

Cambridge University Press

978-1-107-66116-5 - ΑΙΣΧΥΛΟΥ ΧΟΗΦΟΡΟΙ: The Choephoroi of Aeschylus

With Critical Notes, Commentary, Translation and a Recension of the Scholia by T. G. Tucker

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

THE CHOEPHORI

OF

AESCHYLUS

Cambridge University Press

978-1-107-66116-5 - ΑΙΣΧΥΛΟΥ ΧΟΗΦΟΡΟΙ: The Choephoroi of Aeschylus

With Critical Notes, Commentary, Translation and a Recension of the Scholia by T. G. Tucker

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

Cambridge University Press

978-1-107-66116-5 - ΑΙΣΧΥΛΟΥ ΧΟΗΦΟΡΟΙ: The Choephoroi of Aeschylus

With Critical Notes, Commentary, Translation and a Recension of the Scholia by T. G. Tucker

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

ΑΙΣΧΥΛΟΥ ΧΟΗΦΟΡΟΙ

THE CHOEPHORI

OF

AESCHYLUS

WITH CRITICAL NOTES, COMMENTARY, TRANSLATION
AND A RECENSION OF THE SCHOLIA

BY

T. G. TUCKER, LITT.D.

FORMERLY FELLOW OF ST JOHN'S COLLEGE, CAMBRIDGE
PROFESSOR OF CLASSICAL PHILOLOGY IN THE UNIVERSITY OF MELBOURNE

CAMBRIDGE
AT THE UNIVERSITY PRESS

1901

Cambridge University Press

978-1-107-66116-5 - ΑΙΣΧΥΛΟΥ ΧΟΗΦΟΡΟΙ: The Choephoroi of Aeschylus

With Critical Notes, Commentary, Translation and a Recension of the Scholia by T. G. Tucker

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

CAMBRIDGE UNIVERSITY PRESS

University Printing House, Cambridge CB2 8BS, United Kingdom

Cambridge University Press is part of the University of Cambridge.

It furthers the University's mission by disseminating knowledge in the pursuit of education, learning and research at the highest international levels of excellence.

www.cambridge.org

Information on this title: www.cambridge.org/9781107661165

© Cambridge University Press 1901

This publication is in copyright. Subject to statutory exception and to the provisions of relevant collective licensing agreements, no reproduction of any part may take place without the written permission of Cambridge University Press.

First published 1901

First paperback edition 2014

A catalogue record for this publication is available from the British Library

ISBN 978-1-107-66116-5 Paperback

Cambridge University Press has no responsibility for the persistence or accuracy of URLs for external or third-party internet websites referred to in this publication, and does not guarantee that any content on such websites is, or will remain, accurate or appropriate.

Cambridge University Press

978-1-107-66116-5 - ΑΙΣΧΥΛΟΥ ΧΟΗΦΟΡΟΙ: The Choephoroi of Aeschylus

With Critical Notes, Commentary, Translation and a Recension of the Scholia by T. G. Tucker

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

TO

SIR RICHARD JEBB, M.P.

REGIUS PROFESSOR OF GREEK IN THE UNIVERSITY OF
CAMBRIDGE

AND

EDITOR OF SOPHOCLES

THIS BOOK IS DEDICATED

IN GRATEFUL RECOGNITION OF MUCH LUMINOUS TEACHING

AND IN ADMIRATION OF A HIGH EXAMPLE

Cambridge University Press

978-1-107-66116-5 - ΑΙΣΧΥΛΟΥ ΧΟΗΦΟΡΟΙ: The Choephoroi of Aeschylus

With Critical Notes, Commentary, Translation and a Recension of the Scholia by T. G. Tucker

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

Cambridge University Press

978-1-107-66116-5 - ΑΙΣΧΥΛΟΥ ΧΟΗΦΟΡΟΙ: The Choephoroi of Aeschylus

With Critical Notes, Commentary, Translation and a Recension of the Scholia by T. G. Tucker

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

PREFACE.

So long as literary studies are earnestly pursued, the final word on Aeschylus will remain to be spoken. There are, and must always be, large gaps in our knowledge, not only of historical and social facts, but also of the facts of language. Nothing less than the recovery of an immense body of Greek literature now lost could supply the materials for the completion of the mosaic. With Aeschylus in particular the difficulty of attaining to a perfect comprehension is intensified, and that doubly.

In the first place his own style, at least in the later plays, is exceptionally condensed. Its specific gravity is extraordinary, and—though in a sense other than that meant by Aristophanes—his line, when weighed against those of the other dramatists, will make theirs kick the beam. He does not yield all his thought at the first reading, nor at the second; even at the twentieth the student need not be surprised to discover that he has all along been missing the full force, the precise tone, the exact point of a word, a ῥῆμα, a line, or a passage. Over and above this weight of primary meaning packed into a given number of words, it is recognised, though perhaps not so generally nor so fully as it should be, that the style of Aeschylus is peculiarly allusive. While saying one thing, and saying it with power, his language is apt to be highly charged with metaphor, of which the full contents only become φωνᾶντα συνετοῖσι as the reward of prolonged study. In a word which at first sight appears to bear a simple ‘dictionary’ meaning there is apt to

Cambridge University Press

978-1-107-66116-5 - ΑΙΣΧΥΛΟΥ ΧΟΗΦΟΡΟΙ: The Choephoroi of Aeschylus

With Critical Notes, Commentary, Translation and a Recension of the Scholia by T. G. Tucker

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

ii

PREFACE.

run a parallel thread of reference, of a religious, political, social or 'literary' bearing. If Aristophanes, however much he may be speaking with the playful captiousness of comedy, makes Aeschylus *ξυμβαλεῖν οὐ ῥάδιος*, the modern reader must assuredly share in the difficulty of comprehension. It would, however, be well if the modern student attributed the difficulty to its proper cause, which is not the grammar of Aeschylus, but this extraordinary compression of thought into the smallest receptacle of language.

In the second place the text of Aeschylus has for the most part come down to us in a much less satisfactory state than that of the other dramatists. Doubtless between the fairly sound *Prometheus* and the almost hopeless corruptions of the *Supplices* there are gradations in the condition of the text. Doubtless also the degree of corruptness is often greatly exaggerated by critics, and the Medicean text of the *Choephoroi*, for example, is in reality much sounder than is usually supposed. Nevertheless no scholar doubts that every species of vitiation, from a simple misreading to an unintelligible and unmetrical jargon, has its place in the codex upon which, almost alone, we depend for the *Oresteia*.

These considerations should make it unnecessary to apologise for the appearance of yet another edition of the *Choephoroi*. It is no disparagement to the learning or insight of previous commentators, who have contributed their more or less considerable portions to the correction of the text and to its exegesis, that they should be followed in their turn by one who has laboured for no few years to understand Aeschylus and to gather competence for dealing with his text and its interpretation. It will not, I hope, be considered egotistic in a preface if I premise that, since the appearance of my edition of the *Supplices* in 1889, my reading has been largely directed towards further work upon Aeschylus, which I might undertake after fuller preparation *pour mieux sauter*. I see no reason to modify in any important respect the critical principles set forth in the introduction to my earlier work; but in respect of the stringency of their application I trust that the interval has not been without profit. The present edition is primarily exegetical. For this

Cambridge University Press

978-1-107-66116-5 - ΑΙΞΥΛΟΥ ΧΟΗΦΟΡΟΙ: The Choephoroi of Aeschylus

With Critical Notes, Commentary, Translation and a Recension of the Scholia by T. G. Tucker

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

PREFACE.

iii

purpose a revision of the text was inevitable; but the textual criticism will be found to be regulated scrupulously by practical needs. The result is that the text here offered is exceptionally conservative, provided that 'conservative' is taken to imply as much adherence as is reasonably possible to the Medicean MS and not to any familiar printed text such as Dindorf's or Paley's, one or other of which has for a generation stood to the average English student as a *textus receptus*. But while the text is conservative in this sense, as compared with the text of Hermann, Weil, Paley, or even that so judiciously prepared for school use by Mr Sidgwick, it does not attempt to avoid emendation in the too numerous places where emendation is unavoidable.

There has been no such neglect of the *Choephoroi* as of the *Supplices*. In preparing this edition I have consulted in particular Blomfield, Klausen, Paley, Hermann, Conington, Weil, Wecklein, Sidgwick and Verrall. Campbell's translation of the *Oresteia* and his text (in the Parnassus Library) have also been in my hands. Suggestions made by Mr W. Headlam cannot fail to be well worth discussion, but I regret that his recent contribution of Aeschylea to the *Classical Review* appeared too late for me to make use of it. The same has to be said of Mr Warr's translation of the *Oresteia*. The obligation under which every student is laid by such a work as Wecklein's *Aeschyli Fabulae* (1885), with its collation of the text and scholia by Vitelli and its exhaustive *apparatus criticus*, is too great to be estimated. The labours of Vitelli, thanks to their convenient compass, are not superseded even by the recent appearance of the handsome facsimile, *L' Eschilo Laurenziano*, published by Prof. Rostagno under the auspices of the Italian Minister of Public Instruction, a production which is quite indispensable to editors of Aeschylus, and of which the introduction by Rostagno is as helpful as it is lucid. The facsimile has been employed throughout as the basis of the present text, both of the *Choephoroi* and its scholia.

Of the larger studies of the play there are two to which I desire to offer a special tribute. They are those of Conington and Verrall. Dr Verrall's edition is one which cannot but

Cambridge University Press

978-1-107-66116-5 - ΑΙΣΧΥΛΟΥ ΧΟΗΦΟΡΟΙ: The Choephoroi of Aeschylus

With Critical Notes, Commentary, Translation and a Recension of the Scholia by T. G. Tucker

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

stimulate by its freshness and independence. As is the case with all those who honestly study his work upon Aeschylus, my respect for his commentary increased with its use. In several passages when, after long and repeated meditation, I have arrived at a conclusion which I believed to be new, but none the less inevitable, I have found the point already made, substantially or in part, by the keen insight of my predecessor. Wherever an obligation to him has been direct, I have duly acknowledged it. Where I differ from him, I would be understood to do so with the greatest respect for a scholar whose originality has done so much to rejuvenate comment on Aeschylus. The work of Conington must always lend much solid help. Its dimensions are modest, but no work could evince a saner method of comment or more judicial criticism, grammatical or literary. It is with Conington that I prefer to use the form *Choephoroi* rather than *Choephoroe*.

It will be observed that I have not followed the practice of many modern editors of Greek drama in supplying a complete metrical analysis of the lyrics. This omission is not due to lack either of study of the subject or of recognition of its importance. In these matters there is still much to be learned, and I agree with Dr Verrall (*Choephoroi* Appendix II.) that there is at present too great a tendency to argue in a circle. Wecklein appears to be of the same opinion. The arrangement given by J. H. H. Schmidt in his *Kunstformen der Griechischen Poesie* (1868) is too much bound up with arbitrary alterations of the text to command the assent which I could wish to give it. While, for example, the reading of M in vv. 77 sqq. *δίκαια καὶ μὴ δίκαια | πρέποντ' ἀρχὰς βίου | βία φερομένων κ.τ.λ.* is perfectly unobjectionable on grounds of grammar and sense, Dr Schmidt's scansion concerns itself with an imaginary *δίκαια καὶ τὰ μὴ δίκαια | πρέποντ' ἀρχετᾶν βία | φερομένων κ.τ.λ.* Despite all laudable attempts at formalising metres I do not discover that we have gained an appreciably surer footing for criticism. We still have scarcely more to go upon than the facts that (1) in the more subtle lyric metres the strophe and antistrophe do beyond doubt shew a remarkably exact correspondence, (2) the obvious and universally received corrections of obvious and universally

Cambridge University Press

978-1-107-66116-5 - ΑΙΣΧΥΛΟΥ ΧΟΗΦΟΡΟΙ: The Choephoroi of Aeschylus

With Critical Notes, Commentary, Translation and a Recension of the Scholia by T. G. Tucker

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

PREFACE.

v

acknowledged corruptions in MSS regularly result in bringing the places in which they occur into closer metrical tally.

The highly gratifying, because unanimous, approval accorded to the translation of the *Supplices* has encouraged me to follow the same principles in rendering the *Choephoroi*. A translation should, first and foremost, be faithful. But a baldly verbatim version is as unfaithful to the poet as a loose paraphrase. For the purposes of a work like this it appears imperative to render to the best of one's ability in language which, though ἄμετρος, is not ἄρρυθμος, and, though σαφής, not ταπεινή, and which seeks to give the precise shade of meaning in a spirit as nearly identical with the original as English prose will admit.

In the commentary it has seemed better to err on the side of fulness than in the contrary direction. Apart from the fact that the recognised difficulties and vexed questions are so numerous, experience proves that explanations of substance and illustrations of idiom cannot be stinted with impunity. Even the most competent scholars are generally glad to see the substantiation of grammatical and other remarks which are worth making at all. In *Supplices* 125 (= 146) I ventured to suggest λέχους ἄσεμνα in the sense of 'wicked union,' but supplied no parallel. Inasmuch as no less finished a scholar than Prof. Tyrrell (*Hermathena* No. XVI.) questioned whether the expression was Greek, it is obvious that a note should at least have cited Soph. *Ant.* 1209 τῷ δ' ἀθλίας ἄσημα περιβαίνει βοῆς. Inasmuch as another finished scholar, Prof. Housman, doubted the story of Opis which I there assumed, I ought manifestly to have quoted the authority, concerning which that critic now generously declares himself to be satisfied. Since it is seldom possible to find a satisfactory medium for answering even the most courteous criticisms, it seems best to anticipate them wherever they are conceivable. *Les absents ont toujours tort*. Particularly is this the case with a student in Australia, whose rejoinders, if seen at all, must necessarily be so much delayed as to miss their purpose.

It is, of course, to the example set by Prof. Jebb that I am indebted for the general shape of this work. I have acknowledged in its place a special obligation to him in respect of

Cambridge University Press

978-1-107-66116-5 - ΑΙΣΧΥΛΟΥ ΧΟΗΦΟΡΟΙ: The Choephoroi of Aeschylus

With Critical Notes, Commentary, Translation and a Recension of the Scholia by T. G. Tucker

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

vi

PREFACE.

§§ 6—9 of the Introduction. I have moreover to acknowledge the sympathetic aid of Melbourne scholars who have read portions of the proof and given me the benefit of their advice, viz. in particular to Dr Leeper, Warden of Trinity College, and also to Mr W. E. Cornwall, Lecturer in Classics in the University, and Mr H. W. Allen, a former pupil and now Lecturer in Classics at Ormond College.

My especially cordial thanks are due to the staff of the University Press. Nothing could excel the scholarly vigilance with which the proofs have been read by the gentlemen on whom that duty devolved, nor the patience and skill with which the Press has treated a work produced under all the embarrassments of more than one transmission to the Antipodes.

UNIVERSITY OF MELBOURNE,

October, 1901.

Cambridge University Press

978-1-107-66116-5 - ΑΙΣΧΥΛΟΥ ΧΟΗΦΟΡΟΙ: The Choephoroi of Aeschylus

With Critical Notes, Commentary, Translation and a Recension of the Scholia by T. G. Tucker

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

CONTENTS.

INTRODUCTION	pp. ix—civ
I. GREEK DRAMAS OF ORESTES THE AVENGER	ix—lxxviii
A. <i>The Pre-Existing Material</i> (§§ 1—9).	
§ 1. ‘Invention’ as sought by the dramatists. § 2. Fixed elements in the Orestes-legend common to the three plays. § 3. Pre-dramatic variations of the legend. §§ 4—9. Development of the legend, viz. § 5, in the <i>Odyssey</i> : § 6, from Homer to Stesichorus: § 7, in the <i>Oresteia</i> of Stesichorus: § 8, in Pindar. § 9. Summary of evolution of the legend; Delphian influence.	
B. <i>Comparison of the three Orestes-plays</i> (§§ 10—20).	
§ 11. Structure of the <i>Electra</i> of Sophocles: § 12, of the <i>Electra</i> of Euripides. § 13. Structure and staging of the <i>Choephoroi</i> ; analysis of the piece. § 14. Necessary coincidences. § 15. The standard of critical comparison. § 16. The Aristotelian standard. § 17. ‘Simplicity’ of all the three plays. § 18. Comparative plausibility of plot. § 19. Broader principles of criticism; τὸ τραγικόν of the three plays respectively. § 20. The problem of justification as treated by the three dramatists.	
C. <i>Special Criticisms of the Choephoroi</i> (§§ 21—25).	
§ 21. Aeschylean naïveté of plot. § 22. The ‘Recognition’; examination of the criteria; the attack in the <i>Electra</i> of Euripides. § 23. The length of the <i>kommos</i> . § 24. The duping of Clytaemnestra. § 25. The nurse as messenger.	

Cambridge University Press

978-1-107-66116-5 - ΑΙΣΧΥΛΟΥ ΧΟΗΦΟΡΟΙ: The Choephoroi of Aeschylus

With Critical Notes, Commentary, Translation and a Recension of the Scholia by T. G. Tucker

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

viii

CONTENTS.

II. THE TEXT OF THE CHOEPHORI	pp. lxxix—civ
The MSS; description of Codex Mediceus	lxxix—lxxxiv
Classification of textual errors	lxxxiv—xc
The Scholia as textual evidence	xc—xcix
Orthography	xcix—cii
Interpolations; transpositions; lacunae; colometry	cii—civ
TEXT AND COMMENTARY	1—271
Date; dramatis personae; distribution of parts	3—6
Technical divisions of the play	7
Text, with notes	8—237
Appendices	239—271
RECENSION OF THE SCHOLIA	272—291
INDICES	293—318

Cambridge University Press

978-1-107-66116-5 - ΑΙΣΧΥΛΟΥ ΧΟΗΦΟΡΟΙ: The Choephoroi of Aeschylus

With Critical Notes, Commentary, Translation and a Recension of the Scholia by T. G. Tucker

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

INTRODUCTION.

I. GREEK DRAMAS OF ORESTES THE AVENGER.

A. THE PRE-EXISTING MATERIAL.

§ 1. ARISTOTLE in the *Poetics*¹ lays down the rule for Greek tragedy that *τοὺς μὲν οὖν παρειλημένους μύθους λύειν οὐκ ἔστιν, λέγω δὲ οἶον τὴν Κλυταιμνήστραν ἀποθανοῦσαν ὑπὸ τοῦ Ὀρέστου καὶ τὴν Ἐριφύλην ὑπὸ τοῦ Ἀλκμέωνος, αὐτὸν δὲ εὐρίσκειν δεῖ καὶ τοῖς παραδεδομένοις χρῆσθαι καλῶς*. The principle had been sufficiently recognised by the dramatists. Original variation of legend and eclectic handling of existing variations went along with a marked faithfulness to the main elements of the tradition. Clytaemnestra must be slain, and by the hand of Orestes. For the rest the device by which the killing is to be achieved, and the circumstances attending it, can be invented or pieced together by the poet in such ways as he deems most effective. Io must be metamorphosed into a cow and made to wander to Egypt. This much the legend demands. But in his *Supplices* it is enough for the purpose of Aeschylus that she shall wander across the Hellespont and through Asia Minor, whereas her introduction into the *Prometheus* requires that she shall proceed north of the Euxine to the Caucasus. However much the tragic writers may have regarded themselves, or been regarded, as specially σοφοί in religious and legendary lore, and however much they may have undertaken the rôle of instructors of the public in these matters as in ethics, they were in the first instance playwrights. While they did not ‘undo’ the general plot, they recast its details at their pleasure.

¹ c. xiv. § 5.

Cambridge University Press

978-1-107-66116-5 - ΑΙΣΧΥΛΟΥ ΧΟΗΦΟΡΟΙ: The Choephoroi of Aeschylus

With Critical Notes, Commentary, Translation and a Recension of the Scholia by T. G. Tucker

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

It is an error to suppose that novelty of situation counted for little with the Athenian audience. Aristotle does not dwell upon ἔκπληξις for nothing. Human nature was much the same in that respect, and though the Greeks were only working towards the completely original invention of plot exemplified in Agathon's *Antheus*¹, they preferred at least to have the old tales newly told. If the spectator knew the general outline of the story he was at once on terms with the piece, but the question how the poet would impart freshness to the treatment was of great interest to a people who loved *καινὰς ἐπινοίας*, and to whom *δὺς κράμβη* was death.

Despite the difference of title, the *Choephoroi* of Aeschylus, the *Electra* of Sophocles and that of Euripides have the same subject-matter, the vengeance of the loyal children of Agamemnon upon his murderers. These three extant² dramas of Orestes the Avenger afford an excellent example of what can be done in the way of diversifying a plot, thanks to 'inventing for oneself' and 'artistically handling,' while not 'undoing' the story³. The precise amount of absolute originality in the details introduced by Aeschylus, Sophocles and Euripides respectively cannot, of course, be ascertained. Literature and oral tradition supplied many a variant. Homer, the *Nostoi*, Stesichorus, Pindar, popular story-telling with its usual accretions and confusions, all contributed something to the material which was distilling in the alembic of the playwright's mind. It must, however, be remembered that even if no incident or situation in the piece is in itself unequivocally novel, a much deeper 'invention' may be shewn in the use of that which is old. Aeschylus did not invent the robe in which Agamemnon was entangled and murdered. Such a conception might belong to any man. But he did invent the intensely dramatic conduct and the profoundly impressive speech of Orestes as he unfolds the garment in the *Choephoroi*. The originality which

¹ Arist. *Poet.* ix. § 7.

² There were other plays on the subject. Arist. *Poet.* xiii. § 5 *νῦν δὲ περὶ ὀλίγας ὀκτίας αἱ κάλλιστα τραγωδία συντίθενται, οἷον περὶ Ἀλκμέωνα καὶ Οἰδίπου καὶ Ὀρέστην κ.τ.λ.*

³ Compare also the *Phoenissae* with the *Seven against Thebes*.

Cambridge University Press

978-1-107-66116-5 - ΑΙΣΧΥΛΟΥ ΧΟΗΦΟΡΟΙ: The Choephoroi of Aeschylus

With Critical Notes, Commentary, Translation and a Recension of the Scholia by T. G. Tucker

Frontmatter

[More information](#)*FIXED ELEMENTS IN THE LEGEND.* xi

contrives thus to intensify the tragic pleasure, and at the same time compel our sympathy for the hero after so questionable a deed, is of an order which only genius can command. None the less it is of interest to determine what common fund of plot, in the ordinary sense of that term, lay at the disposal of the three tragedians, and how much of it was considered to be essential to the story.

§ 2. An analysis of the three plays will shew that the elements of the Oresteian legend common to all alike are simply as follows. Care must be taken to assume no more definiteness in particulars than is here stated.

Fixed elements in the legend, common to the three plays.

On his return from Troy Agamemnon had been in some way treacherously murdered by agreement between the adulterous Clytaemnestra and Aegisthus. The guilty pair then usurped the throne and reigned for several years, to the great displeasure of the citizens. Meanwhile Orestes, having in the first instance been in some way conveyed to the care of Strophius the Phocian, is in exile, and is a natural cause of anxiety to the murderers; while Electra lives in Argos in humiliation and in a state of hostility to her mother and Aegisthus, upon whom she is continually calling down vengeance for the father whom she never ceases to bewail. Orestes, grown to manhood, and accompanied by a certain Pylades¹, makes his way secretly to his own country with the intention of avenging his father, in accordance with an oracle of Apollo. His first step is to perform a ceremony of filial duty, including the dedication of a lock of his hair, at Agamemnon's tomb. It is next brought about that Orestes and Electra meet and 'recognise' each other, and the plan of vengeance becomes a joint undertaking. In the end the death of both Clytaemnestra and Aegisthus is effected by stratagem.

These are the only 'constants.' Yet in the elaboration of their details and in working them into the plot there is scarcely a point in which all the three dramatists agree. The precise way in which Agamemnon was murdered, the precise manner in which

¹ That Pylades is the son of Strophius is not stated in any of the three plays. This detail belongs to the *Orestes* of Euripides, where also (as in the *Iphigenia in Tauris*) the friendship of the two young men receives the idealisation now familiar to us. See *Or.* 1014 and *I. T.* 498.

Cambridge University Press

978-1-107-66116-5 - ΑΙΣΧΥΛΟΥ ΧΟΗΦΟΡΟΙ: The Choephoroi of Aeschylus

With Critical Notes, Commentary, Translation and a Recension of the Scholia by T. G. Tucker

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

Orestes was consigned to Strophius, the subsequent course of his exile, the measure of communication between him and Electra, the exact treatment of the latter at home, the exact nature of the oracle which sent Orestes back, the manner of the 'recognition,' the plan and execution of the vengeance—in none of these particulars are Aeschylus, Sophocles and Euripides all at one. If the *Electra* of Sophocles touches the *Choephoroi* more closely at certain points, at certain others it more closely touches the *Electra* of Euripides, and so we may go the round.

It may be assumed, therefore, that these few items—which, except for the introduction of Pylades, the dedication of the tress and the *ἀναγνώρισις*, are of an entirely general nature—formed invariable constituents in a legend otherwise much diversified. An alternative would be to suppose that the Aeschylean piece, being rather more than a generation older than those of the other two poets, had itself fixed these as portions of the plot. But such a surmise is contrary to what we can gather of the legend from other sources, and is also *a priori* improbable. In Euripides the part played by the tress is unimportant and irrelevant to the development, while in Sophocles also it belongs to a mere episode. It would hardly have appeared in each and all of the three writers unless for a peculiar consistency in the popular tradition, which rendered it practically indispensable. In all likelihood it was a prominent feature in the Stesichorean¹ story and known to 'every school-boy.' Moreover, when one drama already existed on a subject, the later playwrights would deliberately seek for variations rather than copy a predecessor.

Ascertain-
ment of
variations
in the
details
anterior
to the
dramas.

§ 3. Here then, before the age of the tragedians, was the bare and simple outline of the *Oresteia* as universally adopted. The large scope offered for the introduction of details on the part of poets, *λογοποιοί*, vase-painters and others was not neglected, and, before the dramatists took the theme in hand, the legend had already evolved many variants. Something will be said immediately of the amount of actual knowledge from other sources which we possess concerning some of the contents

¹ See below, §§ 6, 7.

Cambridge University Press

978-1-107-66116-5 - ΑΙΣΧΥΛΟΥ ΧΟΗΦΟΡΟΙ: The Choephoroi of Aeschylus

With Critical Notes, Commentary, Translation and a Recension of the Scholia by T. G. Tucker

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

THE PRE-DRAMATIC MATERIAL.

xiii

of the pre-dramatic *Oresteia*. There is, however, a tolerably fair criterion to be found in the dramatists themselves, by which we can mark off certain particulars as no invention of their own, but as simple adoptions.

Bearing in mind the desire for originality on the part of playwrights—a desire which appears to have been almost morbid in the case of Euripides with his *ἀντουργός* and the other novel elements in his *Electra*—we may reasonably believe that, where two of the dramatists agree in the use of some well-marked circumstance, device or incident, and still more in the tacit assumption of such a circumstance or device, they are drawing, not upon their own invention, nor yet one upon the other, but upon material which was already available, though optional, in current forms of the story.

Now, within the outline which we have discovered to be constant for all the three tragedians, we find that Aeschylus and Sophocles agree in introducing (though in sufficiently different ways) a disturbing dream of Clytaemnestra, which induces her to send *χοαί* to the tomb of Agamemnon. The same two agree in employing a false announcement of the death and inurning of Orestes as the device by which the avenging party gain admittance to the palace. On the other hand Aeschylus is at one with Euripides in representing Agamemnon as having been slain in a bath while hampered by a *πέπλος*, in mentioning only Orestes and Electra¹ as his surviving children, and in causing Orestes to be attacked by frenzy and pursued by the Erinyes. Sophocles and Euripides, in turn, jointly dissent from Aeschylus when they represent Orestes as delivered by a faithful retainer from the clutches of Aegisthus at the time of Agamemnon's murder; they both introduce such a retainer into the plot; neither says anything of *threats* on the part of the oracle in the event of non-fulfilment of the vengeance.

We must not, of course, argue from the silence of a dramatist on a particular point that it was therefore a part of the legend

¹ At least this is the case in the *Electra* of Euripides. In the *Orestes* (23) Chrysothemis is named. The differences between these two plays further illustrate the point made above (§ 1 *init.*).

Cambridge University Press

978-1-107-66116-5 - ΑΙΣΧΥΛΟΥ ΧΟΗΦΟΡΟΙ: The Choephoroi of Aeschylus

With Critical Notes, Commentary, Translation and a Recension of the Scholia by T. G. Tucker

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

unfamiliar to him, nor that he was unacquainted with more than one version. The first consideration for the playwright would be the adaptability of that element to the construction of his piece. Taking, however, the points of agreement as they can be collected from the two *Electras* and the *Choephoroi*, we are justified in assuming that the body of the *Oresteia* already at the command of the fifth century dramatist included at least the following details and variants.

Agamemnon, on the day of his return from Troy, was slain, either at Argos proper or at Mycenae, by Clytaemnestra and her paramour Aegisthus. Some say it was at the hands of the pair, others say at the hands of Clytaemnestra, though all are agreed that both shared in the plotting. The murder was effected by treachery. [According to some, Agamemnon was slain at the banquet-table¹ with blows of an axe; according to others] his wife, who was tending him as he took the bath prepared for the weary traveller, cast about him a heavy and encumbering robe expressly contrived to hamper his movements, and then she (or both together) slew him, either with an axe or with the sword of Aegisthus. After the murder the corpse was mutilated and afterwards buried with ignominy, without the customary lamentation or other ceremonies. Aegisthus then, usurping the place of Agamemnon, became despot of Argos, sharing his rule with Clytaemnestra, and behaving in this matter, as in that of the crime, to the great disaffection of the people of the country. Meanwhile Agamemnon's children were made to suffer. Orestes was dispossessed and in exile. The common story (though it is not the only one) states that he had been saved at the time of the murder and carried out of reach by an aged retainer loyal to Agamemnon. In any case he had been put into the hands of Strophius in Phocis and had either remained with him or subsequently wandered in various parts. As he grew to manhood, Clytaemnestra and Aegisthus lived in constant disquietude at the prospect of his return. During all this time Agamemnon's daughter Electra, remaining in the power of the ruling pair, was at open feud with both Aegisthus and her mother, perpetually bewailing her father and invoking vengeance, which she naturally looked to Orestes to accomplish.

¹ That this was 'available material,' and not the invention of Sophocles, is known from the *Odyssey*, not from agreement with another dramatist.

Cambridge University Press

978-1-107-66116-5 - ΑΙΞΥΛΟΥ ΧΟΗΦΟΡΟΙ: The Choephoroi of Aeschylus

With Critical Notes, Commentary, Translation and a Recension of the Scholia by T. G. Tucker

Frontmatter

[More information](#)*THE PRE-DRAMATIC MATERIAL.*

xv

For this adherence to her father's cause she was ill-treated, ill-fed, ill-clothed; and, to prevent the possibility of a child of hers becoming the avenger of Agamemnon, she was debarred from wedlock. Ultimately Orestes comes to manhood and, in accordance with an oracle of Apollo, returns clandestinely to Argos, bent on the deed of vengeance and on the recovery of his rights. He is accompanied by his friend Pylades. At the outset he visits the sepulchre of his father, to offer thereon a lock of his hair in token of mourning and respect. The usual version has it that on the previous night Clytaemnestra had been visited by an evil dream, which was interpreted to spring from the anger of her husband's spirit, and that on the day of Orestes' arrival she is sending propitiating *χοαί* to the grave for the first time since the murder. Electra (according to the common account) is the bearer of the *χοαί*, and, finding the tress upon the tomb, with other traces of the visit of Orestes, she is convinced that he has returned. Soon (partly by this and partly by other means) a 'recognition' is brought about between brother and sister, who thereupon unite their forces against the common enemy. The main point of their plot is to get it represented to Clytaemnestra and Aegisthus that Orestes is dead and that his ashes have been inurned by Strophius, who naturally offers them to the relatives to whom they belong at Argos. Disguised as messengers to this effect Orestes and Pylades are to gain entrance to the palace, while Electra is to aid the design in such way as circumstances allow. The plot prospers, and both Clytaemnestra and Aegisthus are slain by the sword of Orestes. As a consequence it is generally told that Orestes is harassed by visitations of the Furies, who drive him in frenzy from place to place, until he finds ceremonial purification from Apollo and judicial justification from the Areopagus of Athens.

§ 4. That current legend contained all this material is a conclusion supported by other evidence than that of the plays. We are not in possession of the poems, and still less of the oral tales, which were known in literary and popular circles of Athens in the fifth century B.C. But it is possible to gather something considerable from the literature still extant and from representations of the legend in art-works anterior to the dramas. Though this will hardly, from its fragmentary condition, supply

Develop-
ment of the
Orestes-
legend.

Cambridge University Press

978-1-107-66116-5 - ΑΙΣΧΥΛΟΥ ΧΟΗΦΟΡΟΙ: The Choephoroi of Aeschylus

With Critical Notes, Commentary, Translation and a Recension of the Scholia by T. G. Tucker

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

xvi

INTRODUCTION.

matter corresponding to each and every detail in the foregoing summary, it goes very far towards so doing.

In the
Odyssey.

§ 5. In the Homeric story of the vengeance, which belongs to the *Odyssey* and not to the *Iliad* (to which, indeed, there is no reason why it should belong, since there was no occasion to anticipate events), it is nowhere distinctly stated that Orestes, when he slew Aegisthus, slew Clytaemnestra also. Thus, in the *Telemachy* (*Od.* I. 29 sq.),

μνήσατο γὰρ (sc. Ζεὺς) κατὰ θυμὸν ἀμύμονος Αἰγίσθοιο
τόν ῥ' Ἀγαμεμνονίδης τηλεκλυτὸς ἔκταν' Ὀρέστης.

Similarly *Od.* I. 298 sqq.

ἦ οὐκ ἄτεις οἶον κλέος ἔλλαβε δῖος Ὀρέστης
πάντας ἐπ' ἀνθρώπους, ἐπεὶ ἔκτανε πατροφονῆα,
Αἴγισθον δολόμητιν, ὃ οἱ πατέρα κλυτὸν ἔκτα;

and III. 195 sqq.

ἀλλ' ἦ τοι κείνος μὲν (sc. Aegisthus) ἐπισμυγερῶς ἀπέτεισεν,
ὡς ἀγαθὸν καὶ παῖδα καταφθιμένοιο λιπέσθαι
ἀνδρός, ἐπεὶ καὶ κείνος ἐτείσατο πατροφονῆα,
Αἴγισθον δολόμητιν, ὃ οἱ πατέρα κλυτὸν ἔκτα.

The matter is more fully narrated in III. 304 sqq.

ἐπτάετες δ' ἦνασσε πολυχρῦσοιο Μυκίης
κτείνας Ἀτρεΐδην, δέδμητο δὲ λαὸς ὑπ' αὐτῷ·
τῷ δέ οἱ ὀγδοάτῃ κακὸν ἦλυθε δῖος Ὀρέστης
ἄψ' ἀπ' Ἀθηναίων, κατὰ δ' ἔκτανε πατροφονῆα,
Αἴγισθον δολόμητιν, ὃ οἱ πατέρα κλυτὸν ἔκτα.
ἦ τοι τὸν κτείνας δαίνυ τάφον Ἀργείοισι
μητρὸς τε στυγερῆς καὶ ἀνάγκιδος Αἰγίσθοιο.

The scholia record some question about the genuineness of the last two lines, and *ἀνάγκιδος* only agrees with *ἀμύμονος* (of I. 29) if the latter be taken of physical beauty, although on the other hand it suits very well with the mention of his living *εὐκηλος μυχῷ Ἄργεος* (III. 263) while the heroes were at Troy. If the lines are retained, it is still not certain how Clytaemnestra met her death, albeit it is plainly implied, as Aristarchus observes, that *συναπώλετο Αἰγίσθῳ ἢ Κλυταιμνήστρῳ*, while, as the same critic adds, *τὸ δὲ εἰ καὶ ὑπὸ Ὀρέστου ἀδελφον*.

ORESTES IN THE ODYSSEY.

xvii

All that we can gather from the Homeric account so far is that Aegisthus was both the prime contriver of the mischief¹ and also the murderer, and that it is he upon whom descends the vengeance of Orestes. The punishment of Clytaemnestra is altogether a secondary matter. Not but what Clytaemnestra also bore her share of guilt. She was a willing adulteress (III. 272), and a partner in the murderous stratagem (III. 234 sq. ὡς Ἀγαμέμνων | ὄλεθ' ὑπ' Αἰγίσθιο δόλφ καὶ ἧς ἀλόχοιο). Indeed in one place (IV. 91 sq.) the plot is apparently accredited to her (τείως μοι ἀδελφεὺν ἄλλος ἔπεφνε | λάθρη ἀνωιστί, δόλφ οὐλομένης ἀλόχοιο). If this is really in contradiction to the usual account in the same part of the *Odyssey* (I. 300, III. 194, 303, and particularly IV. 529 Αἰγισθος δολίην ἐφράσσατο τέχνην with the context), the inconsistency is to be put down to the facts that the lines are not all from the same hand, and that accounts of the precise behaviour of Aegisthus and Clytaemnestra respectively already varied somewhat. The tendency to emphasise the part played by Clytaemnestra, and its enormity, was already growing.

The version of Agamemnon's murder given in the *Nέκυια* (*Od.* XI. 409 sqq.) might seem to illustrate a later step in the tradition². While in IV. 529 sqq. it is Aegisthus alone who is said to invite Agamemnon to a banquet and set an ambush to slay him, in the later passage the words run

ἀλλά μοι Αἰγισθος τεύξας θανάτῳν τε μῶρον τε
ἔκτα σὺν οὐλομένην ἀλόχῳ κ.τ.λ.

and it is Clytaemnestra *δολόμητις* (422) who slays Cassandra, and whose part is brought into prominence in the words (424 sqq.)

ἡ δὲ κυνώπις
νοσφίσσατ', οὐδέ μοι ἔτλη ἰόντι περ εἰς Ἄϊδαο
χερσὶ κατ' ὀφθαλμοὺς ἐλέειν σὺν τε στόμ' ἐρείσαι.

¹ In the *Electra* of Euripides Aegisthus is a much more important personality than in the other two tragedies. Euripides was, however, probably influenced by his aim at a tragic situation and his repugnance to the matricide, rather than by authority. Sophocles is nearer to Homer, both in his conception of the manner of Aegisthus' death and also in his air of complete approval of the vengeance.

² There is, however, no agreement as to the relative ages of the several portions of the composite *Odyssey*. According to Kirchhoff it is the *Telemachy* which is the later addition.

Cambridge University Press

978-1-107-66116-5 - ΑΙΣΧΥΛΟΥ ΧΟΗΦΟΡΟΙ: The Choephoroi of Aeschylus

With Critical Notes, Commentary, Translation and a Recension of the Scholia by T. G. Tucker

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

xviii

INTRODUCTION.

ὥς οὐκ αἰνότερον καὶ κύντερον ἄλλο γυναικός·

οἶον δὴ καὶ κείνη ἐμήσατο ἔργον αἰεκές,

κουριδίῳ τεύξασα πόσει φόνον.

In *Od.* xxiv. 97 the murder is Αἰγίσθου ὑπὸ χερσὶ καὶ οὐλομένης ἀλόχοιο.

It is this greater prominence of the wife's crime which leads to her greater prominence in the retribution. The question how she was to be treated in the *τίσις* of Orestes would naturally force itself forwards, until the fact had to be clearly realised that Orestes slew his own mother as well as Aegisthus. Such a deed might possibly pass without much comment in primitive Greek society; but in a society more informed with religion and *νόμος* its justification rose into a problem.

The elements of the Orestes-legend which appear in the Homeric poems then are these. After his treacherous murder of Agamemnon with the connivance and, in some shape, the aid of Clytaemnestra, Aegisthus reigned as tyrant over Mycenae for seven years. In the eighth Orestes 'returned from Athens¹', when he had grown up and yearned for his own land (*Od.* i. 41 ὅππότε' ἂν ἠβήσῃ τε καὶ ἧς ἰμείρεται αἴης), and, as avenger of his father, he slew Aegisthus, and thereupon gave a burial feast to the Argives over Aegisthus and his 'wicked mother.' The deed is represented as the commendable performance of a true and dutiful son.

From
Homer to
Stesi-
chorus.

§ 6. Between the earliest form of the Homeric story and the body of Orestean legend which has been enucleated above as available for the tragedians, lay some five centuries of development. Unfortunately the connecting links still discoverable are few and slight. They are set forth with his usual judicial lucidity by Prof. Jebb (Introduction to Sophocles *Electra* pp. xi sqq.), working upon general literature and upon

¹ It is noteworthy that the Athenian tragedians, who are never slow to introduce a reference to their own city, give no hint of this tradition. With each of them it is Phocis, not Athens, which is the place of exile. This fact lends no countenance to the unlikely emendation of Zenodotus ἀψ ἀπὸ Φωκίων in *Od.* iii. 307, but rather suggests that none of the dramatists went immediately to Homer for the legend, but to those fuller and later sources which supply the remaining details.

Cambridge University Press

978-1-107-66116-5 - ΑΙΣΧΥΛΟΥ ΧΟΗΦΟΡΟΙ: The Choephoroi of Aeschylus

With Critical Notes, Commentary, Translation and a Recension of the Scholia by T. G. Tucker

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

DEVELOPMENT AFTER HOMER.

xix

Carl Robert's essay on 'the Death of Aegisthus' in his well-known *Bild und Lied*. Much the same ground, however, must be traversed for the *Choephoroi*, and certain modifications and new considerations may be offered without presumption.

The epics of the Cyclic poets have perished. So has the great lyric *Oresteia* of Stesichorus, except for a few short fragments. What can be gathered of these, an allusion in Pindar, and the evidence of one or two works of art which are too early to owe anything to our dramatists, constitute the materials from which the development of the story is to be followed, so far as it can be followed at all.

Of the Cyclic poems the *Nostoi* (circ. 750 B.C.) alone contributes one new element, in the introduction of Pylades. The *Oresteia* of Stesichorus (circ. 590 B.C.) is unanimously considered by scholars to be of the first consequence to the tradition. That Stesichorus, who is placed by Simonides (frag. 53) along with Homer as the singer of legends 'for the folk,' must have been a classic text-book among Athenians seems clear from Aristophanes *Pax* 775 sqq., where verses of his *Oresteia* (as the scholiast informs us) appear without any mention of his name, but, of course, with all the more certain an assumption that they would fall on ears to which they were familiar¹.

I would add to this passage the allusion to Electra and the recognition of the lock of hair in the *Clouds* 534 sqq.

νῦν οὖν Ἡλέκτραν κατ' ἐκείνην ἥδ' ἡ κωμῳδία
ζητοῦσ' ἦλθ', ἣν πού 'πιτύχη θεαταῖς οὕτω σοφοῖς·
γνώσεται γὰρ, ἥνπερ ἴδῃ τὰδελφοῦ τὸν βόστρυχον.

The point seems to be that the clever comedy will recognize its clever kin among the spectators by ever so small a token. The scholiasts not unnaturally refer this to the *Choephoroi* (a note in the Juntine, however, struggles to fit the allusion to the *Electra* of Sophocles). But Electra does not in the *Choephoroi* 'come seeking,' and it is doubtful if the play was so familiar as to be the source of popular knowledge concerning Ἡλέκτρα ἐκείνη. If it is otherwise allowed that Aristophanes was intimate with the Stesichorean *Oresteia* and that it was a popular work with the Athenian public, there is perhaps more reason for believing that

¹ Bergk (fr. 36) attempts to restore the exact words.

Cambridge University Press

978-1-107-66116-5 - ΑΙΣΧΥΛΟΥ ΧΟΗΦΟΡΟΙ: The Choephoroi of Aeschylus

With Critical Notes, Commentary, Translation and a Recension of the Scholia by T. G. Tucker

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

xx

INTRODUCTION.

the comedian is alluding to the source from which *all* the tragedians borrowed the dedication of the lock and its use in the ἀναγνώρισις. The βόστρυχος probably figured prominently in Stesichorus. It is well to note also that Aristophanes (*Frogs* 1124) calls the *Choephoroi* the *Oresteia*¹, with (as I think) his mind partly upon Stesichorus.

The *Oresteia* of Stesichorus. § 7. Such actual fragments of the Stesichorean *Oresteia*, or explicit statements of its contents, as can be collected, prove little. We have, however, (i) the fact (frag. 42) that, like Aeschylus and Sophocles, Stesichorus made Clytaemnestra dream a terrible dream, its nature being plainly akin to that in the *Choephoroi*:

τᾶ δὲ δράκων ἐδόκησε μολεῖν κάρα βεβρωτῶμένος ἄκρον·
ἐκ δ' ἄρα τοῦ βασιλεὺς Πλεισθενίδας ἐφάνη.

In the light of what we know from the dramatists and from ritual, we may suppose her to have endeavoured to placate Agamemnon with *χοαί*, and, if the suggestion be correct, that the passage in the *Clouds* (534 sq.) refers to Stesichorus, we may assume that Electra, carrying the libations for Clytaemnestra, discovers the tress at the tomb and recognises it. (ii) From the scholion on *Cho.* 729 we learn that, under the name of Laodamia, the nurse of Orestes makes some appearance in Stesichorus, although we cannot tell whether or not she played the part of the Arsinoe of Pindar (*Pyth.* XI. 17) in rescuing Orestes from death at the time of Agamemnon's murder. (iii) That Orestes was attacked by the Furies after the murder of his mother, and that their attack had been foretold by Apollo (who supplies him with arrows for his defence), is gathered from the schol. on Eur. *Or.* 268.

It is, however, further argued by Robert, and with the highest degree of cogency, that two fifth-century vase-paintings found in Etruria (reproduced in Jahn's *Electra* pp. 148 and 175), and a marble relief from Melos which may be studied in Roscher's *Lexicon* (art. *Elektra* p. 1238), represent in the details of their subject-matter an Orestes-legend anterior to the dramas and in all probability derived from the standard

¹ See Appendix on the opening verses.

Cambridge University Press

978-1-107-66116-5 - ΑΙΣΧΥΛΟΥ ΧΟΗΦΟΡΟΙ: The Choephoroi of Aeschylus

With Critical Notes, Commentary, Translation and a Recension of the Scholia by T. G. Tucker

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

THE ORESTEIA OF STESICHORUS.

xxi

work which would influence artists at that period, viz. the *Oresteia* of Stesichorus¹.

The Stesichorean account to which these pictorial details point, when added to the arguments above mentioned and to the evidence of the actual fragments and scholiastic information, would contain these additions to the Homeric story. An old retainer of Agamemnon, Talthybius² the herald, comes with Orestes back to Argos. [After Orestes has dedicated a lock of hair at his father's tomb, Electra arrives with *χοαί* which have been sent by] Clytaemnestra, who has had a terrifying dream to the effect that she has been visited by a serpent. [Electra perceives the lock and thence recognises that her brother has arrived.] Having obtained entrance to the house, Orestes finds Aegisthus on his father's throne and pierces him to the heart with a sword. Clytaemnestra, seizing an axe³, attempts to slay Orestes, but he is [warned by a cry from Electra and] saved by Talthybius, who arrests the mother's hand. After the further slaughter

¹ I do not think we need stop at art works which can be dated before Aeschylus. Vases later than the *Choephoroi* are pictured with scenes which do not properly correspond to any situation as conveyed by any one of the dramatists. Dr Huddilston (*Greek Tragedy in the Light of Vase-Paintings*) gives as derived from the *Choephoroi* in particular two paintings on vases, one reproduced in Baumeister *Denkmäler* p. 1939 and another *ibid.* p. 1111. I do not feel convinced that either takes its motive from Aeschylus, and am especially dubious of the second. It is at least as probable that they originate in the story as told by Stesichorus. Prof. Jebb, who mentions the second, contents himself with saying that 'the *Choephoroi* has helped to inspire' it (*Introduction to Electra* p. lxxv). It includes a situation and an action of Orestes (holding a *κύλιξ* for libation while Electra is seated at the tomb) which does not belong to the *Choephoroi* (though *λαίβα* of Orestes do occur in the *Electra* of Sophocles *v.* 52), and there are certain figures present which do not correspond to the Aeschylean story. Tragedies which were much acted—like the *Eumenides*, for example, the scholia of which are peculiar in offering many remarks upon the acting and *mise-en-scène* of a kind which shew that the annotator was familiar with the drama on the boards—would lend themselves better to vase-painting than a piece like the *Choephoroi*, and there is quite satisfactory evidence for connecting extant vase-paintings with such dramas. See Huddilston c. iii. § 3.

² The name is given in the painting. The general likeness of the *παιδαγωγός* in Sophocles and the *πρέσβυς* in Euripides to this Talthybius, makes it presumable that the story of some part played in the rescue of Orestes by the aged retainer, who carried him to Strophius, was pre-dramatic, and therefore Stesichorean.

³ Cf. *Cho.* 888 *δοίη τις ἀνδροκυμήτα πέλεκυν ὡς τάχος*—an axe which belongs to this story and has nothing to do with the axe (unknown in Aeschylus) which slew Agamemnon. See Appendix to *v.* 489.

Cambridge University Press

978-1-107-66116-5 - ΑΙΣΧΥΛΟΥ ΧΟΗΦΟΡΟΙ: The Choephoroi of Aeschylus

With Critical Notes, Commentary, Translation and a Recension of the Scholia by T. G. Tucker

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

xxii

INTRODUCTION.

of Clytaemnestra herself, Orestes is attacked by the Furies and attempts to beat them off with the arrows given by Apollo¹.

Pindar. § 8. The eleventh Pythian ode of Pindar, written twenty years before the *Choephoroi*, contains the following passages pertinent to our subject:

ἀγῶνι.....Κίρρας..... (12)
 ἐν ἀφνεαῖς ἀρούραισι Πυλάδα (15)
 νικῶν ξένου Λάκωνος Ὀρέστα·
 τὸν δὲ φονευομένου πατρὸς Ἀρσινόα² Κλυταιμνήστρας
 χειρῶν ὑπὸ κρατερῶν κῆκ δόλου τροφὸς ἄνελε δυσπενθέος.

 θάνεν μὲν αὐτὸς ἦρως Ἀτρείδας (31)
 ἴκων χρόνῳ κλυταῖς ἐν Ἀμύκλαις³,
ὁ δ' ἄρα γέροντα ξένον (34)
 Στρόφιον ἐξίκετο, νέα κεφαλά,
 Παρνασοῦ πόδα ναίοντ'· ἀλλὰ χρόνῳ σὺν Ἄρει
 πέφηνεν τε ματέρα θῆκέ τ' Αἴγισθον ἐν φοναῖς.

In this we meet with a definite statement of what cannot be asserted for Stesichorus, viz. that Orestes was saved from Clytaemnestra by his nurse. We learn further that he was brought as a child to Strophius 'at the foot of Parnassus.' It appears also that Pylades is the son of Strophius, since he became 'host' of Orestes (at a later time) in the same place (Jebb *Intr. El.* p. xxiii, footnote), when Orestes won a victory in the Pythian games⁴.

¹ We may perhaps add that the servile position of Electra in the house had apparently been elaborated. The unknown Xanthus, from whom Stesichorus borrowed much of his *Oresteia* (Athenaeus xii. 513 A), is said by Aelian (*Var. Hist.* iv. 26) to be responsible for the story that the Homeric name Laodice was changed to Electra because she was *ἄλεκτρος*. Her humiliation was therefore emphasised before Stesichorus took up the history.

² Stesichorus calls the nurse Laodamia. The difference is probably due to the filling in of names where no name was. In the *Choephoroi* she is simply styled *Κίλισσα*. In the invention of names for such subordinate characters the poets would please themselves. But at least it is clear that Pindar did not slavishly follow Stesichorus.

³ The difference of the places belongs to another tradition (cf. Paus. 111. 19. 5), and is one more indication that Homeric accounts did not overshadow every other in literature.

⁴ I do not know whether it is anywhere observed that the false story of the Paedagogus in Sophocles concerning the death of Orestes in the Pythian chariot-race,

Cambridge University Press

978-1-107-66116-5 - ΑΙΣΧΥΛΟΥ ΧΟΗΦΟΡΟΙ: The Choephoroi of Aeschylus

With Critical Notes, Commentary, Translation and a Recension of the Scholia by T. G. Tucker

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

DELPHIAN INFLUENCE.

xxiii

§ 9. The probabilities, then, for the evolution of the Orestes-^{Probable evolution of the legend.} legend seem to be these. The Homeric allusions in the *Tele-*^{evolution of the legend.} *machy* are portions of such a legend, which began with little more than the revenge of Orestes on Aegisthus, and with but a passing reference to the guilt of Clytaemnestra and, perhaps, to her bearing a share in the punishment. The legend was of course in the Homeric times purely oral, and in the mouths of different versifiers, professional and unprofessional *λογοποιοί*, and domestic narrators, it would gain new elements and take varying shapes. By the time of the composition and addition of the *Nekuia* the wickedness of Clytaemnestra is brought more into prominence, and therewith her share in the retribution by Orestes. The development of society and religion in Greece would further intensify the wickedness of the wife, and create a vexed problem concerning the justification of the act of Orestes. The writers of epic verse who, as the Cyclic poets, were busy gathering up scraps of legend bearing upon the experiences of persons connected with τὰ Τρωικά, and exercising their invention in developing hints from Homer, could not overlook the sequel to the assassination of Agamemnon, king of men, and at least the composer of the *Nostoi* would naturally take up the story of the vengeance. Such a writer would not merely incorporate, but at the same time modify, legend as developed on the subject.

Next it is recognised by all who concern themselves with the various forms of the *Oresteia* that an intimate relation^{Delphian influence.} somehow grew up between this legend and the oracle of Delphi. This is chiefly gathered from the facts of (1) the prominence given to the oracle of Apollo, whether as a mercilessly compelling power in Aeschylus, as a sanctioning power in Sophocles, or as an advising force of dubious wisdom in Euripides, (2) the regular association of the exile of Orestes with Phocis, where he was the guest of the Crisaeian Strophius and the friend of Pylades (in an exile which replaced the Homeric sojourn at Athens), (3) the insistence upon the function of Apollo as not

compared with the remark of Pindar, should point to some familiar tradition concerning Orestes at the Pythia. This would naturally come from some well-known literary source and the anachronism need not disturb us.

Cambridge University Press

978-1-107-66116-5 - ΑΙΣΧΥΛΟΥ ΧΟΗΦΟΡΟΙ: The Choephoroi of Aeschylus

With Critical Notes, Commentary, Translation and a Recension of the Scholia by T. G. Tucker

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

only *μάντις* but also *ιατρός*, in his relation of purifier to Orestes after the murder, and of defender (*ἀλεξητήριος*) from the Furies. The introduction of Pylades in the *Nostoi* shews that this connection was in some degree established by the early part of the eighth century B.C. Whether there was or was not a 'Delphic epic' embracing the whole of this matter cannot be decided on any substantial evidence. But what appears to be tolerably certain is that, with the increasing prominence given to the problem of Orestes' justification, there arose a solution in the teachings of that religion of Apollo—Seer, Deliverer and Purifier—which grew up later than Homeric times. If a 'test case' was required to illustrate the power of this Apollo, none better could be found than in the person of Orestes, so peculiarly polluted with the blood of matricide. No doubt there were some threads of legend already connecting an Orestes with the Delphian neighbourhood, but, however slender these might be, they were enough to be turned to account in shewing how an oracle should be obeyed¹, and how the giver of the oracle can both justify his response and also purge the case of almost hopeless-looking blood-pollution. Whether there existed a 'Delphic epic' or not, there was strong Delphian influence upon the story, and almost indisputably that story had been shaped into some literary form accessible to both Stesichorus and Pindar.

We are not, however, to suppose that Stesichorus in his long *Oresteia* would confine himself in any timid manner to his original. A certain amount of transformation of the material would take place as it passed through his hands. It would be abridged here, amplified there, varied by some trick of invention. It was not only the dramatists who might 'invent for themselves' while not 'undoing' the tradition. And again, if we consider Stesichorus the chief source for the dramatists, we need by no means consider him the only source. The points in which, of the three tragic poets, all will agree, or sometimes

¹ A vase-painting reproduced by Baumeister *Denkmäler* p. 1110 represents Apollo sitting on the *ὄμφαλος*, holding a lyre in his left hand and in his right a branch of laurel, with which he touches the sheathed sword of Orestes, evidently dedicating it to its work of vengeance. Pylades, equipped like Orestes for travel, stands behind the god.