

## INTRODUCTION.

### *The Story of Orestes*<sup>1</sup>.

IN tracing the links by which the second part of the *Orestea* is connected with the first, we are in one respect even less advantageously situated than with regard to the Aeschylean legends in general. It would have been in the prologue to the *Choephoroi* that we should have expected to find such an account of intermediate events, if any, as the dramatist thought to be necessary: and the prologue, all but some small fragments, is lost. Had it been entire however, it would probably have told us little more than we now know. Except for the information of the audience, there is no reason in nature why Orestes, visiting his father's grave, should give a history of himself: and we may suppose that here as elsewhere Aeschylus presumed the audience to be already informed.

But if, as is the case, the sparse allusions in this and the preceding play are far from giving us the Aeschylean story of Orestes in a complete chain of events, and assume more than we can supply, it is fortunately otherwise with the main purpose and controlling genius of the story. It is essentially a legend of the Apolline religion; and we can scarcely be wrong in supposing that, by whomsoever in the course of legend-making sundry details may have been introduced, it was the authority of Delphi which fixed the general shape of the version used in the *Choephoroi*.

<sup>1</sup> Aristophanes, in *Frogs* 1124, gives the name *Story of Orestes* (*Orestea*) not to the trilogy, but to the second play, our *Choephoroi*. At least he appears to do so, nor is it easy to understand the passage otherwise. This may be merely a slip;

but it is quite likely that the titles of the Aeschylean plays fluctuated in popular usage before they were fixed by the learned; and in sense, as distinct from form, the title describes our play better than it describes the entire work.