

BOOK REVIEW

Sophocles: Oedipus the King. By P. J. FINGLASS. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2018. Pp. 720. Hardback, \$170.00. ISBN 978-1-108-41951-2.

Cambridge University Press has a long tradition of producing exemplary commentaries on the surviving plays of Sophocles, one that was established by the monumental editions of Sir Richard Claverhouse Jebb (released later in abridged school texts under the editorship of Shuckburgh). The so-called green and yellow collection of texts and commentaries commenced with Webster's edition of the *Philoctetes*; in the nearly half century since that volume appeared, several other plays have appeared, including a new edition of the inaugural play by Seth Schein.

To Patrick Finglass we owe the continuation of this Cantabrigian devotion to Sophocles in his marvelous set of large editions of plays for the orange series. First *Electra*; then *Ajax*; now *Oedipus Rex*. This third volume in the series of Finglass' commentaries is devoted to what is perhaps the most famous of all extant Greek tragedies; readers of the Greek text of the play may now indulge in Finglass alongside the smaller Cambridge commentary of Dawe (itself in a second edition) and the still useful edition of Jebb. Lovers of Sophocles' Greek may select now between the Lloyd-Jones Wilson Oxford Classical Text, the Teubner text of Dawe and Finglass – the former two existing in multiple editions/corrected reprints, and all three exhibiting significant differences of readings. If it all seems daunting, it is – but Finglass manages adroitly to educate the reader on the vast tradition he has inherited, all the while ably defending his own interpretations and analyses.

Indeed, those familiar with Finglass' commentaries on Sophocles (not to mention Stesichorus, and Pindar) will be delighted to experience the same high level of exacting scholarship and exhaustive exegesis for which he is deservedly lauded. The lengthy introduction provides especially useful coverage of the Oedipus myth and the question of Sophoclean originality; the section entitled "What Kind of a Play is This?" should be required reading for graduate students in Classics as well as Theater History. The remarks on production and staging are only jejune to those who do not appreciate Finglass' mastery of economy of

expression; the comments on the division of actors' roles and the versatility required of particular performers are masterly. The entrances and exits of the play (not always an easy subject to consider) are also treated with sense and erudition.

For lovers of precise, rigorous philological exposition, Finglass does not disappoint; users of the commentaries will receive a miniature education *inter al.* in Greek particles, circumstantial participles and uses of the genitive case. Vase paintings and Sophoclean reception (especially in later Greek literature) are special favorites of the author's expansive repertoire. The lexical intertext between Sophocles and both Euripides and Pindar is a key recurring feature of the notes. There is a palpable sense in both the introduction and the commentary that more space would have afforded a chance for greater consideration of the vast *Nachleben* of the play in particular.

It should also be noted that Finglass' commentary is refreshingly free of polemic; he disagrees with his predecessors, of course, on any number of points – but the impression one consistently receives from working through this mammoth tome is that the editor is in a respectful dialogue with predecessors and contemporaries. And with Finglass as guide, one is even given a glimpse – insofar as possible – into what the experience of reading Sophocles was like in the days of Seneca and Plutarch (not to mention in the actual time of its Attic performances). One of the many examples that could be adduced of Finglass' excellence in untangling knotty problems in the text comes at the very end of the commentary, with the editor's exposition of the numerous difficulties of the (probably interpolated) last half dozen verses of the play.

There is no English translation of the play, though all the lemmata of the commentary are given literal renderings that make the volume useful even to those without Greek. The bibliographies and indices err on the side of saturation coverage: they are treasure troves of material for the avid researcher. The index of subjects in particular is a compendium that repays active use.

Cambridge University Press and Finglass merit our gratitude for the herculean labor on display in this new *Oedipus*. We await with sincere excitement future commentaries on one of the most mesmerizing and delightfully frustrating of Greek poets. A final note: Finglass' *editio maior* of this grand play is dedicated to the memory of Martin Litchfield West. This volume is a fitting tribute to a man who contributed so much to the elucidation of classical literature.

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