

spiritual aspects of this change, and on the motives of this kind which would commend it to the tragedian<sup>1</sup>. But there were also other reasons simpler and more imperative, why the Homeric version should not have been followed entirely by subsequent narrators, and especially upon the Athenian stage. Without a strong effort of historic imagination, such as no dramatist would willingly require of a popular audience, the Homeric tale could not have been realised. It might pass very well in the antique and consecrated epic, but to expose it in an unfamiliar dress to the 'faithful witness of the eye' would have been in the days of Aeschylus a bold effort indeed. The Homeric story demands for its reception the Homeric mind, and that in two respects. First, in the supposed condition of society and, if the word is applicable, of politics. As conceived by the bard, the whole issue lies between the households and retainers of two chieftains. The lady of Agamemnon leaves her husband's castle for that of Aegisthus. Between the two families this is a deadly breach, but there the rupture ends. What would become of Agamemnon's government upon the flight of his imperial regent, and how the state and the people would be affected and behave, are questions which do not arise, simply because among the independent nobles, to whom the story was sung, no such questions would actually have arisen. But how should they not suggest themselves, if the story was to be presented visibly and in modernized language before a great democracy, to whom the administration of government was a daily familiar problem? And secondly, the epic tale depends still more strictly and necessarily upon the primitive isolation of places. To the bard and his hearers it seemed natural, or at any rate within the license of fiction, that Clytaemnestra in the Peloponnese should have been living for a year in the house of her lover, and that her husband should still return from the Troad ignorant of anything wrong. And the audience of Homer might very well think so. With such communication between the places as they knew, they might well suppose that an expedition sent from Argos to Troy, if such a thing were to be imagined, would for the time be totally cut off from home and news of home. But how was this to pass in the middle of the fifth century? Would the mass of Athenian spectators, accustomed to hear news from Sigeum every week, readily conceive this situation, and was it worth while to risk anything upon their readiness? Aeschylus at any rate makes no such attempt. On the contrary, by a natural compromise with the habitual ideas of his own time, he supposes such a possibility of communication

<sup>1</sup> See for example the excellent introduction to Enger's edition.