

hundreds of miles across the sea, taking their hard-won meal and looking forward to enjoy next night their first unbroken sleep (*v.* 342)? And the very next speech informs us that they are already returned to Argos! Even a happy carelessness might have been expected not to give itself the lie with so much art. Again, the size and general geography of the Archipelago were facts as familiar to an Athenian as those of the Atlantic or the Channel to a modern Englishman, indeed much more so; and he could scarcely, however willing, have imagined them other than they were. But if Aeschylus desired to present a story in which these facts were to be ignored, why should he aggravate his difficulties by prompting the imagination of the audience with a picture of the reality? The conversation between Clytaemnestra and the elders respecting the beacons signifies to us at any rate this, that a voyage over the region described was likely to take some time. A narrator who wished us, for the sake of his story, to suppose that someone had ridden from London to York in an hour, would scarcely begin by reminding us that it takes four hours to go by train.

Then look again at the other side of the picture. To what purpose, in any case, the poet introduced the herald, with his vivid description of the hardships suffered by the Hellenic army and of the awful tempest in which the greater part of it was finally lost, or what is the significance of these narratives to the story, is at present not too clear, as may be seen by reference to the books of authority. But nothing short of a contradiction in terms could be more grossly inconsistent with the preceding scene. If Aeschylus wished to obliterate, by an arbitrary fiction, the interval of time between the fall of Troy and the return of the Greeks, why does he *not* obliterate it? Why narrate the voyage and show that it was not rapid but disastrous? that it was not accomplished in one hour, nor in one day either? that after the capture, and before the return was even commenced, a considerable time was spent at Troy itself in the elaborate destruction of the city, the distribution of the spoil and captives, and other proceedings related or touched upon by the herald and the king? Of these indeed the audience were previously informed by many familiar narratives, but in the design attributed to Aeschylus they might at least have been left in all possible obscurity. Who could listen to the herald's description of the storm, following as it does close upon Clytaemnestra's account of the beacons, and not ask himself in bewilderment at what time all this is supposed to have happened?

This discrepancy of times, not lightly neglected by the poet but studiously obtruded, would, if it stood alone, make the first part of the