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EURIPIDES

CHILDREN OF HERACLES
HIPPOLYTUS
ANDROMACHE
HECUBA

Edited and Translated by
DAVID KOVACS

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EURIPIDES

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For Mark

PREFACE

This edition's editorial principles and its simplified system for reporting variants are explained in Volume One, pp. 36–39. I will discuss in my forthcoming *Euripidea Altera* some of the readings and conjectures I have adopted in this volume.

It is a pleasure to acknowledge generous assistance. A grant from the Division of Research of the National Endowment for the Humanities, an independent federal agency, enabled me to devote half of my time in the two academic years 1990–92 to this volume and its successor. At a later stage of revision, I was the beneficiary of a term as Visiting Fellow at All Souls College, Oxford. My thanks to the Warden and Fellows for their splendid hospitality and especially to Martin West, who was liberal of his time and counsel. I have also profited greatly from discussions with James Diggle, Charles Willink, Hugh Lloyd-Jones, and Justina Gregory. George Goold's criticisms and queries have been invaluable, and both he and Margaretta Fulton have improved the English translation.

This volume carries a dedication to a son by a proud father.

University of Virginia David Kovacs

ABBREVIATIONS

AJP	*American Journal of Philology*
Anz. Akad. Wien	*Anzeiger der österreichischen Akademie der Wissenschaften zu Wien*
BICS	*Bulletin of the Institute of Classical Studies, London*
CP	*Classical Philology*
CQ	*Classical Quarterly*
CR	*Classical Review*
GRBS	*Greek, Roman, and Byzantine Studies*
HSCP	*Harvard Studies in Classical Philology*
JHS	*Journal of Hellenic Studies*
RFIC	*Rivista di Filologia ed Istruzione Classica*
TAPA	*Transactions of the American Philological Association*
YCS	*Yale Classical Studies*

CONTENTS

CHILDREN OF HERACLES

INTRODUCTION

When Athenian orators of the fourth century wanted to extol the greatness of the city's past, one of the stories to which they repeatedly turned was Athens' defense of the helpless children of Heracles from the violence of Eurystheus. (See Lysias 2.11–16, Isocrates 4.54–60, 5.34, Demosthenes 60.8.) It is reasonable to suppose that fifth-century orators, whose work does not survive, did the same. The story appears or is alluded to in other fifth-century sources, including Herodotus 9.27.2, where the Athenians base their claim to a place of honor in the battle order at Plataea on their valorous defense of the Heraclids. Clearly this was a narrative that harmonized well with the Athenians' view of themselves as champions of the weak.

Euripides' *Children of Heracles* was put on, in all likelihood, in the first year of the Peloponnesian War (early spring of 430). The events of the day have had an effect on the telling of the story, particularly the end of the play, where allusion is made to the descendants of the Heraclids (i.e. the Spartans) and their invasion of Attica. But in its main outline the plot is the sequence of events known to patriotic oratory.

Iolaus, Heracles' aged kinsman, speaks the prologue, giving the antecedent history. After Heracles' death his

children were persecuted by King Eurystheus of Argos, the same man who had sent Heracles himself on his perilous labors. Afraid that the sons might exact vengeance for what he had done to their father, Eurystheus determined to put them to death, and since they had been banished from Argos he pursued them all around the Greek world. Whenever they sought refuge with a city, he would threaten that city with war. Hitherto, all the cities they have fled to have succumbed to the threats of Eurystheus and have refused to take the Heraclids in. Now they have come to Marathon in Attica, ruled by the twin sons of Theseus. Iolaus with most of Heracles' sons sits as a suppliant at the altar; Alcmene, Heracles' mother, is inside with Heracles' daughters. The eldest of the sons have gone off to see where else they might settle if Athens fails them.

The action begins with the arrival of the abusive Herald of Eurystheus, who has come to assert Argos' right to kill the Heraclids and who actually begins to drag Iolaus forcibly from the altar. When a cry for help is raised, the Chorus, old men of Marathon, come on and express their outrage at the proceedings. They are followed by Theseus' son Demophon, King of Athens, who faces down the Herald's threats. This earns him the gratitude of Iolaus, who exhorts the Heraclids never to forget this kindness and, when they get their patrimony back, never to send a hostile force against Athens. Demophon accepts these expressions of gratitude and departs to prepare to defend the city against the Argive attack that will surely come.

The Heraclids themselves then get to show their bravery. Demophon returns with disturbing news: the oracles say that if Athens is to prevail in the coming war, a

maiden of noble family must be sacrificed to Demeter. He is not willing to sacrifice a daughter of his own or to force any of his citizens to sacrifice his. Unless Iolaus has something to suggest, the war with Argos will be lost. This perplexity is met by a daughter of Heracles, who offers herself as a willing sacrifice. She is led away, and Iolaus sinks down before the altar in grief. Good news appears at once in the person of a servant of Hyllus, one of the sons sent out to reconnoitre. He reports that Hyllus has returned safe and with reinforcements. Iolaus, old and infirm as he is, decides to go take part in the battle. He cuts an almost comic figure as he leaves, hobbling along on the arm of the servant.

After a choral ode a messenger appears to announce to Alcmene the result of the battle. The Athenians and their allies were victorious. What is more, Iolaus has been miraculously rejuvenated and has performed a great exploit, taking the defeated Eurystheus alive.

In the last scene, Eurystheus is brought in by the Servant. Alcmene denounces him for his crimes against Heracles and his family and then proclaims that he must die a painful death. The Servant objects that this cannot be: the Athenians do not kill prisoners. Alcmene insists that she will kill him all the same. In his speech in his own defense to Alcmene Eurystheus claims that he was forced to take up the quarrel with Heracles, and that what he did to him and his children was merely prudent self-defense. The Chorus Leader recommends that Alcmene spare him.

She, however, is determined to kill him and proposes a sophistic interpretation of the Athenians' words: the Athenians want me to let him go, she says, and I will fulfill

their words literally by releasing his body to his family when I have killed him. At this point, Eurystheus concedes his death to Alcmene. But in light of Athens' refusal to kill him, he makes them a present of an ancient prophecy of Apollo which said he was fated to be buried at Pallene in Attica and there to be a presence favorable to the Athenians and hostile to the descendants of Heracles' children: he will, that is, become a hero in the Greek sense, one of the mighty dead, and will bless the Athenians who worship at his grave and harm their enemies, the Spartans. Alcmene seizes on this prophecy to overcome the resistance of the Chorus, and Eurystheus is led away.

The play has a strong patriotic flavor, appropriately for a piece put on just after the invasion of Attica by the Spartans. Athens is portrayed throughout as a champion of the weak. She refuses to back down when threatened, just as she had in 431, even if it means enduring an invasion. At the start of the play, the objects of her protection demonstrate not only their innocence but also their bravery as the Maiden goes willingly to death to save her kin and the city that offered her protection. Iolaus too appears both decent and valorous. But by the end, Alcmene, who had earlier seemed timorous, now shows herself to be cruel and ready to violate established law. Like the Spartan Menelaus in *Andromache* she proposes to get her way by a quibbling interpretation of Athenian law (see 1020–4). Her descendants, it is now clear, are not going to carry out the behest Iolaus had laid on them never to raise a spear against the Athenians, their benefactors.

In the very act of taking unlawful vengeance against her enemy, Alcmene is sealing the fate of these descen-

dants, who will get an evil homecoming from their invasion of Attica because Eurystheus lies buried in Attic soil. Thus Athens gets full credit for bravely defending the weak and at the same time is protected from the harm that sometimes comes from doing so. That is how matters appeared to Euripides in the first year of the war before it became apparent that the Spartans would be able to invade Attica with complete impunity. His praise of Athens is heartfelt, and although the play is in no way a masterpiece, it gives stirring and coherent expression to a view of Athens' character that continued, as the orators make plain, to waken an answering chord in the hearts of the Athenian people.

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Dramatis Personae

ΙΟΛΑΟΣ	IOLAUS, kinsman of Heracles
ΚΗΡΥΞ	HERALD of Eurystheus
ΧΟΡΟΣ	CHORUS of men of Marathon
ΔΗΜΟΦΩΝ	DEMOPHON, King of Athens
ΠΑΡΘΕΝΟΣ	MAIDEN, daughter of Heracles
ΘΕΡΑΠΩΝ	SERVANT of Heracles' son, Hyllus
ΑΛΚΜΗΝΗ	ALCMENE, mother of Heracles
ΑΓΓΕΛΟΣ	MESSENGER
ΕΥΡΥΣΘΕΥΣ	EURYSTHEUS, King of Argos

A Note On Staging

The *skene* represents the temple of Zeus Agoraios in Marathon, not far from Athens. Eisodos A leads from abroad, Eisodos B from Athens.