

suggest anything of itself and is actually destroyed by a prevalent alteration of the text) facilitated the error of the mediaeval editors and has made it more difficult of detection. But manifestly, in the matter of truth and nature, Aeschylus is right. In the first outbreak of anger and defiance neither victors nor vanquished would fall to discussing or describing the device by which the contest was lost and won. The first address of Aegisthus to his Argive supporters and subjects turns naturally upon what he alleges for the rights of his cause: and it is only because he is too violent and vain-glorious to govern his tongue, that he touches at all upon the inopportune topic of his stratagem (*v.* 1608). Before a modern audience, who did not know the story, Aegisthus would very likely have been made to narrate his plan and its success, although in real life he would not do so, simply lest some of the spectators should be left in the dark. Aeschylus, by the conditions of his art, was spared the necessity of this misrepresentation.

What points have been added to the story by the dramatist himself, we can scarcely guess and have little interest in knowing. But it is likely that those incidents, which would be effective on the stage only, were invented for the stage; and for this reason we may refer to this origin the whole apparatus of the king's entrance, including the laying of the tapestry, the whole vision of Cassandra, and in any case certainly the ἀπειρον ἀμφίβληστρον, in which at the last moment the victim is enfolded. This curious device is to the plot of the *Agamemnon* so unimportant, that if the play had survived alone, we might well have wondered why it is introduced. But the question is answered in the *Choephoroi*, where one of the best scenes is the exhibition of the garment by Orestes, after he has avenged the murder which it served to commit<sup>1</sup>. It is there used, as Antony uses the robe of Caesar, and with similar dramatic effect. For the sake of this scene and of the closely connected reference in the *Eumenides* (*v.* 463), it is introduced and made prominent in the *Agamemnon*. It serves also, by its appearance in the sequel as evidence of the crime, to fix attention upon the part of Clytaemnestra, with whom only, and not with Aegisthus, the moral interest of the story is concerned. The stratagem of the beacon was, we may say, certainly not first introduced into the story by the tragedian. If it had been, it would not be presented as it is. Who was the inventor, it is useless to ask. Possibly some one not more deserving of remembrance than some of the romancers who supplied material to

<sup>1</sup> *Cho.* 971 foll.