

PLATE XXXII



AMY MARJORIE DALE

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1902–1967

AMY MARJORIE DALE was born at West Bridgford, Nottingham, on 15 January 1901, the daughter of Edward Dale, a civil engineer. She was known to her friends as Madge—first Madge Dale, then after her marriage Madge Webster. She was a fine Greek scholar and an unforgettable personality.

From Sheffield Central Secondary School she won a scholarship to Somerville College, Oxford, where she was taught by Miss H. L. Lorimer, who recognized her quality and introduced her to Gilbert Murray. She took the expected Firsts in Mods. and Greats and went on to postgraduate work, holding the Gilchrist Studentship and studying under Radermacher in Vienna. Her first teaching post was at Westfield College in the University of London (1927–9); and it was at this time that she published her first book, surprisingly enough on ancient history—a short, lucid, incisive account intended for the junior forms of schools. In 1929 she returned to Oxford as Fellow and Tutor of Lady Margaret Hall. There she remained until the outbreak of war, apart from a sabbatical year which she spent at Lund working with Professor Wifstrand: she came to love Sweden and spoke Swedish well. In 1939 she was seconded to the Foreign Office for confidential work; in her spare time, such as it was, she worked on the translation of Eduard Fraenkel's great edition of the *Agamemnon* of Aeschylus, and to this work he has paid tribute. She did not then know that she had left Oxford for good, but in 1944 she married Professor T. B. L. Webster, who had been working for the same section of the Foreign Office, and when the war ended went with him to Manchester, where he was Professor of Greek. There she did some extra-mural teaching and made her mark, but enjoyed an unaccustomed leisure for research. In 1948 her husband was appointed to the Chair of Greek at University College in the University of London. The electors to this chair conferred a double benefit upon Greek studies in London. After holding a part-time lectureship, Miss Dale was made Reader in Classics at Birkbeck College in 1952. In 1959 she was given a personal chair of Greek in the college; it may be doubted whether the university has ever recognized a stronger claim for the conferment of this title. She retired in 1963—an early retirement, but by this time her health was

precarious. With her husband she visited the Institute for Advanced Study at Princeton in 1959; and this was followed by a tour of New Zealand and Australia. They were in California, at Stanford University, in 1964 and again in 1966. She was elected a Fellow of the British Academy in 1957, an Honorary Fellow of Somerville in 1962. She died on 4 February 1967.

Such were the events of a scholar's life, the mere record of which reveals little of the struggle, the passion, and the achievement of scholarship, nothing of the vivid human personality. It is hard to know whether to speak first of the teacher or of the researcher. Many scholars feel a conflict between the two claims: it may be doubted if Miss Dale, who was born to teach and born to research, felt this conflict at all, as she devoted herself without stint to both activities. It is perhaps better to begin with her published work, which was almost entirely in the fields of Greek metric and Greek drama, and to speak first of those metrical studies which earned her the position of a world authority.

Her interest in this subject may not have become dominant till after her visit to Lund, but it doubtless went back to undergraduate days when, having done no verse at school, she insisted on being allowed to join Gilbert Murray's class in Greek verse composition and astonished him with her ability. It was to Gilbert Murray—'the scholar to whom in this subject, as in all Greek studies, I owe more than I can ever find words to express'—that she dedicated *The Lyric Metres of Greek Drama*; and it was appropriate that her first publication on metre appeared in *Greek Poetry and Life*, a volume of essays in his honour (1936). This essay, on 'Lyrical Clausulae in Sophocles', was followed in 1937 by an important article in the *Classical Quarterly*: 'Metrical Observations on Aeschylus *Persae* 922-1001'. The virtues of her scholarship were clearly evident in these two early publications; and the latter already showed her sureness of touch in applying metrical considerations to textual problems (on which more must be said). At this time, however, she was perhaps not widely known outside Oxford. She was at work on her book, which, as she tells us, was half-written by September 1939, when it had to be laid aside for six years. It was published in 1948. It can seldom have happened that so short a book—a little over 200 pages (and it was the only full-scale book she published in this field)—has made so big a reputation.

To appreciate Miss Dale's achievement it is necessary to understand something of the peculiar problems and difficulties of Greek metrical studies. It is well known that, apart from

declamatory metres such as the Homeric hexameter and the iambic trimeters of dramatic dialogue, themselves elaborate and subject to elaborate rules, Greek lyric poetry, such as the odes of Pindar and of the dramatic choruses, is written in quantitative metres of great variety and complexity. The understanding of these metres—at least a partial understanding of them—is clearly essential to an appreciation of the poetry (and it was as a lover of poetry that Miss Dale approached metre). But how are they to be understood? Broadly, in the nineteenth century, it was assumed that we could follow the guidance of late Greek metrical theorists such as Hephaestion, aided by our fragmentary knowledge of the rhythmical theory of Aristoxenus, supported (where these failed us) by the easy assumption that rhythmical feeling is stable from age to age and that we can apply to Greek lyric poetry principles derived, if not from modern European poetry, from the classical music of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. It is unnecessary to go into details. A revolution took place in the early part of this century, led by Wilamowitz, Schroeder, and others; and the publication in 1921 of Wilamowitz's *Griechische Verskunst* marks an epoch. It came to be realized (by most, if not by all metricians), that to chop the shapely phrases of Greek lyric into unitary feet was no true path to metrical understanding and that, while many phrases are built up by the multiplication of *metra*, it is the *colon* or phrase which was the effective unit (and the recognition of this was described by Miss Dale as one of Wilamowitz's greatest services to metrical scholarship). It was not less important to realize the fallibility of modern aesthetic prejudices as a criterion. What relevance have the rhythms of Bach or Beethoven (not to mention the lyrics of Herrick or Heine) to the rhythms developed out of the quantities of an unstressed language, to which they remained tightly bound? The ubiquitous phenomenon of the *anceps*—a syllable which in certain positions can be short or long (if not perhaps as long as a normal long syllable)—itself differentiates Greek metric from any poetry or music with which we are familiar. The ultimate evidence was seen to consist in the long and short syllables as we find them in the texts of Greek poets, and the evidence of ancient theory was reduced to marginal importance. This was the situation in which Miss Dale took up the study of Greek metric—a situation involving difficulties and dangers which she envisaged clearly and which evoked her characteristic virtues. (In what follows her own words are used so far as possible.)

(a) 'The metrical principles . . . have in the last resort no other criterion of their substantial accuracy than the text itself.' But texts are often fragmentary (for the early lyric poets, including papyrus texts) and often corrupt (especially in the choruses of drama). The student of Greek metre cannot evade these problems but must add to his equipment the whole armoury of the textual critic. Miss Dale saw the 'linking of metrical with textual study' as the second great service of Wilamowitz, of whom she was a worthy follower in this field. A corrupt or dubious text has of course little or no evidential value for the establishment of metrical principles, but principles established on the basis of sound texts may be a decisive factor in the solving of textual problems, if only by ruling out solutions which are metrically unacceptable or improbable. Her early article on Aeschylus *Persae* 922–1001 was a fine example of the value of this approach; her book is full of such examples and so are her editions of *Alceste* and *Helen*; a short article on Aristophanes *Birds* 227 ff. (*CR*, 1959) is a particularly neat small-scale demonstration of what a metrician can contribute in this line.

(b) If it is true that the ultimate evidence is nothing but the quantities of the syllables in our texts, there is a 'danger of allowing oneself to be mesmerized by schematic patterns of longs and shorts'. The material is in fact all too docile and lends itself to what Miss Dale elsewhere describes as 'a paper-game with longs and shorts'. She used this expression in criticizing the work of an eminent French metrician who had maintained that our knowledge of Greek metric is bound to remain an intellectual comprehension and can never be *expérience sentie*. Is this true? Then the student had better confine himself to description and analysis. But Miss Dale was not content with anything short of an aesthetic experience, 'some echo of ordered and beautiful sound'. No one was more concerned than she to treat the subject with the utmost rigour of scholarship, no one more conscious of the risk of drawing upon 'our native aesthetic prejudices', but she had an ear and an outstandingly fine rhythmical sense: in the last resort and with due reserve, she was prepared to trust them. She was prepared to walk a dangerous tightrope rather than condemn her subject to artistic sterility.

(c) The material is only abundant in the fifth century, with Pindar and the dramatists. Earlier, we have some Archilochus, enough of Sappho and Alcaeus to form a good idea of their metrical principles, inadequate specimens of choral lyric before Pindar. The period covered is some two and a half centuries,

and we cannot suppose there was no lyric poetry before our earliest examples. The historical approach, so congenial to modern scholarship, would seem appropriate. Why then, since we can in fact date most of the poets whose works are extant, should Miss Dale have regarded the historical approach as a dangerous one? Because 'each kind of lyric, solo, choral, dramatic, dawns upon us in perfected metrical technique; of its origins we know nothing, and of its development only the differences of style between its different practitioners'. Theories of evolution, the search for the *Urvers* or *Urverse*, were uncongenial to her, because the evidence for them was lacking. 'The reaction of the sceptical empiricist to the appearance of the prefix *Ur* is likely to be an impatient sigh; all doctrines involved with it make such large drafts upon the unknown and the unknowable and force so ruthless a way through the concrete evidence of context and interrelation.' The notion that Greek lyric poetry proceeded in an Aristotelian progress towards the choral technique of Sophocles was false to the facts. It was not the sense of history that was needed but the sense of style—the capacity, which she herself possessed outstandingly, to discern 'the proprieties of Greek metric—its nice distinction of styles'. To confound these proprieties was to commit the most abhorrent of solecisms. Miss Dale's insistence upon this may have been one of her greatest services to the subject.

She chose for the topic of her now famous book a relatively homogeneous field. Despite the differences of practice between tragedy and comedy and, in tragedy, between the three tragedians (all of which she expounds with delicate appreciation and a wealth of detail), the lyrics of drama 'are composed of phrase-units, most of them traceable to older forms of lyric, set together in such a way that the whole . . . satisfied the poet's ear as a rhythmical form'. Thus the stanzas, relatively short, are shaped in ways not too difficult for us to appreciate and are composed of elements which are self-subsistent and which we can name; and Miss Dale's treatment is able to follow traditional categories, dactylic, iambic, ionic, and so on, though she does full justice to the complexity of such ill-defined categories as aeolic or prosodiac-enoplian.

The toughest problem for the Greek metrician, however, is not drama but non-dramatic choral lyric, and above all Pindar. One of Miss Dale's most important contributions—a series of articles on 'The Metrical Units of Greek Lyric Verse' (*CQ*, 1950-1)—is largely concerned with that most difficult of authors.

Pindar's odes fall, metrically, into two groups. The metres of one group are known by the traditional, if not very satisfactory, name of dactylo-epitrite. The principles of this group are now fairly well understood, particularly since the work of the late Paul Maas, who also devised a descriptive notation for them which has been widely accepted. We can understand them well enough for them to aid rather than inhibit our appreciation of the poetry. As to the other group, the metrical problem is such that many readers have shrugged their shoulders in despair and read the odes as *vers libre*, which is not a satisfactory state of affairs, since Pindar was clearly a careful and formal artist in metre as in other things. The metres of this group used to be called 'logaedic' (which was almost a confession of failure to understand them) and are now more commonly called 'aeolic', because they seem to employ phrases familiar from the verse of Sappho and Alcaeus. Yet how differently these phrases are used in the complex organizations of Pindar and in the simple stanzas of Aeolic lyric! We can take these Pindaric odes and chop up their long lines into familiar units: dochmiac, iambic, glyconic, and so on, and we seem to have brought them into relation with the lyrics of Sappho and the dramatists. But is this more than paper-work—and paper-work done differently by different analysts? Miss Dale was convinced that the received terminology was inadequate for dealing with the metric of choral lyric poetry, particularly of Pindar. She did two things. (i) If Maas's notation for dactylo-epitrite 'cuts straight through the tangle of unreal perplexities', perhaps the same could be done for the 'aeolic' metres; and she devised a system of descriptive notation which, in view of the complexity of the phenomena, is amazingly simple. She tried it out in teaching and discovered that students grasped it easily and found it illuminating. (ii) As mere description which avoids the begging of questions this system has great value. But she was never content with mere description. She was convinced that 'this method of presentation is more than a mere convenience; it exemplifies what I believe to be the true theory of all metrical composition in the "periodic" style'. By the periodic style (as contrasted with the *colon*-based style of drama) she meant long-breathed phrases which were structures of units either juxtaposed or linked by connecting *anceps*. Her discussion shed much light: she did not hope that it had solved all the problems. 'The principles of the more complex kinds of Pindaric composition are probably beyond our understanding, as involving too many unknowns, but at least this article calls attention

to the fallacy of pasting over the gaps with inappropriate labels.' The judgement is not so much modest as realistic—and characteristic.

Three articles should be mentioned which appeared between 1958 and 1965. 'Resolutions in the Trochaic Tetrameter' (*Glotta*, 1958) clears up some confusions and correctly formulates the practice of the dramatists in a minor but not trivial point of metrical technique; it is a model of how such statistical work ought to be done. 'Observations on Dactylic' (*WS*, 1964) is a major contribution dealing with problems over which she had worried throughout her career. It is an admirable piece of clarification and in modifying some of her earlier conclusions showed the openness of her mind, but the issues are too technical for statement here. 'Stichos and Stanza' (*CQ*, 1963) is a remarkable *tour de force*. Four pages long, it contains so much fundamental doctrine (not to mention an illuminating footnote on Aristotle's *Poetics*) that a student contemplating research on Greek metre might do well to read, reread, and ponder it. It also sets out a bold speculation, namely, that the trochaic tetrameter and the iambic trimeter, as we know them, were the inventions of Archilochus and that the trimeter was developed by him out of the tetrameter. And this might seem surprising as coming from a 'sceptical empiricist'. The truth is that Miss Dale, though a careful scholar, was not a timorous one; and, though she detested the imposition of hypothetical schemes upon the material, she was never afraid to advance a bold hypothesis which seemed adequately supported by evidence. In this case, it seemed to her far more likely that these perfectly organized verses originated with a poet of genius than by some evolutionary process. It was a reasonable conjecture: she would have claimed no more.

In 1957 Miss Dale published in *Lustrum* a survey of work done on Greek metric from 1936 onward. Lucid and well organized, scrupulously fair in its statements, it did not refrain from 'value-judgements' and so provides a priceless conspectus of the work of the period seen through the eyes of a supremely qualified and judicious critic. Of her own work she wrote objectively: of *The Lyric Metres of Greek Drama* she said that 'the book contains a good deal that is original, and is in need of revision'. She was able to revise it before her death and the revised edition is, at the time of writing, in the press. An important work from her hand will appear posthumously, published by the University of London Institute of Classical Studies. It is in the nature of a metrical companion to Greek tragedy, containing annotated analyses of

the choruses. She had agreed the form of presentation, and Professor T. B. L. Webster has been able to prepare her material for publication.

If metric is a subject in which few are expert, Greek tragedy is a well-trodden field. Here Miss Dale's main contributions were her editions of two plays of Euripides. *Alcestis* appeared in 1954, *Helen* in 1967—a few weeks before her death. In the Preface to *Alcestis* she wrote: 'The imaginary audience to whom this commentary is addressed includes both pupils and professional colleagues.' She added that perhaps undergraduates were most often in her mind, and their needs are clearly envisaged in both editions. To professional scholars the commentaries might appear slight—until they are studied. Not a word is wasted; there is no parade of erudition or multiplication of superfluous parallels, but always as much learning as her purposes required, unobtrusively applied. No difficulty is shirked; everything is clear and honest. Metrical questions are, naturally, handled with authority. There are numerous textual problems in both plays, particularly vexatious in *Helen*. Here her judgement was admirable; and if she made no claim to ingenuity in conjectural emendation—an exercise which she may not have greatly valued for its own sake—when she advanced a suggestion it was a sensible one. If she thought a problem insoluble, she said so and wasted little time on it. She was a good grammarian, as anyone can become with the aid of hard work and a sense of logic, but she had the rarer gift of a fine feeling for idiom—the power to discriminate the slight shades of meaning carried by minute variations from the normal, and this without the slightest trace of preciosity. Her common sense was luminous. And as a literary critic? The criticism of a work of literature was to her, as indeed it is, a single function. 'In preparing a commentary on the *Helen* I have tried first and last to *interpret*. . . . But the most important task of any interpretation is to try to determine as best one can what Euripides wrote.' This she did with all the resources of her knowledge and discrimination, but it was worth doing because the play, like *Alcestis*, was a notable piece of dramatic literature.

Euripides is a difficult author, and these are two difficult plays—difficult to categorize. Neither is a tragedy, as we use the term (or as it can be applied to *Agamemnon* or to *Oedipus Tyrannus*), but no alternative descriptive term is altogether satisfactory. *Alcestis* took the place of a satyr-play, and the drunken Heracles may be regarded as 'pro-satyric': how seriously then are we to take *Alcestis* herself? In *Helen*, Menelaus has clearly comic aspects,

but Theonoe seems to be seriously treated (up to a point). The plays move from plane to plane in a way most characteristic of Euripides, which may indeed have puzzled a fifth-century audience and which certainly presents a problem to the modern critic. These movements are plotted by Miss Dale with skill and sensibility. Only once did she write about the interpretation of Sophocles (though she showed her intimate knowledge of his text in three masterly reviews of the Budé edition). Her essay on 'The *Electra* of Sophocles', published in a volume dedicated to Francis Letters (*For Services to Classical Studies*, 1966), makes one regret that she did not write more 'literary criticism' of this sort—and more about Sophocles. But there was none of the dramatists that she did not know intimately down to the last detail of his text and the latest papyrus fragment.

As a literary critic she was sensitive rather than subtle, wise rather than sophisticated; and it may be that there are dark corners in the mind of Euripides which her very honesty and good taste prevented her from reaching. This is a subjective judgement which may be incorrect. She herself—no doubt partly because her emotional responses to literature were so strong—was much concerned with the problem of applying objective checks without reducing the study of literature to aridity; and one of the strong points of her criticism was a firm grasp of the literary conventions within which the Greek tragedians operated. In 1965 she contributed to *Classical Drama and its Influence* (essays presented to H. D. F. Kitto) an essay on 'The Chorus in the Action of Greek Tragedy', which was largely concerned with the limitation placed upon the speeches of the chorus-leader: 'though a Chorus may join in the dialogue to a limited extent it must never make a set speech, never marshal arguments . . . or speak a descriptive set-piece. The whole province of what Aristotle calls "dianoia" . . . is closed to the Chorus.' With this she returned to a critical principle developed in her earlier writings which is of such primary importance that something should be said about it here.

Miss Dale had little sympathy with those extremists who would deny to the Greek tragedians all interest in 'character' as it is understood by the moderns, but little sympathy either with those who failed to appreciate the rhetorical character of speeches in a Greek tragedy. The point is clearly made in the Introduction to *Alcestis*. Modern critics have found it natural to regard the utterances of dramatic persons as primarily intended to express character, as though the poet had asked himself: 'What would

X, being such a man, be likely to say in such a situation?' But the contents of a Greek tragic speech are often far more governed by 'the rhetoric of the situation', and the question is rather: 'In such a situation, what can X say to gain his point, move his hearers, prove his thesis?' What Miss Dale called 'the rhetoric of the situation' is what Aristotle had in mind by *dianoia* as a constituent element of tragedy—by *dianoia* as contrasted with *ethos*. Both contribute to the speeches of tragedy, but there is a tendency (not absolute of course) to keep them separate. She came back to this theme in 1959 with an article on 'Ethos and Dianoia: "Character" and "Thought" in Aristotle's *Poetics*' (*AUMLA*). She had a great but not uncritical admiration for this famous work upon which she used to lecture in Oxford and in London. In this article she studies the various pronouncements of Aristotle about *ethos* and *dianoia* and, while showing the difficulties to which this dichotomy leads, points out how the rhetorical character of Greek tragedy tended to conceal them from Aristotle and his readers. As a structure of thought and a piece of writing, this is one of the best things she did; it is a contribution of the first importance to the criticism of the *Poetics*.

Miss Dale's grasp of literary conventions was fundamental to her criticism; she looked at stage conventions with the same unprejudiced eye. This is a case in which, one suspects, sheer exasperation played some part in the genesis of her work. Everyone admits that the Greek stage was governed by conventions alien to modern realism, but 'realistic' considerations continue to obtrude. Miss Dale wrote two articles on this subject. 'Seen and Unseen on the Greek Stage: a Study in Scenic Conventions' appeared in 1956 in *Wiener Studien* (an issue dedicated to Albin Lesky). It dealt with tragedy only, and in particular with the interlocking conventions of the eccyclema and the single door, which, as she maintained—and many, if not all, scholars would agree, is all that any extant tragedy requires for its stage action. In the following year, in 'An Interpretation of Aristophanes *Vespae* 136–210 and its Consequences for the Stage of Aristophanes' (*JHS*, 77), she put forward the far more controversial hypothesis that neither did the plays of Aristophanes require the assumption of more than one door. The debate, which turns upon the interpretation of texts and the probabilities of stage movement, continues and may never be concluded. As was said above Miss Dale was a careful, but not an over-cautious scholar; and this was a bold hypothesis, against the grain of

opinion. It will only be overthrown, if at all, by scholars whose common sense and grasp of realities are equal to her own.

It may well be that Miss Dale loved Aristophanes best of all the Greek dramatists, though (apart from a note on *Acharnians* 1174 ff.) she wrote only on his metre and on the staging of his plays. But a former student recalls how at the end of a course of lectures she laid aside her notes and launched out upon an eloquent eulogy of the poet.

The record of published work remains to be studied and judged; it is a monument, in Housman's sense. Teaching is a process continually renewed with each generation of students; it is personal in its quality, which is hard to describe; it is evanescent, though its effects are lasting. One of Miss Dale's first pupils at Lady Margaret Hall has written of 'the inspiration still strong after 36 years'. A Birkbeck pupil writes: 'She was the best teacher I have known or ever hope to know.' All those who were taught by her or heard her lecture, whether in Oxford or London or California, tend to speak in the same terms: they speak of excitement and inspiration, of vitality, intellectual energy and fire, and of a capacity to convey 'what scholarship was all about and that it was something both rigorous and life-enhancing'.

At Oxford the less able undergraduates may at first have been a little at sea, confronted with something so adult in the way of teaching, with a style which was both trenchant and allusive. But in time they found their feet and reached the height of their capacities. It was, however, probably in London, at Birkbeck College, that she found her own full powers as a teacher. Birkbeck is a unique institution. It caters for part-time students who are working during the day in various jobs; most of them are older, some much older, than normal undergraduate age. Lectures are in the evening between 6 and 9 p.m., and this puts a peculiar strain upon the teacher. Birkbeck is said to have the advantage that it leaves the scholar his day free for research, but this means that he must begin teaching at an hour when he may himself be tired and must hold the attention of students who have already done a day's work. If Mrs. Webster (as she was there known) felt the strain of this exacting post—and certainly in later years she did, she also felt that no effort on her part could be too great for students who worked under such difficulties. She never spared herself. Her teaching was both austere and exhilarating. In lectures—on Greek texts for instance—she made few concessions to the weakness of students, as she commented with characteristic fairness and thoroughness on the problems

of meaning, text, and metre. 'This intense and detailed concern', writes a former pupil now a university teacher, 'with the work under discussion conveyed her sense of literary value and vitality far more persuasively than would generalized appreciation.' It should be added that her reading of a chorus or speech from tragedy was in itself an exegesis. In individual tuition she had the art of correcting error without destroying confidence and the born teacher's capacity to explain difficulties with clarity and patience. She was wise in her relations with her pupils, for whose problems she showed a sympathetic understanding, while maintaining her detachment; she did not seek to influence them, but her influence was great.

In her early days in Oxford she is said to have been shy and even on occasion *gauche*, except in the company of her friends to whom she was an easy and delightful companion. Already in those days she had the art of a hostess; and when she came to London with her husband, though a certain diffidence probably remained, she took great pleasure in their joint hospitality. In congenial company she could shine, though she never sought to impose herself. At Birkbeck members of the staff often take tea together in the common-room before lectures begin; here she attended regularly and, in the words of a colleague, 'built her own little salon'. She could shine herself, and she could stimulate others. A Norwegian friend tells of a party in Oslo at which she sat conversing with Eitrem, that most charming of elderly scholars. 'I have remembered this', he says, 'because, during my acquaintance with Eitrem, I do not think that I ever saw him more sparkling or in higher spirits.' Her relations with eminent male scholars of an older generation were indeed singularly happy—with Gilbert Murray, with Eduard Fraenkel, with Paul Maas. She learnt from them, but gave much in return. From the German scholars she learnt, so far as she needed to be taught, the rigorous standards and methods of a great scholarly tradition, but the bent of her own mind was sceptical and empirical, and she never forfeited her independence of judgement.

Her wide reading, her quick mind, her warm humanity, were all apparent, together with a passionate concern for the things in which she believed. She loved great literature and she hated bad scholarship. In public controversy her manners were impeccable: even a metrician who got his quantities wrong could expect courtesy, though not mercy, from her, but in private conversation her comments were uninhibited and a joy to her friends. She distrusted facile generalizations and tidy schemes; she was

irritated by the *fable convenue*. She wrote; the *fable convenue* continued to be repeated; there was an explosion of wrath, but not in print. She was tenacious of her opinions, which had not been lightly formed, but she could change her mind, because her honesty was paramount. It may seem extravagant to say that in the imposition of strong rational control upon strong feeling there was something Hellenic in her mental make-up which made her respond to the masterpieces of Greek literature and particularly of Greek tragedy.

But this perhaps, though true, gives a false and formidable impression. She was very feminine, ready to charm and to be charmed; and there was a certain style in everything that she did. She had wit and gaiety. She was censorious only of the written word which fell below acceptable standards of scholarship: in all other relations she was tolerant, sympathetic, understanding—and amused, savouring the humours and oddities of human life and human beings with a Herodotean zest. Her interests were wide, particularly in the fields of literature and music. She knew English literature as well as she knew Latin and Greek and had a gift for apt and accurate illustrative quotation. At Oxford she went regularly to chamber concerts. Later, in London, the Websters built up a fine collection of gramophone records, and it was Madge Webster who decided that work in Nevern Square must give way to music at an hour reasonably before midnight. Her taste came to embrace the modern composers, for instance Tippett and Britten, for whose operas she had a particular affection. She loved flowers and knew about them. She loved walking in hill country. She took a keen interest in public affairs, being a strong radical in politics. (It is said that at Oxford, on general election days, she would wear a yellow jumper and a red skirt.)

She had a resonant voice of attractive quality and spoke verse outstandingly well. Later, when the progress of her malady made speech difficult even at the conversational tone, this was a deprivation to her friends as it was a painful frustration to herself.

From girlhood she suffered from fierce attacks of asthma. She wrote her Greats papers in bed in the sick-bay at Somerville. When she travelled to Vienna as Gilchrist Student, she arrived in a state of deep unconsciousness and had to be conveyed direct to hospital. (The whole story is fascinating, but too long to be told here.) In speaking about this subject it is not easy to get the emphasis right—to do justice to the sustained courage of a

lifetime without suggesting that ill health played a greater part in her life than she allowed it to play. Asthma is a disease which is often said to have—and doubtless often has—a psychological basis. The indignation with which she rejected any suggestion that her own asthma could be ascribed to a mental cause was characteristic. She was robust in mind and, though her physical frame was slight, she did not lack stamina. At Oxford, as an undergraduate, when her attacks came at long intervals, she was a vigorous member of the College Boat Club and a good sculler. She went for skating holidays in Switzerland. In later life one of her great pleasures was in long walks preferably among mountains. Only a constitution basically strong could so long have survived so great a strain. And her spirit was stronger still. Though in her last years she had to lead the life of an invalid, she showed no trace of an invalid mentality, and if she resented her weakness it was without self-pity. She worked on, helped by the devoted care of her husband. In the last weeks of her life her mind appeared as clear, incisive, and original as ever. The triumph of spirit was absolute.

R. P. WINNINGTON-INGRAM

Note. I have been helped in the writing of this memoir by many friends, colleagues, and pupils of Miss Dale's. To all of them I offer my thanks and particularly to Professor T. B. L. Webster.

Miss Dale's collected papers, including some hitherto unpublished lectures, are to be published as a volume by the Cambridge University Press. The revised edition of *The Lyric Metres of Greek Drama* was published in January 1968.