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SOPHOCLES
OEDIPUS REX

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PREFACE

As this little by-product of more austere researches goes out into the world, it carries with it acknowledgements of three different kinds. There was the advice I received from the Editors of the series and from Miss Pauline Hire of the University Press. There were those trenchantly phrased and instantly convincing criticisms from Dr James Diggle, for which I shall hope to forgive him in time. Then there were the comments of my own pupils who used a draft of this commentary for some classes on *Oedipus Rex* given in my College in the Michaelmas Term 1980. That Eleanor Cranmer, Clive Galliver, Claire Lobel, Peter Singer and Jeremy Spencer (alphabetical order, τί μήν;) should be so tolerant of their supervisor's little ways that they continued coming week after week (well, almost) to something entirely voluntary is a tribute to the stamina of their characters. To them in particular, and to those like them everywhere, this book is dedicated.

Trinity College
April 1982

R. D. Dawe

PREFACE TO SECOND EDITION

The need for a second edition of this play was brought home to me when, under the stimulus of an article by C. W. Mueller (*Rheinisches Museum* 139 (1996) 193–224), I took a more intensive look at the closing scenes, which had for many years been, in certain quarters, under an ill-defined cloud of suspicion. It seemed to me that the suspicion was justified, but that there was a need for greater precision in deploying the arguments which had led some scholars in the past to scent interpolation, and a need too – a harder one to fill, this – to define more exactly what it was that had been interpolated, and what, if anything, had survived of the authentic ending. An editor cannot conscientiously send out a commentary purporting to be on Sophocles if he is convinced that some of his notes relate to an entirely different author. But once one has recognized that the end of the play is spurious, other doubts begin to assail one, and at a late stage I began to wonder whether the children of Oedipus, who figure prominently in the spurious portion, should be receiving any mention at all in the earlier, authentic part of the play. One cannot tamper with *prima facie* evidence in the interests of supporting an argument, and I have not marked all the relevant lines as spurious (261, 425, 1247–50, 1375–7); but I have felt justified in writing notes on those lines which should be enough to cause intelligent brows to furrow. Apart from those major considerations, there was a host of places where there was room for improvement, and I have taken the opportunity, perhaps not often enough, to do just that.

The massive book by Michael Lurje entitled *The search for guilt* (or *The quest for responsibility*): *Sophocles' Oedipus Rex, Aristotle's Poetics and the understanding of tragedy in recent times*¹ quotes from Dr Johnson: ‘The chief desire of him that comments an authour, is to shew how much other commentators have corrupted and obscured him. The opinions prevalent in one age, as truths above the reach of controversy, are confuted and rejected in another, and rise again to reception in remoter time. Thus the human mind is kept in motion without progress.’ Lurje’s book, with its confirmatory evidence, makes salutary reading, and I commend it to the reader. The present edition strives to be an exception to the Johnsonian law, but if it fails, there is always the comfort that it is better to keep the human mind in motion than to let it ossify completely.

One mind that has been very much in motion is that of Mr Nicholas Lane, a London solicitor who volunteered to read the proofs. Mr Lane is plainly not the man to subscribe to his profession’s insouciant motto, *de minimis non curat lex*, and for his corrections, which went well beyond *minima*, everyone who uses this book has cause to be grateful.

Finally I should like to express my regrets to the reader for the involuntary discourtesy of compelling him to keep moving from the text to that section of the book known to generations of schoolboys as ‘the back’. I would much have preferred the format favoured by most earlier editions, with text and commentary on the same page. But the requirements of the series apparently rule out such dangerous regressions to convenience.

¹ *Die Suche nach der Schuld*. Beiträge zur Altertumskunde Band 209 (Leipzig 2004).

ABBREVIATIONS

Denniston, <i>GP</i> ²	J. D. Denniston, <i>The Greek particles</i> , Oxford 1954
FGE	D. L. Page, <i>Further Greek epigrams</i> , Cambridge 1981
GAI	L. Threatte, <i>The grammar of Attic inscriptions</i> , Berlin and New York 1980
GVI	W. Peek, <i>Griechische Vers-Inschriften</i> , Berlin 1955
HE	A. S. F. Gow and D. L. Page, <i>Hellenistic epigrams</i> , Cambridge 1965
ITAS	S. L. Schein, <i>The iambic trimeter in Aeschylus and Sophocles</i> , Leiden 1979
K–G	Kühner's <i>Ausführliche Grammatik der griechischen Sprache</i> , 3rd ed. Part II, rev. B. Gerth, Hannover and Leipzig 1898–1904
LSJ	<i>A Greek-English Lexicon</i> compiled by H. G. Liddell and R. Scott, new edition rev. by H. S. Jones, Oxford 1940 (with numerous corrected reprints since)
STE	J. Diggle, <i>Studies on the text of Euripides</i> , Oxford 1981
<i>Studies</i>	R. D. Dawe, <i>Studies on the text of Sophocles</i> , Leiden, I and II 1973, III 1978
VUS	J. Wackernagel, <i>Vorlesungen über Syntax</i> , Basel 1926

In citing fragments the following works are taken as standard: for comedy *Poetae Comici Graeci* (PCG), ed. R. Kassel et C. Austin, Berlin and New York 1983–.

For tragedy *Tragicorum Graecorum Fragmenta* (TrGF): adespota in vol. 2, ed. R. Kannicht and B. Snell, Göttingen 1981; Aeschylus in vol. 3, ed. S. Radt 1977; Sophocles in vol. 4, ed. S. Radt 1999²; Euripides in vols. 5.1 and 5.2, ed. R. Kannicht 2004.