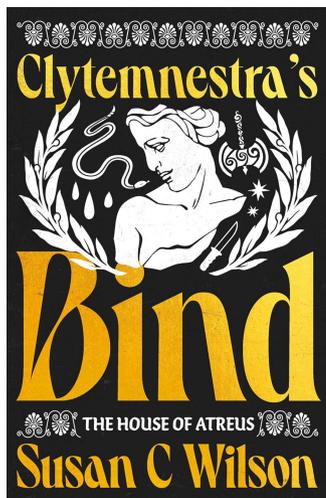


## Clytemnestra's Bind. The House of Atreus

Wilson (S.) Pp. 272, map. London: Neem Tree Press Ltd., 2023. Paper, £10.99 (Cased, £14.99). ISBN: 9781911107590

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'When men plunge a family into self-destruction, women must find a way to break the curse.' *Clytemnestra's Bind* is a fabulous feminist retelling of part of the House of Atreus myth – part one of a trilogy, with the next instalment due later this year. The basic storyline of what happens to Clytemnestra and her family is well known to anyone with an interest in the classical world and there is no attempt to radically alter the main points of the traditional story arc. In deciding to stick fairly faithfully to much of the original

material, Wilson is able to focus her tale on the impending and inescapable horror of what is to come for the characters in her story.

I was completely gripped by the narrative, which is told from the first-person perspective of Clytemnestra herself. Often quite an unlikeable character in the original source material, here Wilson considers the reasons behind her less admirable actions. Her affair with Aegisthus in her husband's absence is one which she tries to resist but is finally forced to give into after years of abuse and ill treatment at Agamemnon's hands. The story begins with the recounting of the tale of Atreus' abominable behaviour – serving up Thyestes' own sons to him in a greasy, gristly soup. We are constantly reminded of this original sin of the House of Atreus and it becomes clear that nothing can stop the inexorable advance of fate. Initially Clytemnestra, having suffered appallingly when Agamemnon comes to take control of Mycenae, tries her best to be a good wife and to raise her children well. However, she is unable to prevent the events which begin to unfold and Wilson's talent is such that reading this book is like watching a car crash in slow motion. You know what is going to happen and you are powerless to stop reading just as the characters are powerless to prevent the inevitable.

Wilson's characters are well rounded, from the adorable and loyal Iphigenia, to the troubled Electra and the monstrous bully Agamemnon. I also enjoyed the way in which the scenes were set, with lovely descriptions of the citadel of Mycenae with its famous Lion Gate and engaging accounts of the clothing and objects used. There is some violence and there are scenes which some readers may find distressing. However, these are not gratuitous in nature and will not come as a surprise to anyone versed in Greek Tragedy. The book would be suitable for Sixth Form students and adults

alike and I, for one, am eagerly looking forward to part 2 which focuses more on Helen and her decision to leave Sparta with Paris.

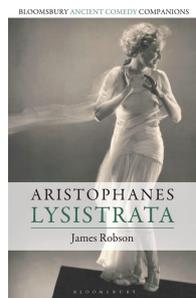
doi:10.1017/S2058631024000801

## Aristophanes: Lysistrata

Robson (J.), Pp. xiv + 184 ills. London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2023. Paper, £17.99. ISBN: 978-1-350-09030-9

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One of the *Bloomsbury Ancient Comedy Companions*, James Robson's short book runs to just under 150 pages, excluding notes, an excellent 'further reading and works cited' list and the index.

Overtly intended for 'anyone and everyone interested in exploring what the *Lysistrata* has to offer', Robson has succeeded in his aim. Using transliterated technical terms which are always carefully explained, the text is lucid, not patronising, and highly accessible for any A level student. Disappointingly, there is however, no glossary to allow for revision or clarification.

The book starts with a helpful 'Timeline of Ancient Events' from the murder of Hipparchus (514 BCE) to the death of Aristophanes in 386 BCE. There are also maps showing the Aegean world in 432 BCE and the city of Athens in the late fifth century BCE.

The meat of the book comprises five chapters covering: 'Lysistrata in Context'; 'The Action of the Play'; 'Places and Politics'; 'Laughter, Language and Logic'; and 'Lysistrata in the Modern world'.

The prose is clear and elegantly explores the controversies on staging as well as placing *Lysistrata* firmly in the context of Old Comedy and its historical and political background; all of which could be very helpful to a student studying the Greek Theatre component of the OCR A level Classical Civilisation.

'The Action of the Play' functions as a non-linguistic commentary and would prove useful to any teacher covering the Greek text and looking for a broader overview as Robson analyses the play in some detail. Unless studying the play in depth (as additional material), this section would be of less use to the A level student of Greek Theatre under the current OCR Classical Civilisation specification.

Robson periodically repeats information, which could be very helpful for a teacher setting a specific section for study. It makes reading the book occasionally less fluid, but broadly, I think the benefits outweigh the aesthetics in this case.

There is also a helpful rundown of the scholarship, particularly in 'People, Places & Politics' that gives an overview of some of the underlying ideas and debates on the political aspects to *Lysistrata* as well as explorations of the putative relationship between the contemporary Priestess of Athena 'Lysimache' and Lysistrata. Robson's analysis of humour includes an extensive section on