

nestra, not Aegisthus, is in the foreground; and the speculations as to her *motive* reminds us that the myth had now grown into a shape which was ready for dramatic handling. Twenty years after this ode was written, Aeschylus produced his *Oresteia*.

Aeschylus.

§ 9. A poet imbued with the ideas of Aeschylus could never have accepted the view presented in the *Odyssey*, that the vengeance of Orestes was a simply righteous retribution, by which the troubles of the house were closed. To the mind of Aeschylus the version which Stesichorus had followed would naturally commend itself: Orestes, the slayer of a mother, could be saved from the Erinyes only by divine aid. And the trilogy, the distinctively Aeschylean form of work, was a framework perfectly suited to such a conception. Clytaemnestra's crime is the subject of the *Agamemnon*; the vengeance of Orestes fills the *Choephoroi*; and the judgment upon him is given in the *Eumenides*.

The *Agamemnon* is pervaded from first to last by the thought of the hereditary curse upon the house: Clytaemnestra, indeed, identifies herself with this 'ancient, bitter Alastor'; and the Argive Elders recognise that this dread power, though it does not excuse her, has presumably helped her¹. She is the principal agent in the crime. Her dominant motive is not love of her paramour, but hatred of the husband who slew Iphigeneia². Aegisthus is a dastard, 'the wolf mated with the lioness'³; at the close he blusters, and threatens the Elders, while the strong woman treats them with a cold scorn. The shadow of the vengeance is cast before. Cassandra predicts the return of the exiled heir; 'for the gods have sworn a great oath'⁴. And the Chorus reply to the menaces of Aegisthus by reminding him that Orestes lives⁵.

probable. Anaxibia, daughter of Pleisthenes by Aëropè, and sister of Agamemnon, was mentioned by Hesiod (Tzetzes, *Exeg. in Iliad.*, p. 68, 20); and as her only mythological function was to be the wife of Strophius and the mother of Pylades, it may be supposed that Hesiod knew those relationships. As we have seen, the association of Pylades with Orestes dates at least from the *Nostoi* (circ. 750 B.C.).

¹ *Agam.* 1500—1508.

² *ib.* 1415 ff.: 1431—1447: 1526: 1555.

³ *ib.* 1258.

⁴ *ib.* 1280 ff.

⁵ *ib.* 1646, 1667.