ils n'étonnent plus, tant on y est accoutumé. Il ne falloit qu'un paricide pour troubler toute la Grèce. L'ancienne histoire de ce pays n'est remplie que de guerres allumées pour punir des paricides, des adultères, des époux assassins de leurs femmes, des femmes qui avoient assassiné leurs époux.<sup>52</sup>

For what he sees as his morally complaisant century, he urges tragedy in the Greek mould so that audiences be educated as well as entertained. Athenian theatre, he argues, focuses on the fundamental principles of society — respect of the gods, observance of religious practice, patriotism, hospitality, horror at marital infidelity, pity for misfortune, mutual respect between fathers and children. Modern tragedy, by contrast, focuses on

<sup>50</sup> J.J. LE FRANC DE POMPIGNAN, *op. cit.* (n. 45), II.

<sup>51</sup> *Ibid.*, xxv.

<sup>52</sup> *Ibid.*, 505.

the most dangerous of the passions — love alone, which is interwoven with affairs of state and effeminizes and trivialises the moral potential of tragedy.<sup>53</sup>

In many ways, the *Oresteia* appears to be his favourite tragedy, even though he detects in *Agamemnon* many of the faults of modern tragedies in being largely expository until its fourth act (with the arrival of Agamemnon). His preference is reflected in his highly wrought account of the powerful effects of the trilogy, which come about, we learn, because here "la plume d'Eschyle est trempée dans le sang. On entend dans ses vers le bruit de la foudre, le cri des Furies, le hurlement des enfers".<sup>54</sup>

In 1869 Alexis Pierron strongly criticised Le Franc's translations in comparison with the slightly later translations of La Porte du Theil, on the grounds that Le Franc often sacrificed accuracy to other ends.<sup>55</sup> It is undoubtedly true that he regularly avoids complex Aeschylean metaphors (such as the famous Watchman's ox on his tongue — avoided also by La Porte du Theil, but commented upon by him in a footnote).<sup>56</sup> Le Franc's translations regularly rely on sound to reinforce meaning; and this is especially true in the passages of stichomythia, which are far superior in Le Franc's version. But this is also obvious when the two translations are closest. Take the two translators' rendering of the famous refrain from the parodos (Aesch. *Ag.* 121, 138, 159), where Le Franc's is not only more literally accurate, it also works better aurally:

**Le Franc:** "Chantez, chantez des vers lugubres; mais que le présage en soit heureux".

**La Porte du Theil:** "Chantons, chantons des vers lugubres; mais que le présage en soit démenti!"<sup>57</sup>

<sup>53</sup> *Ibid.*, v-vi.

<sup>54</sup> *Ibid.*, 495.

<sup>55</sup> A. PIERRON, *Théâtre d'Eschyle* (Paris 1869), LXX.

<sup>56</sup> J.J. LE FRANC DE POMPIGNAN, *op. cit.* (n. 45), 210; cf. LA PORTE DU THEIL, in P. BRUMOY, *op. cit.* [3] (n. 20), II, 39-40

<sup>57</sup> J.J. LE FRANC DE POMPIGNAN, *op. cit.*, 213; cf. LA PORTE DU THEIL, in P. BRUMOY, *op. cit.*, II, 43.

La Porte du Theil introduces the extra final syllable into the concluding loose dactyls, which greatly unsettles the cadence of his sentence, something that Le Franc, the poet/translator of the theatre, we feel, would instinctively avoid.

When Clytemnestra stands over Agamemnon's corpse (Aesch. *Ag.* 1384-1392), Le Franc is able to capture the immediacy, the ferocity and indeed some of the sensuality of the Greek (especially in his sustained use of sibilance) considerably more efficiently than the fuller translation of La Porte du Theil:

**Le Franc:** "Je l'ai frappé deux fois; et deux fois il a gémi sous mes coups. Il tombe à mes pieds; je le frappe encore; et ce dernier coup l'envoie chez Pluton. Il expire; son sang a rejailli sur moi; rosée qui m'a paru plus douce que ne sont les eaux du ciel pour les productions de la terre".

**La Porte du Theil:** "...je l'ai frappé deux fois, deux fois il a gémi; ses genoux ont plié, il est tombé; un troisième coup a été mon offrande au dieux des enfers, et l'a précipité chez les ombres. Son sang a jailli sur moi: rosée de mort, qui m'a réjouie comme la pluie du ciel réjouit la terre, quand les germes de son sein vont éclore".<sup>58</sup>

Indeed, Le Franc's translations are speakable, broadly accurate and most importantly, much more direct and dramatic than La Porte du Theil's more precise renderings. When they appeared in 1770 there was no advance publicity; and by the 1820s they were so little known, that plagiarism of the commentary by La Harpe was more than possible.<sup>59</sup> If they had been more widely available and had their author not suffered relentless ridicule and ostracism, Paris may well have witnessed an adaptation or perhaps even a translation of an Aeschylean tragedy on the stage at the Comédie Française during the 1770s, which would have appropriately heralded the run of

<sup>58</sup> J.J. LE FRANC DE POMPIGNAN, *op. cit.*, 280; cf. LA PORTE DU THEIL, in P. BRUMOY, *op. cit.*, II, 95-96.

<sup>59</sup> T.E.D. BRAUN, *op. cit.* (n. 10), 103-105.

Oedipus plays that appeared on the French stage during the following decade.<sup>60</sup>

### Le Franc's *Prométhée*

In addition to translating *Prometheus Bound*, Le Franc wrote a five-act *tragédie lyrique* entitled *Prométhée*.<sup>61</sup> The date of *Prométhée* is unknown but it is generally assumed to have been written in 1771, the year after the publication of the complete translations. However, the fact that Le Franc describes Prometheus in the Preface in terms strikingly evocative of the language he used in his controversial *Discours* to l'Académie in 1760 (which itself was postponed having been initially planned for 1758), may well point to an even earlier date of composition.

It is not necessary to assume (indeed it is highly unlikely) that Le Franc's translations were all made in a very short space of time. Given his evident engagement with the British debate about the chorus, and Aeschylus in particular during the 1750s, it might well be plausible to suggest that his *Prometheus Bound* translation and his *Prométhée* date from this period. Further evidence in support of this might be Le Franc's fascination with Milton, whose Satan was regularly being compared to Prometheus in Britain from at least 1749 onwards following the publication of Thomas Newton's new edition of Milton's *Paradise Lost*. In a note to line 94 *sqq.* of the poem, Newton comments:

Milton in this and other passages, where he is describing the fierce and unrelenting spirit of Satan, seems very plainly to have copied after the picture that Aeschylus gives of Prometheus.<sup>62</sup>

<sup>60</sup> C. BIET, *op. cit.* (n.32).

<sup>61</sup> It is important to emphasise that there is no debate at this point about the authorship of the *Prometheus Bound*. The eighteenth-century scholars assumed it to be by Aeschylus.

<sup>62</sup> T. NEWTON (ed.), *John Milton. Paradise Lost. A new edition* (London 1749). I am indebted to E. Hall for this reference and for having allowed me to see her forthcoming chapter, "The Problem with Prometheus: Myth, Abolition, and Radicalism" in *Classics and Slavery*, ed. by E. HALL and L. HUNNINGS.

In his *Discours* of 1760, Le Franc had referred to the eighteenth century as being inebriated with heady philosophical ideas “et de l’amour des arts, *l’abus des talents*”; and in the Preface to his *Prométhée*, he explains:

On sent qu’Eschile a voulu montrer dans Prométhée *l’abus des talents*, et des arts, l’insolente présomption qu’ils inspirent, l’impiété qu’ils accréditent, la justice divine qui les punit.<sup>63</sup>

For the pagan poet, however, this could only be imperfectly conceived.<sup>64</sup> Indeed Aeschylus’ play is “un Poème sans ordre, sans action, sans objet”; and yet despite these evident shortcomings, it has “caractère et des beautés”.<sup>65</sup> As with his reading of the trial scene at the end of the *Oresteia*, we now realise that Le Franc reads *Prometheus Bound* as contemporary allegory:

Des talents qui corrompent le genre humain, des arts qui l’énervent et l’amolissent, une fausse philosophie qui détruit toute religion, le renversement des bons principes, la perte des États qui en est la suite, la longue patience des Dieux, leur colère, leur clémence, tous ces objets fondus dans une action vive et intéressante, soutenue d’un spectacle frappant et varié, formeroient, ce semble, un tableau de la plus belle ordonnance et de la plus riche invention. J’ai ce tableau devant les yeux, j’en ai l’idée dans l’esprit, comme Cicéron l’avoit du parfait Orateur. Mais, comme lui, je me crois, dans l’exécution, fort au dessous du modèle que je propose.<sup>66</sup>

The “tableau” is indeed before his very eyes because not only is he describing how he views the intellectual climate of his age; he is also envisaging his arch-enemy in the role of protagonist.

By 1821, La Harpe assumes that the opera is written against Voltaire, “qui a enseigné les arts aux hommes, mais qui les a corrompus en leur apprenant à mépriser les dieux”.<sup>67</sup> Le Franc

<sup>63</sup> J.J. LE FRANC DE POMPIGNAN, *op. cit.* (n. 42), III, 214. (1777). My emphases.

<sup>64</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>65</sup> *Ibid.*, 213 *sq.*

<sup>66</sup> *Ibid.*, 214 *sq.*

<sup>67</sup> J.F. DE LA HARPE, *Correspondance littéraire*. 4 vol. (Paris 1821) cited in L’ABBÉ FR. A. DUFFO, *op. cit.* (n. 26), 406.

was by no means the first to read *Prometheus Bound* allegorically: Brumoy had done so and de Rochefort expands on this in the 1885-89 edition.<sup>68</sup> If indeed Voltaire does lurk behind *Prométhée*, Le Franc is providing a very generous portrait of his rival.<sup>69</sup> From the outset we witness a big-hearted and well-meaning Prometheus, who will offer humanity his own experience to lead them to enlightenment:

Je le rends par ma science,  
Éclairé, sage, industrieux.<sup>70</sup>

It is left to his mother, Thémis vainly to remind him that wisdom involves obedience to the gods. Fêted by humans, and a chorus of harvesters who bring him their offerings in gratitude, Prometheus' seeks to rid the people of their childhood superstitions. When the thunder rumbles, at the very moment when Prometheus is being given the fruits of this year's harvest, he tells them to ignore "ces vains phénomènes", despite Thémis' reminder that a storm often presages divine vengeance (p. 225).

The second act is a startlingly prescient enactment of a real-life event that was to take place on 30 March 1778, when at the end of the sixth performance of Voltaire's *Irène*, the troupe at the Comédie Française crowned a bust of the philosophe/playwright onstage (see fig. 4). Act II of Le Franc's play opens to show a public square bedecked with trophies to the arts and a pedestal awaiting a statue centre stage. Jupiter and Mercury arrive on stage disguised as travellers intent on learning the diverse customs of the world. When they inquire of an artist what the inhabitants of the land think about the gods, they receive a sharp shock:

Les Dieux? Quel étrange discours!  
S'ils existent ces Dieux, ils sont muets et sourds. (p. 230)

<sup>68</sup> P. BRUMOY, *op. cit.* [3] (n. 20), I, 252, 298, 352.

<sup>69</sup> Cf. T.E.D. BRAUN, *op. cit.* (n. 10), 98.

<sup>70</sup> Le Franc (1777), III, Act I, sc. i, 222. Subsequent references to the play appear in parentheses after the citation.

In their stead, this land has placed:

Des mortels sublimes, divins,  
 Qui déchirent avec audace  
 Le bandeau des erreurs trop fatal aux humains. (p. 231)

Very soon, we learn that public rhetoric about collaboration between artists is only window-dressing and the reality is that favouritisms and animosities abound. And with the arrival of the chorus, we hear that it is Prometheus “Sur les vertus et sur les arts / C'est lui qui nous éclaire” (p. 234).

The statue of Prométhée is placed upon the pedestal during the chorus’ laudatory ode, which has a refrain that makes Prometheus the liberator sound remarkably like Prometheus the libertine:

Il rend plus enchanteurs  
 Les plaisirs innocents dont les Dieux font des crimes. (p. 234)

The cult of Prometheus, we learn, is located in the heart, not in ritual practices. When the chorus dances around his statue in celebration, the earth begins to shake and finally opens up to reveal balls of fire which rain down upon Prometheus’ statue and the surrounding colonnades to the accompaniment of thunderclaps. The entire city is set alight causing buildings to collapse and the inhabitants to flee. Jupiter, the tyrant, emerges from behind the scene, thunderbolt in one hand, eagle in another, to condemn mortal sacrilege and order Mercury, his “Ministre fidèle”, who appears on a globe of fire, to hunt down “un ingrat, un rebelle / Qui m'ose disputer l'hommage des humains” (p. 236).

In Act III we watch the rebel railing against the despot in Etna and trying to solicit the help of the dispossessed giants entrapped within the volcano. When Thémis explains that the people’s deference to the arts in favour of obedience to divine law has prompted Jupiter’s wrath, Prometheus maintains that he has always honored virtue, hated crime and only sought happiness for all (p. 240). Thémis instructs her son in the truth

about happiness: the arts do not bring happiness; it comes through having peace in your heart alone. When the giants eventually emerge with Etna's eruption, they are enchain'd and spiritually defeated; and Prometheus is forced to realise that he must fight alone.

The winds descend at the end of the third act to drag Prométhée to the even more inhospitable summit of Mount Caucasus. From now on we witness a truncated version of the opening of *Prometheus Bound*, during which Prometheus' defiance leads him to refuse to repent because he is guilty of no criminal offence. He pointedly reminds Mercury of the finite nature of monarchical rule:

Deux fois j'ai vu du ciel la puissance mobile,  
Changer de Monarque et de lois,  
Le sceptre de tes Dieux est presque aussi fragile  
Que le sceptre des Rois. (p. 250)

To an effective onomatopoeic choral accompaniment from the North Winds and the Cyclopes, Prometheus is nailed to the rock ("Frappez, hâitez vous, / Redoublez vos coups / Pour punir un traître; / Pour venger un maître / Frappez, hâitez-vous" [p. 253]). The eagles and vultures emerge and Prométhée calls out, Christ-like, to all those who have abandoned him in his agony:

Ô terre, ô ciel, ô rives sombres,  
Ô mortels, ô peuple des ombres,  
M'abandonnerez-vous à d'indignes fureurs?  
Soyez touchés de mes douleurs. (p. 253)

Prométhée's cries are not in vain. Act V opens by the sea where his mother, Thémis and her goddesses and nymphs weep in sympathy. Their lamentations and supplications bring forth Jupiter on his cloud. His tyrannical entourage which includes the Furies urges further oppression; Thémis and her followers, in turn, beg Jupiter for clemency. Jupiter sends Force and Violence to get Prometheus, who is granted a pardon on his return. This unexpected act of clemency astounds Prometheus, who explains:

Je resistois au Dieu vengeur,  
Mais je cède au Dieu qui pardonne. (p. 260)

Now Prometheus acknowledges how like the mortals he has himself been and how his own blindness had led them astray; 'true' enlightenment will now be possible for humankind, not the kind on offer from *les Encyclopédistes*. Prometheus recognises the error of his ways and under a benign, forgiving divinity, he will teach by way of a new example:

Que mon repentir vous éclaire. (p. 261)

Art will not be an end in itself; but a means of articulating true, divine-informed wisdom, just as Le Franc had sought to do in his *Poésies Sacrées*. The play ends with a celebratory dance in which art acquires its true purpose — to celebrate the divine and its benevolence.

### Conclusion

In many ways, Le Franc was very close intellectually to Voltaire; and not surprisingly he has been dubbed 'Voltaire chrétien'. For him a world without God was intolerable; a world with an occasionally absent one, vastly preferable.<sup>71</sup> Just like Zeus in the *Oresteia*, so his Jupiter at the end of *Prométhée* turns out to have a benevolent plan after all. Le Franc's translation of the refrain in the *Agamemnon* parodos, therefore, is not just accurate ("Chantez, chantez des vers lugubres; mais que le présage en soit heureux"); it is also programmatic for his own philosophical outlook as well.

*Prométhée* was never performed — indeed with its biting critique of *les philosophes* and of Voltaire in particular, it could never have been performed at the time. But with its combination of speech and song, individual and collective movement, spectacular effects and vast sweeps across time and place, it

<sup>71</sup> T.E.D. BRAUN, *op. cit.* (n. 10), 98.

learned much from Aeschylean practice. Le Franc's realisation, many years in advance of his fellow countrymen, that the so-called 'father' of tragedy had much to teach the modern playwright unfortunately fell upon fallow ground.

## DISCUSSION

*J. Jouanna*: Votre communication est très éclairante notamment par votre réhabilitation de l'œuvre de Le Franc de Pompignan et de ses jugements sur l'œuvre d'Eschyle. Vous avez souligné aussi les relations entre les traducteurs d'Eschyle en langue française et en langue anglaise. Vous avez comparé également la traduction d'Eschyle de Le Franc de Pompignan avec celle de La Porte du Theil. À partir de cette traduction de La Porte du Theil, je voudrais revenir sur les éditions de Brumoy. Bien entendu, c'est la troisième édition de 1785-1789 qui est la plus importante puisque les traductions d'Eschyle de La Porte du Theil y sont insérées. Je voudrais vous poser à cet égard deux questions. Qu'apporte de nouveau la deuxième édition par rapport à la première? La Porte du Theil a donné dans la troisième édition l'ensemble de la traduction du théâtre d'Eschyle. Mais n'avait-il pas publié auparavant une partie de sa traduction? La question est importante pour la relation chronologique entre la traduction de Le Franc et celle de La Porte du Theil.

*F. Macintosh*: You ask about the second edition of Brumoy's *Le Théâtre des Grecs* and how it relates to the first edition. The second six-volume edition of 1760 is described on the title page as "revue, corrigée et augmentée", but the increase from 3 to 6 volumes is deceptive (the first edition was in much larger format than the second). The corrections are in fact few and are generally confined to the occasional notes to Brumoy's translations of Sophocles' *Oedipus Tyrannus* and *Electra*, which appear in the first 3 volumes. In other words, the relationship between the first and second editions is very close indeed. La Porte du Theil's translation of *Les Choéphores* appeared in 1770 and there is no suggestion that he had translated any

other plays by that time. His translations of Aeschylus appeared in the 1885-89 edition and then separately in a two-volume edition in 1795, together with "notes philosophiques et deux discours critiques". As a member of L'Académie des Inscriptions et Belles Lettres, his translations were no doubt preferred to those of Le Franc de Pompignan on the grounds of philological accuracy; just as they were to be in the nineteenth century. If, as I suggest, Le Franc's own translations can be dated (at least embryonically) to the 1750s, there is no doubt that Le Franc's interest in Aeschylus antedates that of his French contemporaries.

*M. Griffith*: Thank you so much for a fascinating and (as far as I could tell) in several respects trail-blazing discussion. I learned much and came to think in quite new ways about several issues concerning the reception/rediscovery of Greek drama and of Aeschylus in particular.

Would it be a great oversimplification to see your account as outlining a three-stage progression (broadly speaking) in the response to/use of Aeschylus' plays (mainly *Oresteia* and *Prometheus*), especially with regards to the musical and choral elements of the plays:

(i) a republican focus on the *Oresteia* endorsing *régicide*, with the voice of the chorus representing that of *le peuple* demanding justice for all; (ii) a moral-religious counter-movement (which you persuasively identify as "anti-philosophical"), sometimes now focusing on *Prometheus Bound* rather than *Oresteia*, with the musical/choral elements promoting emotional and passionate engagement with the divine (as it were, 'ritualism' *avant la lettre*), and admitting moments of excess and hyper-emotionalism as well as an ultimate reaffirmation of the justice and power of God; (iii) (a later stage, not falling within your topic but nonetheless perhaps arising out of it) Nietzsche's *Birth of Tragedy from the Spirit of Music*, as a mode of reading Greek tragedy (especially Aeschylean tragedy, in the Wagnerian spirit) as being essentially musical, choral, even divinely

inspired (Dionysus), but no longer 'just' or spiritually comforting? I.e., Nietzsche, Jane Harrison, etc. may owe more to these French predecessors than has been noted before?

A supplementary point: Would it be fanciful to see Themis and her daughters/nymphs etc., assembled tearfully round the 'crucified' figure of the hero in Le Franc's *Prométhée*, as recalling 'both' Thetis and the Nereids in the *Iliad* (lamenting Patroclus' death in sympathy with Achilles; and in other traditions lamenting Achilles' death as well) 'and' Mary and the other women attending at the crucifixion of Christ? (And the scene in Act 2 concerning the trophies dedicated to the arts (referring to Voltaire's statue) may also recall the account in *Exodus* of Aaron and the Golden Calf? So Biblical and Classical references are interwoven.

*F. Macintosh*: I would say, yes, you have correctly identified three phases in the reception of Aeschylus' plays: the first, broadly speaking, English phase (with Thompson's *Agamemnon* as paradigm), which mirrors the French eighteenth-century republican readings of Sophocles; the second, English/French phase, which is manifest in the work of the English poets, Gray, Collins and Mason and the readings, translations and adaptation of Le Franc de Pompignan; and the third 'ritual' phase, which is in many ways indebted to the French anti-philosophical readings that form the subject of my chapter. Regarding your supplementary observation, I think you are absolutely right about the deliberate range of reference in Le Franc's *Prométhée*. He was clearly influenced by the work of early comparative anthropologists; and religious syncretism (especially pagan and Christian) is a common feature in his work. Thank you, especially, for pointing out the important parallel with *Exodus* in Act II.

*M. Griffith*: Picking up on your remarks and quotations about the strangeness of Aeschylus' language and the difficulty of translating his poetry into another tongue ("Aeschylus necessitates

violence to the host language"): are there particular periods and contexts, within the histories of French, English, German etc. aesthetics, theatre and political control of language usage, appealing, or more incorporable into a vernacular equivalent, than others? (E.g., did the French language and its guardians, or experimentalists, have, for whatever reasons, different moments and modes of attraction and revulsion in relation to translating and staging Aeschylus, as compared with their English or German counterparts? (Maybe there weren't always exact counterparts?)

*F. Macintosh:* Your question is 'big'! Yes, I think we usually assume that there is an equivalence — aesthetic, theatrical and political — between languages and cultures at certain points that facilitate translation of particularly difficult ancient authors. The German and British Romantic periods are the obvious examples. What is interesting here, I suppose, is that Aeschylus language "trempée dans le sang", as Le Franc says, is translated by him into (proto-Romantic) prose but then recast by him, in his adaptation of *Prométhée*, into (neo-classical) alexandrines. This is a transitional moment when certain aspects of Aeschylus — the numinous, especially — are seized upon (both in England and France) at a time when it is, perhaps, the absence of any such equivalence that prompts the rediscovery. Then translation is essentially exploratory — a feeling 'after' new modes of expression, new coinages. What John Hill says of Aeschylus in 1753 seems especially pertinent here: "Take his soul and genius, in some degree along with you, and his thoughts become, as it were, your own; they rise in a natural succession, and instead of being perplexed, one runs always with him". This feeling of 'running with' Aeschylus is clearly what Le Franc and his English counterparts were feeling in the 1750s.

*R. Parker:* One aspect of your hugely interesting presentation is the brief excursion into the counter-factual: how different, you suggest, the French reception of Aeschylus might have been but for the *damnatio memoriae* practised against Le Franc

de Pompignan. But on your own showing the 1785-9 edition of Brumoy's *Le Théâtre des Grecs* provided much of what was needed to approach Aeschylus: it gave a full translation of the plays, by La Porte du Theil, and a sympathetic essay by de Rochefort. You stress that La Porte du Theil's translation is much less 'speakable', though more accurate, than Le Franc's of 1770: is that the main reason why Le Franc could have had an influence which the later translation didn't?

*F. Macintosh:* You are absolutely right to say that the 1785-9 edition provides much of what was needed to approach Aeschylus. But what it did not have, I suggest, was a 'performable' text. La Porte du Theil, with his distinguished scholarly background, provided a philologically rigorous text, but not one that was informed by, nor indeed intended for, any theatrical practice or realisation. Le Franc, by contrast, had from the outset of his career been seeped in the theatre; he was writing for a much wider 'audience', who both delighted in spectacle and 'heard' the text. Moreover, instead of appearing as La Porte du Theil's translations did during the turbulent years of the Revolution when the theatres were undergoing enormous upheaval and reorganisation, Le Franc's translations could have been widely available from 1770 (possibly earlier, if my suggestions about the genesis of the translations are accurate). If his relations with Voltaire had been different, they may well have appeared at the same time as a staging of his *Prométhée* and, in turn, have spawned numerous adaptations of Aeschylean plays, which would have matched those adaptations of Sophocles' *Oedipus Tyrannus* that became especially popular at this time in France.

*P. Judet de La Combe:* L'histoire de la 'redécouverte' moderne d'Eschyle qui nous est proposée nous sort de nombreux clichés sur l'invention d'un Eschyle religieux par les Romantiques. Vous montrez clairement que l'insistance sur la religiosité de cet auteur est antérieure, qu'elle est liée aux oppositions que

suscitait le lien entre classicisme aristotélicien et les Lumières tel qu'on le trouve chez Voltaire notamment. Ma question porte sur la relation entre l'importance du lyrisme chez Le Franc de Pompignan et la finalité éducative qu'il prête à la tragédie, en accord, sans doute, avec l'esthétique qu'il avait dû apprendre du Père jésuite Porée, lui-même auteur de tragédies latines écrites pour ses élèves (voir son *Brutus*): l'irrationalité des tragédies d'Eschyle n'est-elle pas valorisée précisément parce que cette violence, cette irrégularité permettent aux spectateurs de découvrir au moyen des affects une vérité morale et religieuse supérieure, vérité qui serait moins efficacement atteinte si elle était présentée sous une forme plus sereine, faisant appel à la raison? La critique des Lumières peut ainsi mettre en évidence des éléments cultuels, historiques et sombres de la tragédie que la science philologique mettra du temps à prendre en compte.

*F. Macintosh:* I am sure you are right to link the prizing of Aeschylean 'irrationality' to Le Franc's early Jesuit education and to suggest that it precisely his 'irregularity' that is seen to convey religious and moral truths more efficaciously than the 'serene', rational form of, say, Sophocles. It is also striking, as you say, that the critics of the Enlightenment were able to highlight the darker, 'underside' of tragedy to which philologists paid little attention until much later. There is no doubt a paper to be written on the relationship between classical philology and the Enlightenment!

*P. Judet de La Combe:* Selon cette ligne de réception d'Eschyle, les *Euménides* ont une place importante. Ce ne sera plus le cas ensuite, puisque Leconte de Lisle, dans son adaptation de l'*Orestie*, pourtant intitulée *Les Érinnyes*, omettra cette pièce. Comment interpréter ce changement et la perte d'intérêt pour cette dimension politique, collective et 'sacrée' de la tragédie, sans doute au profit des figures héroïques individuelles qui sont au centre des deux premières pièces, et qui sont plus conformes aux attentes d'une esthétique plus classique?

*F. Macintosh:* You are right to see this as an essentially neo-classical privileging of the individual heroic figure at the expense of the collective. However, there were deeply 'political' reasons behind Leconte de Lisle's decision to omit the final play: in marked contrast to the other late nineteenth-century versions of the *Oresteia*, *Les Érinnyes* does not show, let alone celebrate, any way out of the cyclical pattern of revenge; nor does it allow any prospect of reconciliation between the city and its aven-ging spirits. It is a very angry and pessimistic text, which in many ways reflects Leconte de Lisle's profound disillusionment with France under Napoléon III.

*P. Judet de La Combe:* Quelle importance, pour l'interpré-tation des poètes tragiques, a le fait qu'au XIX<sup>e</sup> siècle, en France, contrairement à ce qui se passe en Allemagne et en Angleterre, il n'y a pas d'activité philologique intense dans l'édition, l'in-terprétation et l'analyse historique de la tragédie? Il semble bien que les poètes, par leurs adaptations, ont eu une influence déci-sive sur la lecture de la littérature ancienne.

*F. Macintosh:* Your observation concerning the relative absence of significant philological interpretations of the tragic poets in France during the nineteenth century in marked con-trast to the impact of theatrical practice is a very interesting one. Is this, perhaps, symptomatic of a general (and belated) French nineteenth-century resistance to neo-classical theory (which doesn't return with any force until anti-German feeling informs taste and the curriculum post WW1)? Instead we find, as you say, a number of pathbreaking and durable adaptations, which are hailed as close translations (notably Jules Lecroix's *Œdipe Roi* of 1858, which was awarded in 1862 the *Prix Extraordinaire* from the Académie française which is normally reserved for original works). Perhaps too we have evidence with this lacuna of the academy's shying away from what it per-ceives as the 'popularising' of the tragic, at a time when the ancient tragic hero/heroine was becoming synonymous with

the stars of the Comédie Française (especially Mounet-Sully as Œdipe from 1881)?

*G. Avezzù*: Oltre alla prossimità cronologica con l'*Antigone* di Mendelssohn e con la *Médée* di Legouvé, mi chiedo se un'altra interessante sincronia possa essere offerta dalla pubblicazione di *Oper und Drama*, di Richard Wagner (1852) — in particolare per quanto riguarda l'idea di una sorgente popolare della musica e, più in generale, per il disegno di un'opera d'arte totale. Lei, del resto, menziona Wagner come il solo "yet quite ready for the trilogy's full epic sweep". Con questo non voglio dire che Dumas fosse un lettore di Wagner ma che, anche da questo punto di vista, forse i tempi erano maturi per una ripresa del grande disegno trilogico dell'*Oresteia*.

*F. Macintosh*: I think you are absolutely right: in the 1850s time was ripe for an *Oresteia*, or rather the realization of the ideal of the *Gesamtkunstwerk*. There was also considerable interest in the the trilogic form at this time (there are even parallels between the dramatic trilogy and the so-called 'triple-decker' novel of the Victorian publishing industry). Schiller's *Wallenstein* (1799) and Grillparzer's *Das Goldene Vließ* (1821) are interesting points of comparison. Grillparzer's trilogy (the three constituent five-act plays being *Das Gastfreund*, *Die Argonauten* and *Medea*) played throughout the century. Outside of Vienna, however, it was only *Medea* that was performed because of the enormity of scale that staging the trilogy entailed (in this case, the necessity of having two actresses for the part of Medea). So even though there was a fascination with and a desire to realize the full epic sweep of the Aeschylean trilogy, this could rarely, for institutional reasons, be materialized (Bayreuth notwithstanding) outside the metropolitan centres at this time.

*A. Podlecki*: We are indebted to you for this fascinating account of how the 'reception' of an author may be affected by factors other than the receptiveness of the intended audience.

Thanks also for your discussion of the figure of Prometheus in contemporary polemic that may lie behind Le Franc's *Prométhée*. If only he and Voltaire had not fallen out... Let me ask you about Leconte de Lisle's *Les Érinnyes*. Do you think that he suppressed the third play because he considered it undramatic (ignoring Le Franc's in my opinion correct appraisal of the theatrical qualities of the trial scene)? Leconte certainly saw the potential impact of bringing in the Erinyes as participants, albeit mute, in the action (like their sisters in Eliot's *The Family Reunion*). In the opening piece, *Klytaimnestra*, he introduces them as ghostly figures who come and go, "grandes, blâmes, décharnées, vêtues de longues robes blanches, les cheveux épars sur la face et sur le dos". They reappear in Part II, *Orestès*, emerging from behind Agamemnon's tomb after the matricide (which takes place onstage) and barring his way as he tries to escape. This may be an unfair question, but can you think of other works in which the Furies have been 'repositioned', removed from a concluding separate play of their own into earlier parts of the story?

*F. Macintosh:* No, I don't think that Leconte de Lisle suppressed the third play because he considered it undramatic: rather, it was because he resisted the idea that the tragic could be in any way reconciliatory. The ubiquitous Furies contribute to his incredibly bleak play of human revenge. As for your question about other plays which have similarly 'repositioned' the Furies, I can't think of any adaptations which include them before the matricide. But if we consider Leconte de Lisle to have thereby contributed to a privileging of the 'maternal' voice, there have been recent equivalents: I think especially of Katie Mitchell's decision in her production of the *Oresteia* (in Ted Hughes' translation at the National Theatre, London in 1999) to include the ghost of Iphigenia on the stage of the first play, *The Home Guard (Agamemnon)*. Otherwise, I think you are right to draw attention to Leconte de Lisle's powerful version which proved popular well into the early twentieth century, despite (or even because of) its extraordinary pessimism.