

of love, surpasses all understanding. We shall see hereafter that Euripides, as well as his reviewer, has furnished an illustration of this truth. But Aeschylus, with profound reverence, took the legend as it was. The whole is contained in the statement, that Apollo by an oracle commanded and compelled a man, whose mother had murdered his father, to inflict with his own hands the punishment of life for life; and that the god himself at his own hearth bestowed the ceremonial purification by which the man-slayer was restored to communion. The 'bare fact' that the heir of Agamemnon returned to Argos and killed both the murderers of his father, had been put into story at the date of the *Odyssey*¹; but almost everything else in the Aeschylean version has been shaped with the purpose of converting Orestes into a minister of Pytho.

In the first place he had to be brought there. The 'Odyssean' story placed his exile, for some reason not known, at Athens; and from Athens or elsewhere it would have been easy, had this suited the intention, that he should repair to the oracle and consult it on a project of revenge. But this was not enough for the inventors, with whom Apollo, not Orestes, was the centre and mainspring of interest. The command of Apollo is related in the play five times²: but neither in these places nor elsewhere are we told that it was given in answer to a question on the subject, or that the purpose of exacting a bloody retribution was originally conceived by Orestes³. Nor was it the design to make him an independent 'hero', in the modern sense of the word. On the contrary he dilates upon the tortures, which he was to suffer for disobedience, with all the particularity of one who desires to remember that he has no choice, and though he spurs himself with the 'contributory' motives of affection, poverty, and patriotism, he leaves it plain enough that Apollo, not he, is responsible for the view that the offence of Aegisthus and Clytaemnestra is inexpiable, and not to be compounded for by anything less than life⁴. To give the initiative to Apollo was the purpose with which Orestes was placed during his exile in the god's own city of Crisa on Parnassus. Here, in the original city of Apollo's priests, the place from which, according to tradition, he had

¹ See *Od.* 1. 30, 1. 298, 3. 193, 3. 304, 4. 545, 11. 461. These references, and other such materials of this section, are mainly taken from my predecessors, especially Conington and Mr Sidgwick.

² *vv.* 268, 556, 899, 952, 1027. See also note on *vv.* 37—41, and repeated references in the *Eumenides*.

³ Contrast Soph. *El.* 32, 171 etc. Here as elsewhere we have to remember the loss of the prologue, but it would be unnecessary to repeat each time that the prologue may be assumed to have agreed with the data of the extant play.

⁴ *vv.* 268—304.