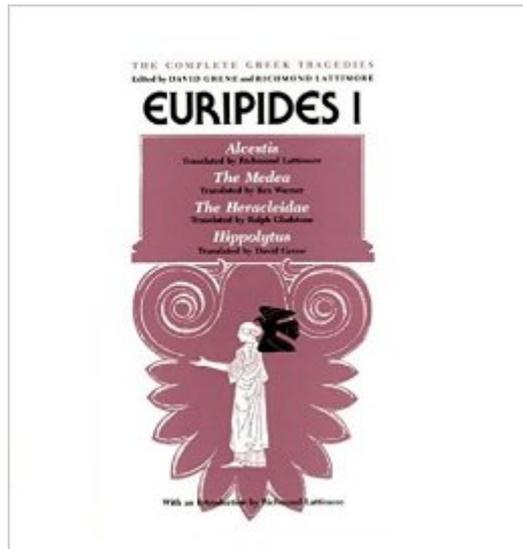


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Volume I of "The Complete Greek Tragedies" of Euripides offers the playwrights rather unique view on some of the greatest heroes of Greek Mythology: Hercules, Jason, and Theseus. "Alcestis" (translated by Richard Lattimore) is the oldest surviving play of Euripides and the closest thing we have to an extant example of a satyr play. Consequently, this play has more of a burlesque tone, best represented in the drunken speech of Hercules to the butler and his teasing of Admetus at the end. Alcestis was the model wife of Admetus, for when her husband is to die she alone agrees to die in his place. However, the key in this drama is how Admetus finds this sacrifice totally acceptable. Admetus is represented as a good and honorable man, but then his ethos is established in this play by the god Apollo in the opening scene, and even though it was written later it is hard not to remember the expose Euripides did on the god of truth in "Ion." Euripides adds a key twist in that Alcestis agrees to the sacrifice before she fully understands that her husband will suffer without her. She is brought back from the underworld by Hercules and restored to her relieved husband, but the play clearly characterizes Admetus as a selfish man. [Medea](#) (trans. Rex

Warner) is not really about infanticide, but rather about how "foreigners" were treated in Greece, best seen in the odes of the Chorus of Corinthian Women. The other key component of the play is the psychology of Medea and the way in which she constructs events to help convince herself to do the unspeakable deed and kill the two sons she has borne Jason.

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