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A DUKE PAPYRUS OF EURIPIDES' ORESTES 939–954

# A DUKE PAPYRUS OF EURIPIDES' ORESTES 939-954[*]

This papyrus, a fragment from the top of a column of a papyrus roll, contains parts of lines 939 through 954 from the messenger speech of Euripides' Orestes. It is the oldest papyrus of the play yet found. On the basis of the script it can be dated to the mid-third century B.C. Its chief significance is (1) its confirmation at an early date of the standard text of the medieval tradition, and (2) its additional testimony to the great popularity of the *Orestes* in antiquity.

(1) C.W. Willink,[1] bothered by "the sheer inadequacy of Orestes' apologia at his trial (without even a mention of Apollo)," wished to delete lines 932-942 of the *Orestes* arguing that it was an interpolation. N. Wecklein before him had deleted 938-941. The Duke papyrus is evidence either for the antiquity of the verses, or for the antiquity of the interpolation, since modifications are believed by many to have crept into the text in the period between the death of the poet and the Lycurgan law mandating an official Athenian text.[2] Yet if these verses were an actor's or a producer's interpolation, they were widely disseminated and accepted as part of the canonical text rather rapidly, within approximately 150 years of Euripides' death. It seems almost easier to believe Euripides wrote them. This papyrus at any rate predates the major efforts of Alexandrian scholars to establish the texts of the tragedies, an effort begun by Aristophanes of Byzantium.[3]

(2) J. Diggle[4] recendy counted eighteen papyri with portions of the Orestes. Two of these, *POxy*. XI 1370 (lines 945-948) and *POxy*. LIII 3716 (lines 939-949), contain the ends of some of the lines attested also by the Duke papyrus. In 1968 W.H. Willis[5] reported that Euripides was the third most frequently attested author in papyri with 75 papyri. O. Bouquiaux-Simon and P. Mertens[6] list about 55 numbers in addition to the original 75 Pack[2] numbers. The *Orestes* is the second most popular of Euripides' plays (after the *Phoenissae*)

based on a count of papyri. One may also note that Menander modeled a speech in his *Sikyonios* on the assembly narration, "and could probably count on audience-recognition of the direct echoes."[7] Other evidence attesting to the popularity of the *Orestes* includes the wall painting of the opening scene from a house in Ephesus (second century A.D.),[8] and the musical papyrus of the play (*ca*. 200 B.C.).[9] Dionysius of Halicarnassus comments on the music of lines 140-142, the first music in the play, as an illustration of non-agreement of word accent with melody. He notes that the first three words were sung on one note.[10] The hypothesis ascribed to Aristophanes the grammarian also testifies to the popularity of the play in antiquity: τὸ δρᾶμα τῶν ἐπὶ σκηνῆς εὐδοκιμούντων. Perhaps one of the chief reasons for its popularity in antiquity is the same strongly rhetorical quality which has repelled some readers in modern times.[11] Certainly the messenger speech is a tour-de-force of ἠθοποιία, and perhaps the play as a whole intrigued the ancient audience because none of its many different arguments ultimately carries conviction.

This papyrus is in all probability from mummy cartonnage. It came to the Duke University collection in 1974 with a group of pieces[12] of which most are cartonnage; except for the Zenon archive hardly any papyri of this early date are not from cartonnage; and the back of the papyrus is discolored, perhaps evidence of an acid bath used for dissolving the cartonnage. The provenance is unknown. The writing is along the fibers; the color of the papyrus is dark brown; the verso is blank. A stain has blurred and dimmed the writing on both edges of the papyrus, most evident on the left from lines seven through twelve. There is a vertical split from lines one through three (running through the middle of the second delta in line two).

The most notable feature of the papyrus is the very small script. It is one of the smallest scripts used for literary texts on papyrus. The script of *PLond.Lit.* 52 pl. III B is smaller, but it is not a literary hand. The script can be classified with Group D of E.G. Turner's thorough discussion[13] of early Ptolemaic bookhands. The script of this group he describes as "almost miniature writing, regular, upright, done with a fine pen." On the Duke papyrus the vertical of a mu or iota measures three mm.; the width of a kappa, alpha, or nu is two mm. The writing is tiny, but not crowded, and there is sufficient interlinear space. There is a very slight tilt of the writing to the left. The hand does not attain the elegance or regularity of a luxury edition.

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[7] Willink p. lxiii.

[8] V.M. Strocka, "Theaterbilder aus Ephesos," *Gymnasium* 80 (1973) 362-380, pl. XVIII.

[9] E.G. Turner, *Greek Manuscripts of the Ancient World*, rev. by P.J. Parsons, BICS Supplement 46 (London 1987) no. 35 (*Orestes* 338-343).

[10] Dion. Hal. *Comp*. 63. See the discussion in West p. 191.

[11] Certainly the work of Willink, West, Diggle, and others is evidence of a recent resurgence of interest.

[12] Previously published from this group: MF74.5 (R.L.B. Morris and J. F. Oates, "An Official Report," *BASP* 22 [1985] 243-246) and MF74.17 (*PCongr.XV* 5). The first of these is linked to the Heracleopolite nome, the second is from the third century B.C.

[13] E.G. Turner, "Ptolemaic Bookhands and Lille Stesichorus," *Scrittura e Civiltà* 4 (1980) 30-31.

The style is only roughly bilinear; omicrons are small and occupy only the upper half of the line. The base of the delta likewise may be approximately at the same level as the cross-bar of an epsilon or eta, as in line two (though not in line one).

The closest parallel to the script is *PPetr*. I pl. I and II, a papyrus of Euripides' *Antiope*, which also gives an approximate impression of how a complete page of the Duke papyrus originally might have looked.[14] Another close, non-literary parallel to the script is a receipt for rent, *PSorb*. 14 pl. IX. This receipt, dated in the text itself to 266 B.C., is in a similarly tiny script. On the Duke papyrus the distance from the top of one line to the top of the next is 4 mm. In comparing other small scripts from the early Ptolemaic period one finds that in *PSorb*. 14 the distance from the top of one line to the top of the next is slightly more than 4 mm.; in another early fragment of Euripides' *Phaëthon* [15] the distance is 4.5 mm.; in *PPetr*. I pl. I and II almost 5 mm.; in *PPetr*. pl. V-VIII (Plato's *Phaedo*) 7 mm.

I present here side by side a diplomatic transcript of the Duke papyrus and a restored text. In supplementing the restored text I have adopted the reading πετρούμενος (attested by *POxy*. XI 1370) over πετρουμένους in 946. I have supplied elided forms throughout, although the scribe uses two unelided forms (941 και ου, 943 ε]πειθε ομιλον) as against two elided forms (948 τηιδ ημερ[αι and 949 δ αυτ[ο]ν). Whether φασγαν[η in 953 was elided is uncertain. Possibly the scribe elided only δέ. The length of the lacunas to the left would permit unelided forms at 943 and 953, and perhaps favors an unelided form at 948, but with this type of script this argument cannot be pressed too hard.[16] In accordance with early Ptolemaic practice the papyrus uses iota adscript in a case ending in 948; consequently I have supplied iota adscript in all case and other endings in the restored text (see 944, 947, 948, 953) as well as in θνήισκων (see the note on 941). There is no evidence that helps decide between the aorist and imperfect in line 945. The manuscripts are balanced; Willink supports ἠγόρευσε, Biehl[17] and West print ἠγόρευε. The space allows either reading.

| P.Duk.inv. MF74.18 | 2.8 x 7.1 cm. | mid-third century B.C. |
|---|---|---|
| (temporary inventory number) | plate I a | provenance unknown |

upper margin of 0.5 cm

|  |  |  |
|---|---|---|
| ] αρηπροδουςα ̣ [ |  | [νῦν μὲν] γὰρ ἡ προδοῦσα λ[έκτρ᾽ ἐμοῦ πατρὸς] |
| ]νειδεδηκατακτ ̣ [ | 940 | [τέθνηκε]ν· εἰ δὲ δὴ κατακτε[νεῖτ᾽ ἐμέ,] |
| ] ̣ ̣ιταικαιουφθαν ̣ [ |  | [ὁ νόμος ἀ]νεῖται, καὶ οὐ φθάνο[ι θνήισκων τις ἄν·] |

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[14] F.G. Kenyon, *The Palaeography of Greek Papyri* (Oxford 1899) 61, speculating on the size of the *Antiope* (of which more than one colurun ist extant), estimated that it would occupy a roll of about 12 feet in length.

[15] W. Schubart, *Papyri Graecae Berolinenses* (Bonn 1911) pl. 4 b.

[16] I am not aware of a discussion of elision practices in early Ptolemaic literary papyri.

[17] W. Biehl, *Euripides Orestes* (Leipzig 1975).

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| ]τολμηϲουϲπαν‸[ | | [ὡϲ τῆϲ γε] τόλμηϲ οὐ ϲπάνι[ϲ γενήϲεται.] |
| ]πειθεομιλονευδ[ | | [ἀλλ' οὐκ ἔ]πειθε ὅμιλον, εὖ δ[οκῶν λέγειν.] |
| ]‸νοϲοκακοϲεν‸[ | | [νικᾶι δ' ἐκε]ῖνοϲ ὁ κακὸϲ ἐν π[λήθει λέγων,] |
| ]‸υγγονονϲετ[ | 945 | [ὃϲ ἠγόρευ(ϲ)ε] ϲύγγονον ϲέ τ[ε κτανεῖν.] |
| ]‸‸εμηπετρ[ | | [μόλιϲ δ' ἔπε]ιϲε μὴ πετρ[ούμενοϲ θανεῖν] |
| ]τηϲαυτο‸‸[ | | [τλήμων Ὀρέϲ]τηϲ· αὐτόχε[ιρι δὲ ϲφαγῆι] |
| ]ντηιδημερ[ | | ὑπέϲχετ' ἐ]ν τῆιδ' ἡμέρ[αι λείψειν βίον] |
| ]ιδαυτ[ ]νε‸[ | | [ϲὺν ϲοί. πορεύε]ι δ' αὐτ[ὸ]ν ἐκ[κλήτων ἄπο] |
| ]‸ρυωνϲυ‸[ | 950 | [Πυλάδηϲ δα]κρύων· ϲὺν [δ' ὁμαρτοῦϲιν φίλοι] |
| ]ειροντ[ | | [κλαίοντεϲ, οἰκτ]είροντ[εϲ· ἔρχεται δέ ϲοι] |
| ]‸‸αιπρ[ | | [πικρὸν θέαμ]α καὶ πρ[όϲοψιϲ ἀθλία.] |
| ]‸φαϲγα‸[ | | [ἀλλ' εὐτρέπιζ]ε φάϲγαν' [ἢ βρόχον δέρηι·] |
| ]‸φοϲ‸[ | | [ὡϲ δεῖ λιπεῖν ϲε φέ]γγοϲ· ἡ [εὐγένεια δὲ] |
| - - - - - | | |

941.    I have supplied θνήιϲκων rather than θνήϲκων because a search of the Duke Data Bank of Documentary Papyri produced only examples of iota adscript in this word from the early Ptolemaic period: *PLond.* VII 2007 R° 18, and *PTebt.* III.1 759,3. E. Mayser, *Grammatik der griechischen Papyri aus der Ptolemäerzeit* I.1, rev. by H. Schmoll (Berlin 1970) 99, adds *PCair.Zen.* IV 59532, 22, and *PPetr.* I 5 (1 a) 7, both literary papyri contemporary with the Duke papyrus.

944.    I have not adopted Wecklein's conjecture χερῶν for λέγων, despite recent endorsements of it by Willink (*ad loc.*) and West (p. 248) who puts it in his text. Biehl (p. 124) has already pointed to the exact parallel *Troades* 721: νικᾷ δ' Ὀδυϲϲεὺϲ ἐν Πανέλληϲιν λέγων, which supports the transmitted text.

951.    οἰκτ]είροντ[εϲ: this is the only case of iotacism on the papyrus, if one regards οἰκτίρω as the standard spelling. The spelling ἰκτείρω however is also frequent in medieval manuscripts.

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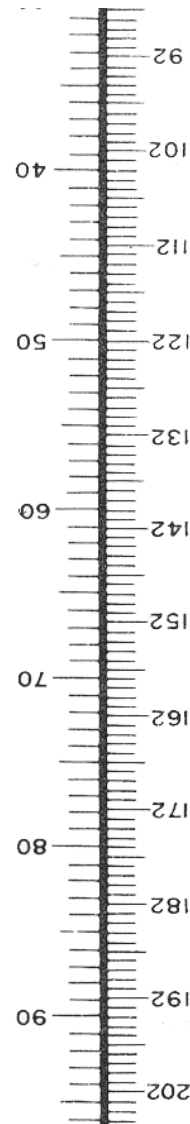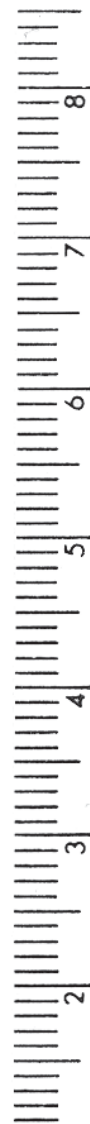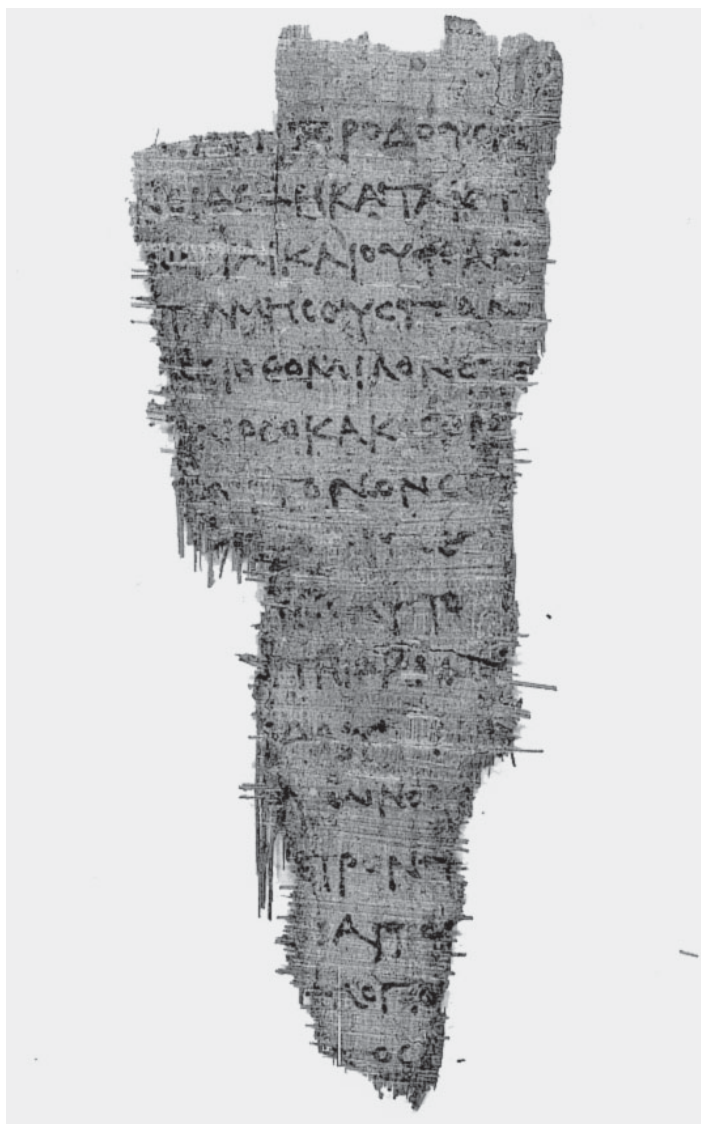
Euripides, Orestes 939-954 (P.Duke MF 74.18)