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EURIPIDES
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EDITED WITH INTRODUCTION
AND COMMENTARY

BY

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PREFACE

It is over fifteen years since I first decided that I would attempt to write a detailed commentary on *Phoenissae*. In the intervening years there have been detours for study of the textual tradition and then for the Teubner edition, and delays occasioned by other projects, family life, and administrative duties. Now that the project has come to an end, I feel relief mixed with exhaustion, and I am also humbled by the sense that I cannot avoid leaving some questions unanswered, or even unasked, and some insights of fellow scholars unnoticed.

Portions of this work were first drafted as long ago as 1979, a major chunk was completed in 1986, and the commentary itself reached virtual completion at the end of 1991. Many months of 1992 were devoted to a final process of pruning, updating, and adding cross-references as well as to compiling or revising sections of the Introduction. I have in general taken account of bibliography through 1991, although I have been able to make use of, or at least add references to, some later material.

From the beginning it was my goal to produce a commentary on a scale that would allow consideration of a full spectrum of issues, from literary and dramaturgic to stylistic and textual. The literary interpretation of a work like *Phoenissae* is not neatly separable from or posterior to the problem of establishing its text, which for this play includes the difficult attempt to determine the extent of interpolation that the play has suffered. I argue for a relatively conservative position in the interpolation controversy, but hope that I have informed the reader adequately of the main approaches and arguments so that he or she may form a personal judgment or carry on the debate from a secure foundation. Accepting the desirability of not letting an already large book grow even more unwieldy, I have knowingly tolerated some unevenness of

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PREFACE

treatment: on some points I give a fuller view of the history of approaches to a problem or quote parallels at length, while on others the comment may be much more condensed and the parallels left for the reader to pursue in other books. Brevity will not, I hope, be taken as a sign of dogmatism or of disrespect for works or views which I have not had room to cite.

I would like to express here my gratitude to the editors of the series for their encouragement and patience. James Diggle, in particular, has been tireless in supplying me with corrections, supplements, and advice of all kinds: only a fraction of these points are actually signalled by the appearance of the initials JD in the commentary. I am all the more grateful for our cordial correspondence because I know that his *Phoenissae* in volume III of the OCT will differ in many points from mine. I am again indebted to Michael Haslam for sharing with me yet another papyrus scrap of this play. At various points over the years I have had Berkeley graduate students perform some grimly tedious tasks for me (checking collations, compiling conjectures, proof-reading), and I here thank Costas Yialoucas, Nancy Marlowe, James Astorga, and Kate Gilhuly for this help. Earlier phases of my work were supported by fellowships from the American Council of Learned Societies and the John Simon Guggenheim Foundation. From the University of California, Berkeley, I have received assistance with computers and minor expenses, sabbatical leaves, and a Regents Humanities Fellowship, as well as a fine library collection and a wonderful place to work.

Finally, I dedicate this book to my wife Joan: οὐ μὲν γὰρ τοῦ γε κρείσσον καὶ ἄρειον . . .

Berkeley, California
December 1992

D. J. M.