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EURIPIDES  
MEDEA

EDITED BY  
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## PREFACE

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*Medea* is probably now the play of Euripides most widely known to the general public, from exposure to translations in classes in secondary schools and colleges and from performances either of translations of the Greek text or of looser adaptations of the plot. In the curriculum of programmes in ancient Greek, too, *Medea* is frequently an assigned text for study in the original language, and is sometimes the first Greek drama or first Greek poetry that a learner studies. In earlier generations, the play was equally studied but often frowned upon, for an Aristotelian motivation and causation, for the extremity of Medea's action, and for the moral shock of its conclusion. In more recent times, the play has deservedly attained a better reputation, as critics and audiences have become more open to acknowledging the tensions and contradictions of classical Greek culture, to appreciating the chaotic as well as the harmonious and serene. Rather than seeing *Medea* as a realistic or psychological study, scholars now concentrate on issues like the problematics of the heroic code, the religious and ethical aspects of revenge, oath, and supplication, and the socio-political tensions reflected in the contest of genders and ethnicities evoked by the play.

The goal of this commentary is to make the play accessible in all its complication and sophistication to present-day students. It aims to provide, on the one hand, the linguistic and technical information that will support the task of translation and equip the student to appreciate the formal and artistic devices of Greek tragedy: hence, the sections Language and Style, and Prosody and Metre that follow the General Introduction. On the other hand, it is equally important to give an introduction to the major interpretive problems, with reference to some further discussions (mostly in English), and this purpose is addressed both in the Introduction and in the Commentary itself.

The aim has been both to replace, and not to replace, the famous commentary of Denys Page (Oxford 1938). Page's work contains many fundamental discussions of matters of tragic language and style and constitution of the text, but many of his notes are too technical for the modern student commentary, or concern matters on which later generations have not been in doubt, thanks in part to Page's

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work. In some respects, his work is, not surprisingly, outmoded, partly because of changes in critical approaches, and partly because of new evidence (papyri and vase-paintings) and new work on the textual tradition. But no one should doubt that the advanced student of Greek tragedy still has much to learn from Page's commentary.

My task in writing this book has been facilitated greatly by the recent work of high quality done on the text of the play, particularly that of James Diggle in the Oxford Classical Text Euripides (vol. 1, 1984) and David Kovacs for the new Loeb edition of Euripides (vol. 1, 1994). I have also benefited from reference to the Teubner edition of H. van Looy (Stuttgart and Leipzig 1992) and the edition with introduction, translation, and notes by V. di Benedetto and E. Cerbo (Biblioteca Universale Rizzoli, Milan 1997). I am grateful to the editors, Patricia Easterling and Richard Hunter, for the invitation to work on this play in this format and for their helpful advice and criticism, and to several other scholars for generously providing comments and corrections on various parts at various stages of their drafting: James Diggle, John Gibert, Luigi Battezzato, Mark Griffith. I owe advice on particular points to Michael Haslam, Andrew Garrett, Tony Long, Peter Parsons, and Henk Versnel, and I thank Ted Brunner, former Director of the Thesaurus Linguae Graecae at the University of California, Irvine, for his help. Among the students who have offered specific comments or discussed the play with me, I would like to acknowledge here Frank Cope, Melissa Mueller, and Mario Telò, as well as Alex Kozak, Donna Sy, and Kurt Lampe for bibliographic work, proofreading, and reference-checking. Two undergraduate classes and a graduate seminar also helped me make progress. The early stages of my work were supported by a sabbatical leave from the University of California, Berkeley, and a fellowship from the American Council of Learned Societies.

I am pleased to dedicate this book to my Classics colleagues and students at the University of California, Berkeley.



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## ABBREVIATIONS

NOTE: 'Introd.' followed by a number refers to the numbered section of the General introduction, 'SE' refers to the section Structural elements of Greek tragedy, 'LS' refers to the section Language and Style, and 'PM' refers to the section Prosody and Metre. Fragments of Aeschylus and Sophocles are cited from the editions of Radt in *TrGF*, those of Euripides from Nauck. Other commentaries and secondary works referred to are listed in the Bibliography at the end of the volume.

- Ast, *Lex. Plat.* F. Ast, *Lexicon Platonicum sive vocum Platoniarum index* (Leipzig 1835–58)
- Chantraine P. Chantraine, *Dictionnaire étymologique de la langue grecque: histoire des mots* (Paris 1968–80)
- CGFPR C. Austin, *Comicorum Graecorum fragmenta in papyris reperiata* (Berlin 1973)
- CMG *Corpus Medicorum Graecorum*
- Dale, *MATC* A. M. Dale, *Metrical analyses of tragic choruses* (BICS Suppl. 21.1–3, London 1971–83)
- Denniston J. D. Denniston, *The Greek particles* (2nd edn, Oxford 1954)
- EGM R. Fowler, *Early Greek mythology* (Oxford 2000)
- Frisk H. Frisk, *Griechisches etymologisches Wörterbuch* (Heidelberg 1954–72)
- Goodwin W. W. Goodwin, *Syntax of the moods and tenses of the Greek verb* (Boston 1890)
- FGrHist F. Jacoby, ed., *Die Fragmente der griechischen Historiker* (Berlin and Leiden 1923–54)
- K–A Rudolph Kassel and Colin Austin, eds., *Poetae Comici Graeci* (Berlin and New York 1983–)
- K–G R. Kühner and B. Gerth, *Ausführliche Grammatik der griechischen Sprache, 2. Teil: Satzlehre* (3. Aufl., Hanover 1898–1904)
- LIMC *Lexicon iconographicum mythologiae classicae* (Zurich and Munich 1981–97)

LSJ	H. G. Liddell, R. Scott, H. S. Jones, <i>A Greek-English lexicon</i> (9th edn, Oxford 1925–40)
Nauck	A. Nauck, <i>Tragicorum Graecorum fragmenta</i> [2nd edn 1889]. Supplementum continens nova fragmenta Euripidea et adespota apud scriptores veteres reperta adiecit B. Snell (Hildesheim 1964)
OCD	S. Hornblower and A. Spawforth, eds., <i>The Oxford classical dictionary</i> (3rd edn, Oxford 1996)
PMG	D. L. Page, ed., <i>Poetae Melici Graeci</i> (Oxford 1962)
PMGF	M. Davies, ed., <i>Poetarum Melicorum Graecorum Fragmenta</i> (Oxford 1991)
Schwyzler	E. Schwyzler and A. Debrunner, <i>Griechische Grammatik</i> (Munich 1938–50)
Smyth	H. W. Smyth, <i>Greek grammar</i> , rev. by G. Messing (Harvard 1956)
TGFS	J. Diggle, ed., <i>Tragicorum Graecorum fragmenta selecta</i> (Oxford 1998)
TrGF	<i>Tragicorum Graecorum fragmenta</i> , ed. B. Snell, R. Kan-nicht, S. Radt (Berlin 1971–85)
TrRF	<i>Tragicorum Romanorum fragmenta</i> , ed. O. Ribbeck. (3rd edn, Leipzig 1897)