PREFACE

Except that both plays deal with stories about descendants of Herakles, the Archelaos and Kresphontes have little in common. They have been combined here mainly because of reasons which have nothing to do with their contents: in the first place we have fairly substantial papyrus-fragments of both, of which editions are available, but no exhaustive commentary (Musso’s commentary on the Kresphontes I would not call exhaustive). Besides, there is also a number of book-fragments and testimonia, which proved to be even more in need of a modern commentary. A new study of both plays seemed therefore well justified.

The commentary on the fragments is mainly philological, because obviously with fragments there is little else one can do. In the introductions to the plays and in the commentary on the testimonia I have ventured some general remarks on plot, structure and background of the plays. Of course, much is hypothetical here, but on the other hand both the Archelaos and the Kresphontes must have been plays of considerable interest and it seemed worth the effort to try to make the most of our evidence. Especially tantalizing are such matters as the background of the Archelaos, written in honour of the Macedonian king (or was it?) and the relation of the Kresphontes with the plays about Orestes, in particular Euripides’ own Elektra.

As to the text, I have re-read the papyri in Oxford, London and Hamburg and give my results in a transcript and a transcription-apparatus. But of course I owe very much to previous editors of the text, especially to Siegmann’s edition of the Archelaos-papyrus in Hamburg (a papyrus which reminds one of ‘penguins on a beach’ according to a papyrologist with whom I once talked about it). As to the book-fragments and testimonia, I have relied on the text as given in the modern standard-editions of their sources, from which I have also taken over the information on the manuscript-readings in the apparatus and on Nauck’s edition of 1889, especially for the older conjectures; in cases where I have not been able to trace them I insert them in my apparatus ‘teste Nauck’. Emendations proposed after Nauck I have collected as far as possible and inserted into the apparatus selectively (e.g. the oddities of Walker I have left out almost without exception). The emendations proposed in the apparatus to the testimonia I have not traced.

For the fragments I have kept the numbering and order of Nauck and added the numbers in Austin; the papyrus-fragments I have inserted ‘where they come in in the plays’, which was fairly obvious in all cases, with their number in Austin and editio princeps; the testimonia I have numbered myself, as no numbering was available, starting for each play with those which refer
to outward features of the play and ending with those about the contents; doubtful testimonia I have indicated with * and testimonia which I consider to be falsely attributed I have relegated to the appendices.

To the fragments I have sometimes added indications of speakers, thereby adopting the following system:

X: attribution certain from source or text of fragment; beginning of speech

(X): idem, but not certain that speech starts here

X?: attribution is hypothetical; beginning of speech

(X?): idem, but not certain that speech starts here.

To the fragments and testimonia in the appendices I have generally added no apparatus: I briefly discuss their attribution, but consider the constitution of their text to be beyond the scope of this book.

In the indexes I have included those items and passages which are discussed at some length in introduction, commentary or appendices. For the abbreviations used see the note on the abbreviations preceding the bibliography.

As to the spelling of Greek names I found attempts at consistency extremely frustrating and have roughly followed the system that for well-known names like Aeschylus or Corinth I have kept the conventional spelling, whereas I have generally transliterated the names of characters from the plays and titles of plays (unless this resulted in a clash with the abbreviations in LSJ).

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Note on the transcription of the papyri

Because of the bad state of the papyri I have indicated with a dot only those letters which are badly damaged; a single dot indicates that a letter has not been read or not been read with certainty or is merely represented by an indefinite trace. In the latter case there naturally is no description in the apparatus. I generally refrained from describing traces of those letters which have been supplied with certainty for philological reasons, especially in PHamb. 118a, which is in an extremely bad condition. Where the text is still uncertain I attempted a description of the traces, but in PHamb. 118a found it often very difficult to distinguish which ink actually formed part of a letter and which did not; also the fact that often ink may have been broken away may have led me to false impressions.

I have inserted into the apparatus the readings of the editio princeps when I differ from them, and those of subsequent editors when they differ from the editio princeps; but I have not included those cases where the difference
concerns only the presence or absence of a dot below a letter. In the reading-
text supplements are by the first editor, unless otherwise indicated in the
apparatus.

To the transcript of PHamb. 118a col. I 1-14 I have added no remarks in
the apparatus: it only means to record what I could 'read', knowing that the
lines should contain the ends of IT 53-66—there was nothing, as far as I
could see, to contradict this identification.