

APPENDIX I.

§ I.

v. 1. Ἑρμῆ χθόνιε, πατρῶ', ἐποπτεύων κράτη.

Mr Macnaghten's explanation of this verse removes all difficulty, and is in my judgment decisive. The triple invocation, impressively scanned by the exceptional metre, has a solemn, religious effect; and πατρῶε, as epithet of Hermes, is perfectly clear. Probably this view would have been proposed and accepted before, but for the fact that, from the loss of the original text, the passage comes to us entangled with the comic discussion of it in Aristophanes. As Mr Macnaghten remarks, we need not expect to find there the true explanation. It was enough for Aristophanes that there was a possible ambiguity; and his object was effected, if he raised a laugh.

He offers two explanations: First "Euripides", taking πατρῶ' for πατρῶα, asks if πατρῶα κράτη (*violence to a father?*) describes the murder of Agamemnon (*father* of Orestes), which Hermes, being the patron of treachery and deceit, patronized or 'regarded' by his presence. It is worth notice that "Euripides" does not assert this view, but only suggests it as possible; his object is merely to prove ambiguity, and his malice is the greater, if he knows that he is wrong. This interpretation Aristophanes at any rate can hardly have regarded as seriously entertainable, nor is it, though defended by Aristarchus (according to the scholia on Aristophanes) and others: κράτη without explanation could not bear such a meaning, and πατρῶα must refer, if to any father in particular, to the father of Hermes. There would be a still more fatal ambiguity in ἐποπτεύων, which cannot by itself mean 'regard *with aversion*'. "Euripides" ironically supposes that Hermes patronized the murder, and so the word would rather imply; but such a suggestion would be inappropriate to Orestes.