

Preface

P.Oxy. 5283, from a second-century papyrus roll, contains ancient prose summaries ('hypotheses') of six plays by the classical Greek dramatist Euripides, including two lost plays depicting the hero Perseus, *Danaë* and *Dictys*, which were previously known only from meagre fragments. Since its publication in 2016, however, this papyrus has been overlooked by scholarship. This book demonstrates the significance of this discovery for our understanding of Greek tragedy and its ancient reception. After setting out the mythological and dramatic context and offering a new text and translation based on autopsy, the book analyses the light which the papyrus sheds on *Danaë* and *Dictys*, whose narratives, centred around ultimately successful female resistance to abusive male tyrants, speak as powerfully to us today as they did to their original ancient audiences. The book proceeds to investigate Euripides' tragic trilogy of 431 BC, which ended with *Dictys* and began with *Medea*, a notorious drama in antiquity and today Euripides' most famous play, whose brilliance now stands in sharper focus given our significantly improved understanding of the production in which it originally appeared. That production also contributes to our picture of the tragic trilogy in general, helping us to see the range of approaches taken by tragic poets to this literary form. Finally, it ponders the purposes which such a document served in the Roman empire, and why readers in the second century AD should have wanted a summary of plays written more than half a millennium before. All Greek (and Latin) is translated, making the book accessible not just to classicists, but to theatre historians and to anyone interested in Greek literature, drama, and/or mythology.

The initial stages of the writing of this book alleviated those long months of lockdown caused by the Covid-19 pandemic during the academic year 2020–1. I am particularly grateful to colleagues for sending me pieces from libraries that I could not access in person during that period: especially to Dr Chiara Meccariello, for sending me at an early stage a text of her *editio princeps* and image of the papyrus, to Dr Daniela Colomo, for sending me the higher quality image kept in the Oxyrhynchus collection, and to Dr Martina Delucchi, at the time my PhD student, for photographing material for me in libraries. At a later stage, during the summer of 2023, Dr Colomo's successor as curator of the Oxyrhynchus Papyri collection, Dr Ben Henry, kindly facilitated repeated examination of the papyrus itself. Images of the papyrus in the present volume are included courtesy of The Egypt Exploration Society and the Faculty of Classics, University of Oxford.

Although not the focus of the award, this book was written during my tenure of a Major Research Fellowship awarded by the Leverhulme Trust. I am grateful to the Trust for permitting me to focus on research during this period, and to

Professor Michael Basker, then Dean of Faculty of Arts at the University of Bristol, for permitting me to apply for the Fellowship; without such an opportunity, which released me from several years of leadership positions within and across different universities, this book could not have been written. As the work progressed, parts were shared with audiences at the universities of Cambridge, Paris, Valencia, Salamanca, Nottingham, and Boston, as well as at the annual conference of the Association for Latin Teaching in Tiverton, Devon; I am grateful to them all for stimulating questions. And the Institute for Advanced Study at Princeton provided ideal surroundings for making progress on the project during my semester there in autumn/winter 2022.

Quite apart from her outstanding *editio princeps*, to which all future study of this difficult manuscript is indebted, Dr Meccariello has with great generosity evaluated many WhatsApped proposals and supplements over the past few years, and otherwise fully demonstrated the *amicitia papyrologorum* which is the foundation for research in this field. For comments on the typescript ahead of publication I also thank Dr Ioanna Karamanou, and also Professor Robert Fowler and Mr Nigel Wilson, who furthermore accepted it into the Sozomena series; I am grateful to Dr Carlo Vessella, Ms Carla Schmidt, and everyone at De Gruyter involved in the production process.

Professor James Diggle permitted me to cite his own supplements of the papyrus made in December 2020, which are duly attributed to him throughout; and he also commented on the typescript. My gratitude to him, however, goes well beyond that generous assistance with the present volume. Since we met at my doctoral viva in December 2003, he has provided unstinting and untiring support for my work beyond my capacity to describe or repay. Most of what I write comes out in a series which he edits, where a dedication to him, in addition to the well merited appearance of his name on the first page in the list of series editors, might seem out of place. The publication of this book affords me the opportunity to dedicate this small tribute to the man who has, among many services to the discipline, truly done a good deal for the text of Euripides.

PJFF
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in comitatu Wiltoniensi,
die festo Ss. Cosmae et Damiani
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