

of the MS. are merely normal variations of spelling, not affecting the authority of the tradition in the slightest degree. The errors properly so called are often such that their reproduction through long periods, from the time when by their nature they must have originated, bears speaking testimony to the conservative care of those by whom the text was handed down. Although this edition adheres more closely to the MSS. than its predecessors in modern times, my revision, were I to revise it now, would tend rather to closer adhesion than the other way.

Indeed the men who preserved Aeschylus through the long night of literature were protected as much by their defects as by their merits from tampering with the words. They were scholars, as can be proved out of their own mouths, of the narrowest type. In old words, old forms, and the like they were keenly interested. For the poet they did not care. Of the *Agamemnon* the MS. Introduction speaks with a reserve barely saved from disapprobation. And no wonder; for the editors had not read the play, as literature, at all. This is the simple fact. To a reader who wished to understand a drama, as well as make notes of the words in it, no point could be so essential as the fixing and distribution of the parts. The Byzantine scholars were entirely indifferent to the matter. If a modern editor were to adopt the *dramatis personae* of the Medicean manuscript, he would justly be thought a fool. Nor were the Greek commentators unaware that their scheme was dubious; but they would not be at any trouble about a thing of so little consequence to grammar and lexicography. The corrector of the *Mediceus* assigned the speech beginning ἦκω σεβίζων (v. 270) to a certain ἄγγελος of his own invention, perceiving that in the scene which follows there was some difficulty in finding speakers for all the speeches. To this ἄγγελος, as appears from the later copies, he assigned among other things the speech γύναι, κατ' ἄνδρα (v. 363), while to Clytaemnestra he gave τάχ' εἰσόμεσθα (v. 494). Now nothing is more certain than that