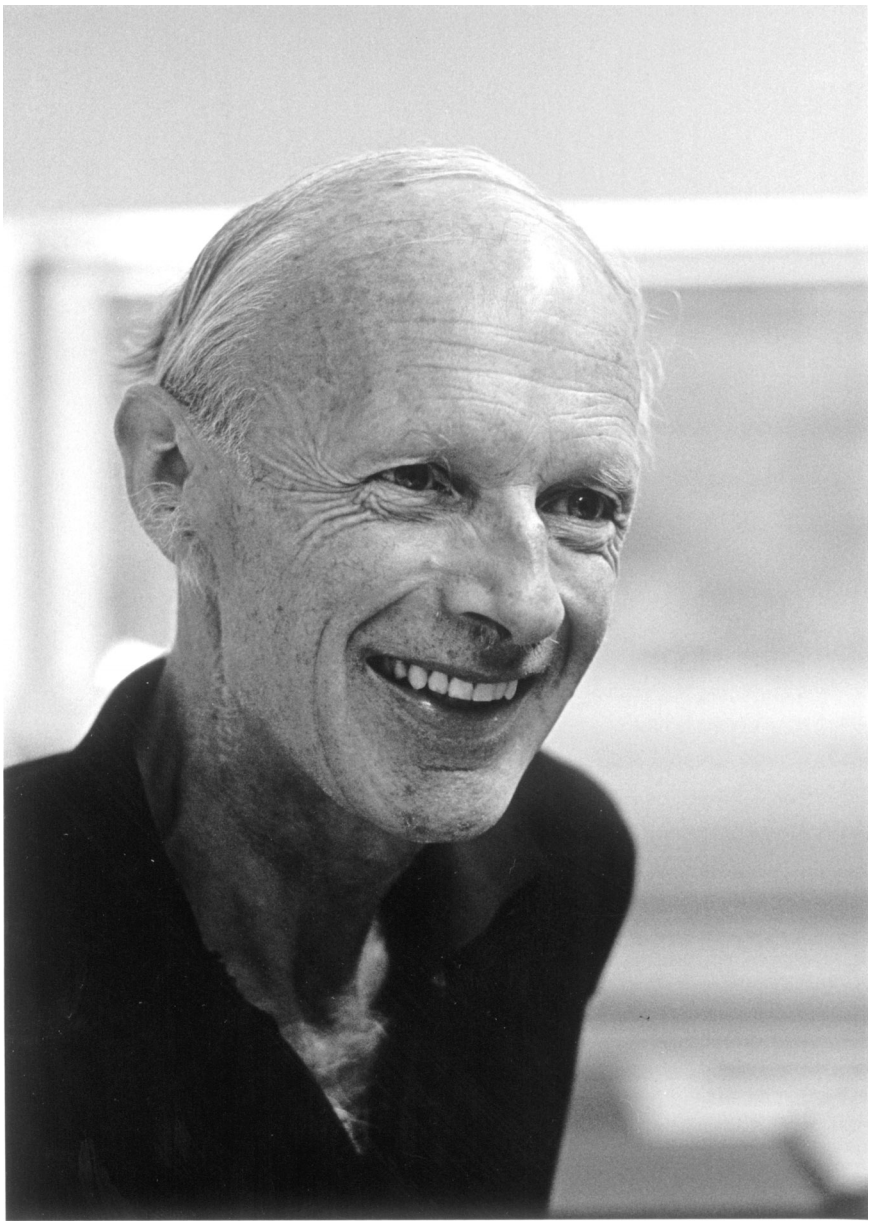

TOM WEBSTER *Stanford University*

Thomas Bertram Lonsdale Webster
1905–1974

TOM WEBSTER was born on 3 July 1905. He grew up in London, and lived there for twenty years in middle and later life, when he was Professor of Greek in the University at University College, the scene of much of his most fruitful work. For seventeen years before that, he was Hulme Professor of Greek at Manchester, taking up his appointment at the age of twenty-six, as the University recalled with pride and affection when it made him, in 1965, an honorary Doctor of Letters. He began his academic career with eight years (mainly) at Oxford, as an undergraduate and then a young don at Christ Church, with a fruitful interlude at Leipzig; he ended it with six years at Stanford, as Professor of Classics and then Emeritus. At and after the end of the First World War he was a schoolboy at Charterhouse; during the Second World War he served as an officer in Military Intelligence. He died on 31 May 1974 after a terminal illness of some six weeks, active until then as ever.

A photograph taken at Stanford accompanies this memoir.[1] It shows the Emeritus Professor in his element, in a classroom. He looks much as many people knew him from early middle age onwards 'incredibly close to the man as he was in 1939', as one former pupil writes. If the image suggests a tall, spare figure with (in later years) a scholar's forward stoop, so much to the good. It gives the high domed forehead, the businesslike

[1] News and Publications Service, Stanford University, with grateful acknowledgement.

Proceedings of the British Academy, **120**, 445–467.

brows; a smile of engaging warmth, which could shade to an expression of amused tolerance; the features had a range of negative aspects from boredom to an episcopal air of disapproval when stirred to anger. One sees the keenness of the eyes, not the pale blue that could seem by turns bright or hard; only the abrupt fall away from the left shoulder hints at a disability overcome with poise and courage, a lower left arm malformed from birth. The Christ Church undergraduate was remembered by a contemporary as a good and competitive tennis player, and the talent survived on the squash court in the middle age of the Professor at University College London.

The list of writings compiled by James Hooker for *Studies in Honour of T. B. L. Webster* has 341 items, not counting newspaper articles, unsigned reviews, and translations of his works into other languages. The relentless energy that generated this work is not without parallel in other scholars of our time; what is not always to be found in combination with so active a record of publication is the intense and generous devotion to promoting the work of others that is so well documented in prefaces, footnotes, and in the personal recollections of colleagues and pupils of whatever age, and from whatever place, over some fifty years. If just one witness is to be quoted, it had best be the vivid and affectionate memoir by John Betts at the beginning of the *Studies* . . . just mentioned.[2] That voice speaks for many. Less directly felt, perhaps, but often of lasting significance, was Tom Webster's effect on institutions in Manchester, London, Stanford and elsewhere. The creative innovation that sustained individual enterprise could also have its powerful effect on groups and societies, even on those occasions when (as can happen) internal differences arose over policies or their implementation. In an *In Memoriam* notice for the Joint Association of Classical Teachers, Charles Baty remarked:

> It is common knowledge that he played a great part in the establishing of JACT; but perhaps only those who worked with him then know what he did by gaining the interest of influential supporters . . .; and it can now be said (what he did not like us to say at the time) that his own generous contributions in money helped us in days of difficulty and enabled us to expand. I do not myself think that JACT is quite what he originally had in mind in the days of its formation,

[2] J. H. Betts, J. T. Hooker and J. R. Green (eds.), *Studies in Honour of T. B. L. Webster*, vol. 1 (1986), vol. 2 (1988), Bristol Classical Press. The photograph that makes the frontispiece to each of these volumes dates from *c.*1950; it is from one of a long series of unposed portraits of colleagues taken by Dr C. R. Bailey in University College London in (and for) the common room of that period.

> but he backed us whole-heartedly when we began to take shape, and I hope he was not displeased with the way in which we grew.[3]

Webster forebears and relations of different distances emerge from the reference books.[4] He would probably have deplored any incursion into family history, for like many (or even most) people of his generation and lifestyle, he politely kept the personal and the professional world apart.[5] There was a Thomas Webster, Vicar of Oakington and Rector of St Botolph's, Cambridge, at the time of his death in 1840, a graduate of Queens' College; his eldest son Thomas, born in 1810, had brothers who were doctors: he himself read mathematics at Trinity College and became secretary to the Institution of Civil Engineers; he developed an expertise on Patent Law, and after an interesting legal career of public engagement, involving among other matters the Liverpool and Mersey docks, he died in 1875, a QC and a Fellow of the Royal Society. Among his children were Richard Everard Webster, who was to become Lord Chief Justice of England, Viscount Alverstone; and Thomas Calthrop Webster (1840–1906) the grandfather of our TBLW, Rector of Rettendon, Essex. In these and in other related people, one sees an East Anglian family of the Victorian professional class, occupied with the Church, Medicine, the Law, with members of high public distinction and a fascinating variety of talents. TBLW's father, Thomas Lonsdale Webster, was Second Assistant Clerk of the House of Commons when his son was born in 1905; his wife Esther being the younger daughter of T. B. Dalton, again an East Anglian, of Fillingham, Lincolnshire; he rose to become Clerk and to be elevated at the age of fifty-four from CB to KCB, remembered for three successive editions, with W. E. Grey, of the parliamentarian's invaluable Erskine May. It might have been predicted, given generations of forebears at Charterhouse, that he would send his son there; less obvious, given family connections with Trinity, Queens', and other Cambridge colleges, that the son would break the mould and arrive one day as an undergraduate at Christ Church, Oxford. The young Tom was perhaps a little below form on entrance to the school, missing a Junior Scholarship; but he was

[3] *JACT Bulletin*, 36, Nov. 1974, p. 2, omitting a parenthesis.

[4] *DNB, Who's Who?, Who Was Who?,* Venn, *Alumni Cantabrigienses.*

[5] Compare John Bayley, *Iris* (1998), p. 14, beginning: 'There was a lot of privacy about in those days . . .'; or (going back earlier) J. A. K. Thomson on Gilbert Murray, *Proc. Brit. Acad.*, 43 (1957) at p. 254 f., 'while he was one of the friendliest, he was one of the remotest of men . . . His sympathy was unfailing and unwearied; he liked to give it and to get it. But he did not need it.'

soon to make amends by attaining the status of a Senior Scholar and winning a galaxy of prizes, including among their subjects, English, Divinity, and Natural History; but it was in Greek and Latin, his interests fostered by A. L. Irvine, that he shone and was to shine more brightly still.[6]

'The study of the Greek and Latin languages and literatures': that is what Classics traditionally meant. This formulation (an official one once devised for the University of London) would have been too narrow for some people then as it is for many now. It remains true that until the middle of the twentieth century, and for longer than that in some places, schools in Great Britain with any pretensions to a Classical Side would encourage or persuade a number of their ablest pupils to join it. Syllabuses were grounded in the intensive study of Latin and Greek grammar, syntax and a selection of individual authors' works. Latin usually came first; the production of compact annotated editions of both Latin and Greek texts for the resulting population of school and university students was and still is a characteristic of British classical scholarship. With it went a devotion to composition in Latin and Greek prose and verse, and not simply voluminous practice in translation from unprepared passages of major authors. Elegance and precision in Greek and Latin composition, in Tom Webster's time and for many years afterwards, were taken as a hallmark of high educational standards, and set one on a royal road to a prestigious university place and to early success when there. Versions over the initials TBLW still survive, at the beginning of the twenty-first century, in the files of former pupils and colleagues, who remember them with admiration, and still sometimes use them if they still teach composition in the way he did for almost all of his academic career.[7] The point of sketching this traditional background is not only that it is now receding in time. Tom Webster would not have been like himself if he did not make good use of it in many ways in published work as well as in teaching. There are annotated editions of texts at either end of his career: Cicero, *pro Flacco* in 1931, including an element of rhetorical commentary distilled from the treatise *ad Herennium*; and Sophocles, *Philoctetes* in 1970. This was commissioned by Pat Easterling as one of the set of

[6] I am grateful to Brian Rees for an extract from an obituary in *The Carthusian*; Webster on Irvine, *Proc. Class. Ass.*, 57 (1960), 9.

[7] John Betts (see above, n. 2) has a vivid recollection of a moment in a prose composition tutorial. At the time in question, classical undergraduates in University College London had a weekly individual meeting with a tutor in each language, and would normally spend a term at some point with each of their two Professors; Greek and Latin composition figured in the final examination, and was studied throughout the three years.

Sophocles' plays in the series *Cambridge Greek and Latin Classics*; it was largely written, in a not untypical way, during the summer of 1968 that saw his final transition from London to Stanford: 'after all,' he said, 'I have been lecturing on it for thirty-odd years'. 'A study in Greek sentence construction',[8] in later times to be referred to as 'an unreadable article by me', is one of several studies concerned with the structures of language or the meaning of words which were to lead to such diverse activities as a seminar on Language and Thought in early Greece, to restorations and reconstructions in fragmentary texts from papyri, and to an early participation in the study of Mycenean Greek from the Linear B tablets. All this is from time to come. Whatever else happened, Oxford was to offer an important new perspective to the bright schoolboy from Charterhouse, and one which gave his work its greatest lasting impact.

A sensitivity to the visual arts is not always easily documented in the lives of scholars and scientists with more tangible claims to fame. Part of it with Tom Webster belonged to his personal life: sketching as a hobby from childhood; an enthusiasm for French medieval sculpture, perhaps developing from a visit to Chartres; friendship with the art historian R. H. Wilensky in Manchester; the ownership of a few treasured Greek vases, including a fine cup now in the Museum at Stanford. He was fortunate in that his time at Oxford brought him into contact with J. D. (Sir John) Beazley, whose advice in the field of Greek vase painting he continued to seek from time to time long after he had set out on his own major enterprise of exploring the relationship of Greek art to Greek literature in a series of books ranging from the Mycenean Age to the Hellenistic poets and some of their Roman successors. The late book *Potter and Patron in Classical Athens*, published in 1972, is a tribute to Beazley's work by the allusion in its title and otherwise.[9] No doubt several lines of thought came together. Twenty years after the publication of *Greek Art and Literature 530–400 BC* in 1939, he wrote that:

> I cannot say now what gave me the original impulse but I can still remember various events which contributed to it when I was an undergraduate—Sir John Beazley's lectures on Greek vase painting, Sir John Myers's equation of Homeric composition with Geometric art, a cursory reading of Spengler's

[8] *American Journal of Philology*, 62 (1941), 385–415.

[9] p. 1: 'My title intentionally recalls Sir John Beazley's famous lecture of 1942 'Potter and Painter in Ancient Athens', partly because without it this book could not have been written, partly because I want to ask questions about a third, necessary person, the purchaser of the pot.' The lecture, *Proc. Brit. Acad.*, 30 (1944), p. 87, was separately published in a revised form in 1945 by OUP.

Untergang des Abendlandes, and curiously enough a hearing of Reger's orchestral suite on three pictures of Boeckhlin.[10]

There were advances on what was still, for many people, the main line. To his entrance scholarship at Christ Church to which he went up in 1923, Tom Webster added in his first year the Ireland and the Craven Scholarships awarded by the University. Study apart, there were friendships to make. He used to say to younger colleagues, in favour of supporting student activities, that many of the most important things learnt at University are learnt from contemporaries; and the Oxford of the 1920s seems to have had at least its fair share of the good, the great and the interesting. A. L. Rowse recalled recruiting him to the Labour Club, and noted in his diary during the General Strike of 1926 that 'Tomorrow night I have to hold forth to the waverers in T. B. L. Webster's rooms at Christ Church'.[11] Gilbert Ryle moved in a different orbit: 'I knew all of the rowing men, and lots of the rugger and hunting men. Tom knew only, but very intimately, the classical-languages-and-literature plus the archaeology men.' The two met first as tutor and pupil in the context of Greats, and later as colleagues, 'always on cordial terms, but never more than cordial', as Ryle recalled: 'he had no taste for philosophical issues' and 'his study of Plato was irrigated by streams tributary to those of logic, metaphysics, epistemology, etc.'[12] A First in Greats followed.

The next move, in a later generation, would typically have been a programme of work leading to a D.Phil. On graduation, Tom Webster was appointed to a college lectureship, and given leave to spend a year in Leipzig, attending seminars by Richard Heinze and Alfred Körte. There he developed an interest in what was to be another main theme of his work to come, namely Menander and the development of Greek Comedy. It is worth recalling that Körte's expertise in this field, which is represented for most people who know his name by his successive editions of Menander in the Teubner series, extended beyond the texts to the terracotta statuettes and other surviving artefacts that help to document the history of the genre. This was then a twofold meeting of minds. It is still

[10] *Greek Art and Literature 700–530 BC* (1959) p. xv; he must be recalling the work now available as 'Four tone poems after A. Böcklin', Op. 128, as Peter W. H. Brown remarks to me.

[11] *A Cornishman at Oxford (*1965) p. 298: a diary entry of Saturday, 8 May, the meeting to follow on Sunday 9th.

[12] Quotations from a personal letter, GR to EWH, 8 Sept. 1975, for which I remain warmly grateful, conscious that at the Oxford Philological Society he once presided over a paper by me that was still less philosophically inclined than the young Webster.

the case, as it was throughout the Webster years, that the publication and study of new papyri and new archaeological material have gone on in parallel, with gains to knowledge that neither master nor pupil in Leipzig would have dared to dream of while some of the foundations of future work were being laid.

It was in fact projects in the field of Roman studies that came next on the scene, under the aegis of two senior colleagues, A. S. Owen and A. C. Clark: this development may have been inspired or sustained by opportunities to visit Italy (Greece, as it happened, remained off the travel agenda until 1954). Owen's and Webster's texts to illustrate the history and topography of the Roman forum came out as a modest but useful compendium in 1930;[13] and it was in Athens in 1954, over coffee in the British School, among a group of friends, that Tom could produce a considerable piece of Martial from memory to settle a light-hearted argument. The edition of Cicero, *pro Flacco* was a larger undertaking. It was the result of his work as Derby Scholar for 1928; it involved visits to Paris and the Vatican to examine manuscripts, as well as an immersion in the author and some of the current work on him that is reflected in reviews and notes produced along the way.[14] In the end, as the preface to the edition states 'Unforeseen circumstances have led me to publish it earlier and on a smaller scale than I originally intended.' By that date, 1931, the personal world in which the edition was begun had radically changed. The rising Oxford Ciceronian had become Hulme Professor of Greek at Manchester.

Nowell Myers, in a letter written many years later,[15] recalled their shared experiences as young contemporaries in what seemed a very senior company, and reflected on these lines: 'Had he stayed on at Christ Church he would very soon have turned into the best kind of old-fashioned bachelor don, devoting himself wholly to the interests of his pupils and the young in general, for whom he would have kept open house term and vacation alike.' He had clear reasons to have done so: election as a Student (the equivalent of a fellowship in places with a more conventional nomenclature) came in 1929; the prizewinning habit, and the characteristic diversity of interests, are both reflected in the award of the British Academy's Cromer Prize in that same year for an essay on 'Some

[13] *Excerpta ex antiquis scriptoribus quae ad Forum Romanum spectant* (Oxford), 82 pp. The incident in the British School at Athens mentioned next is from personal recollection.
[14] For instance in *Class. Review*, 44 (1930), 25–9, 188–90 and 221–4.
[15] JNLM to EWH, 11 Sept. 1975.

sculptures of the Persian War period'. There was also the circle of friends, including pupils and former pupils, among them Robert Willis, who shared the enthusiasm for Cicero, and is acknowledged among others in the preface: 'though he was sad [Robert Willis recalled] that I could not do at all with his beloved Greek pots.'[16]

Sooner or later, perhaps, would have come a moment when so purposeful and free-ranging a mind would look for more opportunities than the canonical life of hard mornings, light lunches and golden afternoons could offer. Sometimes, to put it differently, the grass outside the enclosure not only looks greener; there can also be perceived a lack of rules and of rivals to determine the grazing of it. If Manchester had not happened, Providence might have needed to invent it. Be all that as it may, there was one event, both grave and unpredictable, that imposed itself on the scene. On 7 October 1930, Sir Lonsdale Webster, Tom's father, died after a short illness at the age of sixty-two, leaving his widow and their one child.[17] The world of the ideal bachelor don was to be no more. A secure professorial appointment, for a man in such a situation in his mid-twenties, was something that brought both personal and professional advantages.[18]

Figure 1 is a sketch of the view from the Webster apartment of Rusholme Gardens, Manchester. It is one of a long series from which Christmas cards were made each year.[19] Sketching, apart from its professional use for notes and blackboard demonstrations, was a weekend and holiday hobby; those made into cards for friends and pupils never set out to be more than the visual equivalent of a paragraph in a letter, but could be equally elegant and evocative. William B. Thompson recalled Monday evenings in the new Professor's apartment which were 'probably the most important influence on all his students in those years before the war'.[20]

[16] RW to EWH, 20 Sept. 1975. The friendship continued into the Manchester years and for years afterwards, though dislocated, like many others, by the 1939–45 war. *An Introduction to Sophocles* (1936) has the dedication 'To R.W.', and both were involved from the mid-1950s onwards in the setting up and the work of the Gilbert Murray Trust.

[17] Obituary in *The Times*, 9 Oct. 1930.

[18] It needs to be remarked here that I never spoke personally with TBLW about the various reasons for his move; but the bereavement itself may have caused him to think that his life should change. He did say in 1968 that one of the reasons for moving to Stanford from London was the loss of his wife.

[19] I owe it, and copies of some others, including Fig. 2, to the kindness of William B. Thompson, who was a student at Manchester from 1932 to 1937, and who sent me reminiscences which I acknowledge most gratefully.

[20] WBT to EWH, 26 Feb. 1976, continuing directly, but with one addition, in brackets, and one minor abridgement.

Figure 1. Rusholme Gardens, Manchester, date uncertain.

> We drank ginger wine and ate slices of cake. And we met all sorts of folk in that wonderful Manchester world of the between-the-wars years—there were the giants of the business world of the city, the writers on the *Manchester Guardian* [TBLW himself was a not infrequent contributor] and folk from the world of music—I recall Eric Newton, art critic and in the distant past a graduate of the University, Sir Thomas Barlow, director of one of the great cotton manufacturers of the city; and his wife, who translated Greek Tragedy which we performed at the Round House . . .'

Other names from those years and later could be added to extend this social scene, in which Lady Webster also met the young; they would include Eric James (later Lord James of Rusholme), the High Master of Manchester Grammar School, a scientist of distinction with a strong devotion to Plato. What is characteristic, and remained so in the more diverse circumstances of London, was the spread among the guests between the Good and the Great in their capacity as personal friends, and the students and younger colleagues in that same unaffected capacity.

Onto the academic scene, there very soon came the 'beloved Greek pots'. New acquisitions and other uncatalogued material in the Manchester Museum and elsewhere were the subject of presentations

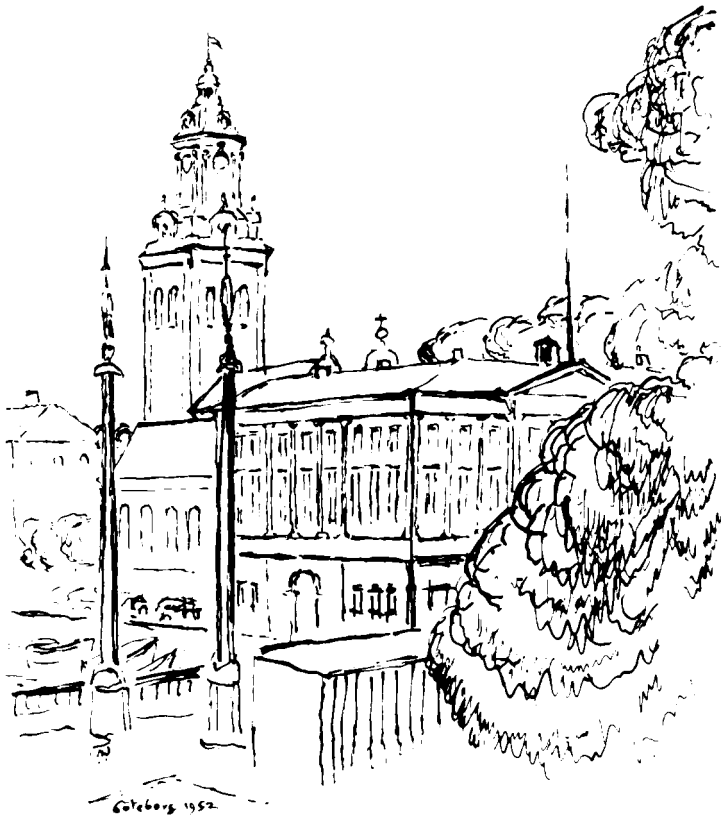

Figure 2. Göteborg, 1952.

to the Manchester Literary and Philosophical Society and appeared subsequently in the Society's *Memoirs and Proceedings.*[21] Publications of this kind, there and elsewhere, were to continue; they went on, over the years; their interest here, setting aside such value as they have as contributions to knowledge, is that they show in a clear form the writer's enthusiasm for new material and for first-hand interpretation of it, as well as the ability to deploy, from a splendid memory, backed by card-indexes of high efficiency, the parallels that could transform an object into an object lesson. There is other significant work in the field of classical archaeology

[21] For instance, 'Greek vases in the Manchester Museum', *Mem. and Proc. Manchester Lit. and Phil. Soc.*, 77 (1932–3), 1–7; 'Greek Vases in the Manchester School of Art', ibid. 78 (1933–4), 1–7; for more, see the list in Betts, Hooker and Green (above, n. 2).

from this period; but a major development is the appearance of studies in Sophocles, leading up to the book *An introduction to Sophocles*, first published by the Clarendon Press in 1936, and reproduced in a second edition with additional material by Methuen in 1969.

> It appeared to me [he writes] . . . that I could only interpret a passage to my own satisfaction by comparing it with other passages of the same kind. This necessitated my using the analytical and comparative method, and gave me the main divisions of this essay into thought, characters, plot, songs and style. But this procedure made it necessary to assume the order of Sophocles' plays and difficult to discuss his development. I therefore decided to begin with a chapter on the life of Sophocles and the chronology of his plays and end with a general account of his development.

More than thirty years later, the preface to the second edition expresses the hope that 'it still serves its modest purpose of providing a sort of comparative grammar of Sophoclean drama'. There is much in this that illuminates the method of the book and in large measure the great volume of work to follow. The base, as the author's own words tell us, is a close analytical reading of the text. It is presented with a conciseness and a wealth of primary documentation that challenges the closest attention, even as one may wish to delete and add. Additional Note N, for example, in under two pages, gives sets of line references for 'the chief motives in the surviving plays of Sophocles'. This, if it does nothing else, concentrates the mind powerfully. Likewise, on character-contrasts, in the course of an approach to Sophocles that was later to prove fruitful with Menander, the meat of the argument is presented schematically in just over a page (pp. 88–9). In the work on Menander too, the concentration on structure and design is evident; it is rescued from sheer formalism by a lively interest in the social and intellectual context of the writing, whether in the fifth century or the fourth, and by the concern that the narrative should lead to new insight.

In oral presentations and seminars the different elements of the argument could be more sharply separated. Michael Coffey makes the point in recalling the impact of the Professor of Greek on the undergraduates who met him on his return from war service in 1945, some of them also just demobilised, 'men of maturity, receptive to wide-ranging ideas, a powerful example to those of us who were young and immature, having had no break in our education'. The skill in linking ideas from different aspects of literature and life that was so conspicuous had its other side in the way in which 'he taught his pupils to distinguish between what is relatively certain and what is the bold imaginative suggestion that may

always remain not proven'.[22] Likewise in reviews, over many years, he was at times a tough critic of others' work, but not an ungenerous one when he could see that a serious attempt to advance knowledge was being made.

The war service that separated the two periods of work in Manchester was for many years, as was appropriate, left without precise reference. Duties at one time included interrogating captured airmen; at another, there was a brave notion for identifying the sources of enemy morse-code signals from the individual style of the operators (whether it came to anything, we were not told); most significantly, there was an attachment to Bletchley Park, the centre of the code-breaking operation in which many people known as prominent academics were inconspicuously involved, among them A. M. Dale, who had left her book on Greek metre behind her, half-finished, in Oxford.[23] They married in 1944. Many stories used to circulate on the theme, so well-liked by the English, of the amateur at war: they were an offset to the grimmer realities. There was a time in 1940 when Tom Webster was a solitary soldier among Guards officers at London District Headquarters. Amongst air raids at night and daily fears of invasion, he would sometimes join a kindred spirit engaged in parallel work for a run round Hyde Park, or lunch at the Athenaeum, or shop-talk. John Marsden, well-remembered as a Master at Eton, recalled this with affection.[24] He added the story about the meeting with the Commanding Officer that began: 'Gentlemen, I would only have asked you to come here because of something extremely serious.' Someone had been seen returning a salute from one of the men, rather than acknowledging it in the way that a Guards Officer should. The culprit was the newly commissioned A. J. Ayer, Welsh Guards. He was known to his two temporary colleagues since undergraduate days at Christ Church, and was later, as Grote Professor of Mind and Logic at University College London, to be a colleague of one of them in a more lasting sense.

University College, when Tom Webster joined it in 1948, was at a nodal point in its history of 120 years. Air raids in 1940 and 1941 left the main building a blackened ruin; reconstruction, made no easier by shortages of materials and resources, was in some places a lengthy

[22] MC to EWH, 4 April 1977: after graduation from Manchester, and a further period of study in Cambridge, Dr Coffey became Lecturer and then Reader in University College London, continuing this early association.

[23] On AMD see R. P. Winnington-Ingram, *Proc. Brit. Acad.*, 53 (1967), 423–36.

[24] AJM to EWH, 6 Sept. 1975.

process.[25] Academic departments on return from their various places of wartime exile, colleagues of long standing home at last from their national service of whatever kind, new recruits faced with crowded classes, old syllabuses and cramped accommodation: all these in some way pushed aside the difficulties and discouragements that were all too obvious, and began to move forward—as if one were to imagine a tide with waves that surge this way and that, and at last repossess a coastline. It is obvious with hindsight, and may well have been less than unclear to the appointing authority of the day, that this had the makings of an ideal prospect to attract the Hulme Professor of Greek from Manchester: with whatever nostalgia, attracted he was.[26] His Inaugural Lecture, *The interplay of Greek art and literature*, delivered on 17 January 1949, is recalled as an inspiring foretaste of what was to come.

'An inspiring foretaste': like many summary statements about eminent men and their works, this one needs some qualification. We have already noted that the original impulse of which the inaugural lecture is a manifestation was traced back by its author to his undergraduate years, and had already made an impact, somewhat tempered by the times, in a book published in 1939.[27] Secondly, as is true perennially of this author, there were other irons in the fire. Wartime train journeys between London and Manchester gave time for reading plays: Menander, as studied with Körte in Leipzig, and Plautus and Terence, writing New Comedy in Latin as heirs and successors to Menander and his contemporaries. The first edition of *Studies in Menander* appeared in 1950; but it was based on essays on the reconstruction, the typology and the literary antecedents of the plays that were, typically, delivered as lectures and published in the *Bulletin of the John Rylands Library* from 1945 onwards.[28] *Studies in Menander* was succeeded in 1953 by *Studies in Later Greek Comedy*; second

[25] 'The second world war did more damage to UCL than to any other British university or college', according to Negley Harte and John North, *The world of UCL, 1828–1990* (1991), p. 180: see the description following, with plates 338–47. The main building, now called the Wilkins building, was not fully occupied until 1954; the library reopened there in 1951, when a number of departments, all now housed elsewhere, began a long tenure of the top floor. TBLW and his colleagues in Greek and Latin were together with French, Italian, Hebrew, and some of the Ancient Historians, and that is the scene most former pupils and visitors will remember.

[26] There is a brief sketch by me of the classical departments at this time, in *Bulletin of the Institute of Classical Studies*, Suppl. 51 (1988) at p. 166; for a wider perspective, see Harte and North (above, n. 25) pp. 190–5.

[27] See the reference given above in n. 10 and its attendant quotation.

[28] 'Revision has been impossible,' says a footnote in one of them, 'owing to the writer being in the army.'

editions appeared (respectively) in 1960 and 1970. The combination of innovative ingenuity and minimalist argumentation make some parts of this work hard reading, and there are tracks which no-one would now wish to retrace. The achievement remains considerable. On the appearance of the first set of studies, L. A. Post wrote 'This is the first book in English, I believe, that is devoted entirely to Menander and nothing else, except for editions, translations, or theses'; '. . . a book,' he concluded, 'that will be useful and necessary to scholars, but that might deter the less advanced student and obscure for him the pure genius of Menander by its sheer abundance of detail. It should be welcomed, then, not as scripture, but as learned and ingenious and intelligent commentary.'[29]

The powerful sense of forward movement that Tom Webster brought to his new appointment, however personal to him, was also evident elsewhere. It was evident nationally in the run-up to the Festival of Britain (he was a great enthusiast for it when it opened in 1951); and the colleges of London University, all with their own histories of wartime exile and damage of one kind and another, were alike regenerating and thinking, sometimes rather tentatively, of ways in which their departments might collaborate. The problems of joint action between institutions dispersed across a metropolis of ten million people or so have been known to be underestimated, sometimes by colleagues for whom another college is something a short walk, or a short bicycle ride away. A day used to be set aside for intercollegiate lectures, with sports in the afternoon for some.

It was in this context that a course by R. P. Winnington-Ingram was memorably parodied at a student party in a college not his own (the three principal parodists all later became Professors themselves);[30] some fifty attended T. B. L. Webster on 'Homeric Problems'. Other leading lights could be named; for younger colleagues, the foundation of the London Classical Society on the initiative of M. L. Clarke and Victor Ehrenberg gave regular occasions to meet and discuss papers in a way that was generally new to them. These developments are recalled here because they held within them seeds from which grew the Institute of Classical Studies, and—with the gift of the golden opportunity brought by Michael Ventris's decipherment of the Linear B script as Greek—the Institute's

[29] *American Journal of Philology*, 74 (1953), 107–9. See also Sandbach's acknowledgement to both books (once again this side idolatry), written some 20 years later in the Preface to A. W. Gomme and F. H. Sandbach, *Menander: a Commentary* (1973). My own debt to the two books is very great.

[30] This was, I think, not long before the publication of *Euripides and Dionysus* in 1948: he would have enjoyed the occasion.

first regular activity, the Mycenean seminar. It has met ever since. In all this Tom Webster's role, much though he credited to others, was cardinal. What made the initiative possible was a partnership between the two old-established national institutions, the Societies for the Promotion of Hellenic and Roman Studies, and the University of London. The societies had (and have) a wide membership, very high international prestige, and a fine library extending beyond texts and research materials to works of interest to an informed general public; the University's part was to provide new premises against the expiry of a long-running lease, and to enhance the academic side of the organisation with its own contributions to library resources and with its intercollegiate activities, reaching out meanwhile with seminars, publications, and facilities for visitors from home institutions and from overseas. The first Director was E. G. Turner (later Sir Eric); the inaugural meeting, held in University College, was addressed by one of the major figures of international scholarship, Bruno Snell, whose distinguished career as a classicist culminated in his Rectorship of Hamburg University. The official foundation date was 16 October 1953. Activities continued in the Societies' premises at 50 Bedford Square and in University College for a few years more, until the first stage of the vision was realised in the session 1957–8 with the move to a new building in Gordon Square shared with the Institute of Archaeology, a partnership which was to last for another thirty-nine years until the move in 1997 to more spacious accommodation with new partners in the University of London Senate House.[31]

The choice of Bruno Snell to give the inaugural lecture for the new institute was no accident. It was a token of the contacts made in pre-war years between scholars working in London and their continental colleagues, and now, in friendship, being resumed. Distinguished exiles—among them, Tom Webster could look to his colleagues Arnaldo Momigliano and Oswald Szemerényi in University College—made lasting contributions to the British classical scene; but the facility of both Websters in European languages (Madge Webster had happy recollections of times she spent in Sweden and in Vienna) made them congenial hosts and visitors alike. There came to London, among others, Gudmund Björck, Uvo Hölscher, Albin Lesky, Manu Leumann, and Karl Reinhardt; nor were English-speaking countries abroad overlooked, one of the furthest

[31] The story of the foundation of the Institute, of Tom Webster's part in it, and of later developments (in which he himself played a major role) is well told by John Barron, 'The vision thing: the founding of an Institute', *Bulletin of the Institute of Classical Studies*, 43 (1999), 27–39.

travellers being A. D. Trendall, who constantly bought news of new discoveries in South Italian vase-painting, and was to be a collaborator in a handsome and useful illustrated book.[32] Nor is the tale complete with senior scholars. At the time, the College had graduate scholarships of an amount which would (just) fund a term's stay in a student hall of residence, and among their holders in Tom Webster's early years were people who have stayed in collaboration or in friendly contact across the decades since then: Holger Thesleff from Finland, Axel Seeberg and Knut Kleve from Norway, as well as others from elsewhere. Seminars held in the Department profited from the presence of these visitors, and a record of one of them, which was to set a pattern for some of the later work at the Institute, appeared in a paper entitled 'Language and Thought in early Greece'.[33] If the starting point, as acknowledged, were some remarks by J. Z. Young in his Reith Lectures of 1950[34] on the brain's use of models, it was also work by Snell, Onians, Dodds, and others in their various fields of classical studies that inspired the theme. There were (typically) a dozen or so regular contributors, mostly colleagues in the department, together with visitors and the occasional graduate student; though a number of the contributions eventually appeared as published papers, or parts of them, the essence was collaboration and continuity, the latter emphasised by clear and supportive chairmanship. One pauses over the phrase 'the occasional graduate student'. The great development of graduate studies in the following half-century has brought new ideas into seminars and teaching programmes in such proliferation that looking back to simpler times can sometimes still be worth while. A formidable catalogue could be made of work initiated or supervised by Webster in London and later in Stanford.

It was after one of the early seminars at which Michael Ventris presented some of the evidence proving that Linear B represented Greek that Tom Webster was walking along Gower Street with a colleague on the way to some other meeting. 'There's a job to be done here', he said reflectively. 'For one of the graduate students, you mean?' 'No: for me.' The result was *From Mycenae to Homer* (1958; repr. 1960), perhaps the most widely appreciated of the series of books relating Greek art and literature

[32] A. D. Trendall and T. B. L. Webster, *Illustrations of Greek Drama* (1971), not reprinted, so far as I know, and now unhappily scarce.

[33] *Memoirs and Proceedings of the Manchester Literary and Philosophical Society*, 94 (1952–3), 1–22.

[34] *Doubt and Certainty in Science*, published with some additional material in 1951.

that had begun in 1939 with *Greek Art and Literature 530–400 BC*; it was completed with *Art and Literature in fourth century Athens* (1956), *Greek Art and Literature 700–530 BC* (1959: de Carle lectures, University of Otago), and finally *Hellenistic Poetry and Art* (1964). Naturally enough, over something like a millennium and a half (the last book has a fascinating chapter called 'Roman Epilogue') what might be said about the links between verbal and visual creativity offers an enquiring mind a vast choice, with no guarantee of a static situation between period and period; and indeed the author's own perceptions and interests can sometimes be seen to change over the twenty-five years that the project spans. It is richly documented, full of insights, but in no way encyclopaedic. Taken as a whole, the series is arguably the centrepiece of an intensely active scholarly career, and shows Tom Webster for much of the time in his most characteristic vein.

Something of the work, if not of the creative ingenuity, that lies behind these studies can be seen in the reports in *Lustrum* on 'Greek archaeology and literature', beginning with volume 1 (1956), 87–118 and dealing with the years 1951–5, and then successively in volumes 6, 11, and 15 carrying the review to 1970. The voracious collection of data was not confined to libraries and their shelves of new books and periodicals. The series of catalogues that began with *Monuments illustrating Old and Middle Comedy* in 1960 was based on typewritten lists circulated to colleagues of a personal collection of photographs and slides drawn from published illustrations of vases, terracottas, and other objects depicting dramatic scenes, actors, masks, and the like, and ranging widely in date and place of manufacture (still more so when it came to New Comedy). This material was augmented by museum visits, requests for photographs (or newer photographs), and updates from archaeological reports and other publications. The depictions were not to be treated as if they were a sort of ancient snapshot of a performance, to be quoted in the sense of a visual aid to a text. The catalogues distinguished the material as far as possible by date and provenance; they let it be seen that even when remote from the actuality of a performance, these different reflections of a dramatic tradition still have a story to tell. The work has been continued in successive editions in the series of Supplements to the *Bulletin of the Institute of Classical Studies*, latterly (apart from other publications of their own) by two former pupils and associates, Richard Green and Axel Seeberg; Webster himself exploited the lists in his *Greek theatre production* (1956; 2nd edn. 1960), and in the briefer and more analytical *Griechische Bühnenaltertümer* (1963) as well as less directly

elsewhere. A younger generation with a marked inclination towards an interdisciplinary approach to classical studies and a special interest in the reception of Greek drama at times and in places away from its origins has given a new recognition to the value of all this labour and to the intellectual attitude that sustained it.[35]

The discoveries of the 1950s brought excitements of several kinds to the field of classical antiquity. Apart from the revelation that the Linear B tablets were written in Greek, we had a papyrus fragment of a historical tragedy that was presented as contemporary with Aeschylus (but was it Hellenistic after all?);[36] another that down-dated Aeschylus' *Supplices* to the 460s, some thirty years or so later than most people had supposed; and then the recovery of a complete play by Menander (less minor damage) in the shape of the *Dyskolos*—one could go on. Tom Webster's response to all this was manifold, and it is interestingly seen in his Presidential Address to the Classical Association in 1960, under the title 'First Things First'.[37] Amid all the excitement, he shows a concern, which he never lost, for the essential contacts, as he saw them, between the main achievements of the ancient world and the active interests of a modern non-specialist. This came at a time when the output of new specialist publications in all classical fields was increasing remarkably, as it has done since, and when the impulse to trace data and interpretations to their sources was fostered not only by a growing intensity of technical scholarship, but by more efficient means of international communication with libraries, archives, museums, and sites.

> Of course [he remarks] the specialist must pursue his special subject wherever it leads him . . . But the general practitioner (and we are all general practitioners over most of the field) is best served by the scholarship of his own time and perhaps of his own country. He will have been brought up on the scholarship of the preceding generation; the scholars of his own generation live in the same world that he does, are subject to the same influences, and face the same problems. New problems, new influences, as well as new techniques and new material, will appear in the scholarship of the next generation, which will be published when our hypothetical general practitioner is in his fifties. If he man-

[35] See for instance Pat Easterling and Edith Hall, *Greek and Roman Actors* (2002), xviii, with a quotation from an important review article by Hall entitled 'Theatrical Archaeology', *American Journal of Archaeology*, 101 (1997), 154–8.

[36] Strictly speaking its first appearance dates from 30 Sept. 1949, in a paper communicated to the British Academy by Edgar Lobel and published in *Proc. Brit. Acad.*, 35 (1949), 207–16; it is currently quoted as *Tragicorum Graecorum Fragmenta* [=*TrGF*] ii. 664.

[37] *Proceedings of the Classical Association*, 57 (1960), 9–20.

> ages to keep up with this new scholarship, he will have a Nestorian view which includes three generations, and we should not ask for more.

The consolation for any readers of these words to whom scholarship is antiquarian rather than dynamic is present in the opening remark, as well as in the respect and support given over the years to colleagues and associates whose temperament led them to stay on the ground rather than to attempt flight. What is implied here is that while a grasp of primary evidence is essential, there is still some room for tolerance, according to the nature of the user, in deciding how far the term 'primary' extends; but essentially the view is that data are for solving problems and gaining insights and not simply for accumulation. Thus in *The Tragedies of Euripides* (1967), a book full of speculative hypotheses, the Introduction says that: 'This book is written in the belief that an attempt to describe all the tragedies of Euripides might be useful to students of ancient drama, both those who know Greek and the much larger number who study ancient drama in translation.' After brief remarks on translations, it goes on: 'Reconstructing lost plays is a dangerous business, and I have therefore thought it essential to give all the evidence (or at least to refer to places where the evidence can be found). Where the argument inevitably involves quotation of Greek, I have tried to make clear the points at issue.' An admirable objective; but the problem is not only that of Greek, but the unfamiliarity of many potential readers with the kind of arguments used in evaluating fragmentary evidence, among them the use of statistical methods, seriously discussed both before and since, for dating the development of Euripides' metrical style. The end of the book, reached after many intellectual adventures, seems worth quoting to show both its author's enchantment with his subject and the lack of illusion over its many intractabilities. He liked to fly with ideas, but was too good a scholar to press them, in the way some do, into doctrine.

> In so far as Euripides has a message [he writes] it is the play in its totality with all its metrical and musical varieties and gradations, all its range from beautiful fantasy to modern reality, all its differences between characters and within single characters, a flux of events and emotions in which nevertheless certain human qualities are always condemned and certain human qualities are praised without qualification, but except for them 'the lights are dim and the very stars wander'.

The decade of the 1960s, which this account has already invaded, was for Tom Webster one of high achievement and deep sadness. Teaching and research (always placed first) continued with intensity. There were

more new discoveries of Menander, including substantial pieces of *Misoumenos*, *Sikyonioi*, and *Dis Exapaton*, as well as, at the end of the decade, the publication of the remains of the two companion pieces to *Dyskolos* in the Bodmer Codex, *Samia* and *Aspis*, each of which went together with text previously known. All this was the subject of successive seminars chaired by Eric Turner at the Institute of Classical Studies, to which contributions by TBLW, both individual and shared with others, were numerous. The continuing lively interest in New Comedy is still there in his last book, *An Introduction to Menander* (1974), with its concentration, as in *The Tragedies of Euripides*, on the less knowable survivals of text as background to the more easily accessed. Visits to Stanford, California, as earlier to Princeton and to Australia and New Zealand, opened new horizons and brought new friends and admirers. One prospect of these changes of habitat was that a climate other than that of London might bring some relief to the asthma from which Madge Webster had so long suffered. She was devoted to her work at Birkbeck College, where she was promoted from Reader to Professor in 1959; but the burden of ill-health caused her to retire early in 1963. For them both, there were the manifold satisfactions of seeing bright undergraduate pupils transformed into research scholars and junior lecturers, of seeing junior lecturers with whom they had worked becoming Readers and Professors in their turn. Yet the dark cloud would not go away, and after a final illness that she endured and fought with pure spirit, Madge died in 1967. 'It was Madge Webster,' recalled a friend, 'who decided that work in Nevern Square must give way to music at an hour reasonably before midnight.'[38] Without her, Tom gave time to commemorating her work, firstly in editing the *Collected Papers* (1969), and then in preparing for publication from her notes the three volumes of *Metrical analyses of tragic choruses* that appeared as Supplements to the *Bulletin of the Institute of Classical Studies,* beginning in 1971; his own book *The Greek chorus* (1970) is in some respects a by-product of the task. If all this, while it was in progress, was a job for the flat in Nevern Square, other enterprises were in hand in University College (it was normal, and possibly necessary to him that he did at least two things at once, and preferably in different places).

As the 1960s progressed, there was growing concern about the fall in demand for classics courses at universities and about the capacity of traditional syllabuses to respond to contemporary aspirations and needs. Tom Webster taught for the London BA in Classics throughout his

[38] Winnington-Ingram (see above, n. 23) 435.

twenty years at University College; but not the least of his intellectual legacies to the college was a plan for reform that took advantage of the newly granted freedom to the colleges to devise and award college-based rather than university-based degrees.

London University's long-established Honours Degree in Classics was a monolith. It was based wholly on eleven 3-hour written papers taken at one time, normally at the end of the third and final year of study. It had advantages, which were responsible for its long survival; but it responded to change slowly and with difficulty, and some thought it discouraging, if not unfairly stressful, to the typical student of the time. Its replacement, in the Webster scheme, was inspired partly by Humanities degree courses in the United States, partly by the experience of course-unit degrees in some of the major scientific departments at home, especially (as it happened) that of Electrical Engineering under Professor Harold Barlow. The total of units required for the degree could be exceeded, to the benefit of the student; University programmes were retained for the more advanced work; most of the core teaching in language and literature was in college courses that counted for the degree; but first-year courses (which, among other things, allowed students to experiment with such subjects as Political Philosophy or Old Irish) were counted for quantity but not towards classification.

The Webster scheme was first set out on two sides of a not-very-large piece of paper. No-one even remotely familiar with the inner workings of a university (never mind London) is likely to be surprised that it took a year or two, and a valuable measure of goodwill from colleagues in other places, for the original design to become a reality. Its basic logic, however, prevailed. There was a favourable review by a branch of the Nuffield Foundation concerned with research and innovation in higher education; and with various modifications brought by later experience, this innovation of the late 1960s has survived into another century and has had a certain wider influence. Among the tributes paid to the Professor of Greek on his departure to Stanford was an unsigned one that looked discerningly beyond his international eminence and his high academic honours to his role as a figure in college, noting his wide circle of friends and cordial acquaintances, and remarking that:[39]

> He hated red tape and had a miraculous gift for telescoping procedures if required, but at the same time he respected traditional methods and gave ungrudgingly of his time and energy on committees. For his students he had

[39] University College London, *Annual Report 1967–8*, p. 22.

> sympathy and affection, and slightly amused tolerance if they failed to reach the very high standards which, as one of nature's aristocrats, he had set himself, and, as a convinced democrat, never despaired of finding adhered to by others.

Stanford, as it was planned to do, brought a fresh start and a new lifestyle. To a visitor it was not wholly clear if his host would appear dressed as a member of the Athenaeum or in jeans and in a blue top that must have seen many better days; but to have been surprised would only display ignorance of his acute sense of context; he was equally up to hosting a dinner party or offering a share of a home-made meal ('Will *oeufs florentines* do?') in his apartment. In California he could relax, as he perhaps never did quite so readily elsewhere; he enjoyed San Francisco; he was delighted by the humming-birds and other minor wildlife of the Stanford campus, and made excursions to different places with his sketchbook. It would be easy, from the outside, to sentimentalise this scene as one of idyllic retirement to the far West, if it were not one side of a deeply engaged life of teaching and research as a regular Professor in the Department of Classics, with an active relationship to senior and junior colleagues alike, who before long had him take his turn as Chairman. When not busy with all this, or with maintaining a correspondence in rapidly but neatly written pen or ballpoint with friends and colleagues in the United States and abroad, he could at times be found in the museum, labelling or cataloguing terracottas and other objects, some of them survivors from the earthquake of 1906—in fact continuing some work begun a few years before as a visitor. The *Introduction to Menander* published in 1974 was written while supervising a Stanford Ph.D. on the author; it had several articles and reviews as by-products; and, as ever, there was a diversity of other enterprises in hand, notably an attractive book for Batsford entitled *Athenian culture and society* (1973).

The spring of 1974 was not a happy time for the Classics at Stanford. At the end of March, Tom Webster was afraid that two of his colleagues and close friends would be axed and have to find posts elsewhere, as in fact happened.[40] Before long, he was himself struck down with what proved to be inoperable cancer. Visitors as the end came near included Otto Skutsch, who had been his colleague for a time in Manchester, and for seventeen years as Professor of Latin in University College London; Ron Mellor and William Berg were among regular visitors from Stanford, and they played him music till the last, when he found it hard to speak.

[40] TBLW to EWH, 27 Mar. 1974.

On 31 May 1974 he died. In a eulogy delivered at Stanford, Mark Edwards, who had known him in England, remarked how effectively his skilful guidance continued to function when transplanted to the different conditions of classical teaching in the United States.

> His enthusiasm and warmth [said Professor Edwards] affected any student anywhere who came into contact with him; and his immense knowledge somehow did not frighten or overwhelm the pupil, but only urged him on. I think this was partly because, for him, teaching and research always went closely together, so that one always felt *he* was learning too; it was very much this experience of shared excitement that made so many of his pupils keep in touch with him in later years.

The eulogy ended as follows:

> We must be glad that his long life of teaching and scholarship continued until only a few weeks before his death, and that he was spared the frustrations of old age, about which the Greeks were often eloquent. We must be thankful to him for his life, his work, the warmth of his friendship, his unending considerateness; but we may justly feel sadness for ourselves, who have lost an incomparable companion and friend. Plato used the same words about the death of his own teacher: ἀπέκλαον ἐμαυτόν—οὐ γὰρ δὴ ἐκεῖνόν γε, ἀλλὰ τὴν ἐμαυτοῦ τύχην, οἵου ἀνδρὸς ἑταίρου ἐστερημένος εἴην.

ERIC HANDLEY
Fellow of the Academy

Note. I am grateful to the Department of Classics at Stanford for visits there, and here particularly to Mark Edwards for a letter of 13 Sept. 1975 with a typescript of his eulogy, and to Ron Mellor for a very moving letter written on 1 June 1976. Without these and other personal communications acknowledged above, this Memoir would have been much harder to write; its finished version has benefited from comments by Peter W. H. Brown, Pat Easterling, Dick Green, and Carol Handley.