



Sophocles and the Language of Tragedy (Onassis Series in Hellenic Culture)

By Simon Goldhill

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Written by one of the best-known interpreters of classical literature today, *Sophocles and the Language of Tragedy* presents a revolutionary take on the work of this great classical playwright and on how our understanding of tragedy has been shaped by our literary past. Simon Goldhill sheds new light on Sophocles' distinctive brilliance as a dramatist, illuminating such aspects of his work as his manipulation of irony, his construction of dialogue, and his deployment of the actors and the chorus. Goldhill also investigates how nineteenth-century critics like Hegel, Nietzsche, and Wagner developed a specific understanding of tragedy, one that has shaped our current approach to the genre. Finally, Goldhill addresses one of the foundational questions of literary criticism: how historically self-conscious should a reading of Greek tragedy be? The result is an invigorating and exciting new interpretation of the most canonical of Western authors.

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Review

"With this latest book, Simon Goldhill brings his customary acumen and verve to reading the 'language' of Sophoclean tragedy from two very different perspectives. ... By placing between the same covers 'profoundly conservative' and 'rashly revolutionary' critical perspectives (3), Goldhill instills in the reader a new awareness of the interpretive practices that have sustained tragedy scholarship for centuries at the same time that he defamiliarizes them. His eye for telling detail, moreover, combined with his panoramic sweep of intellectual history, is...enthralling." --*New England Classical Journal*

"Mr. Goldhill joins the crowded field, but his work should stand out." --*San Francisco Book Review*

"Goldhill's critical discussion of the historical and philosophical origin of several key concepts of Sophoclean tragedy is of great interest." --*rogueclassicism.com*

"A brilliant balancing act: Simon Goldhill combines close readings of Sophocles' plays with penetrating chapters on the language of tragic criticism since the nineteenth century. There is something for everyone in this exhilarating and adventurous book." --Pat Easterling, University of Cambridge

"Following up on his landmark studies of Aeschylus and his influential *Reading Greek Tragedy*, Goldhill offers now a full-length look at Sophocles. With his customary versatility as critic and cultural historian, he offers a Janus-faced volume that looks in two directions. In the first instance, there are exemplary close readings with insistence on the rhetoric, politics, and history of 5th century Athens as essential background for articulating how the poet develops his own particular engagement with the language of tragedy. In the second, Goldhill spreads a wider net to expose the often unrecognized historicity of our own understanding of the tragic, established especially by 19th century German thinkers, for whom Sophocles represented the perfect paradigm. Like all his work, Goldhill challenges us to rethink inherited ideas and deepens our understanding at every turn of the fabled author of *Oedipus the King* and those who have cherished him." --Froma Zeitlin, Princeton University

About the Author

Simon Goldhill is Professor of Greek Literature and Culture at the University of Cambridge. His previous books include *Jerusalem: City of Longing*, *How to Stage Greek Tragedy Today*, and *Reading Greek Tragedy*.

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