

Martin Litchfield West

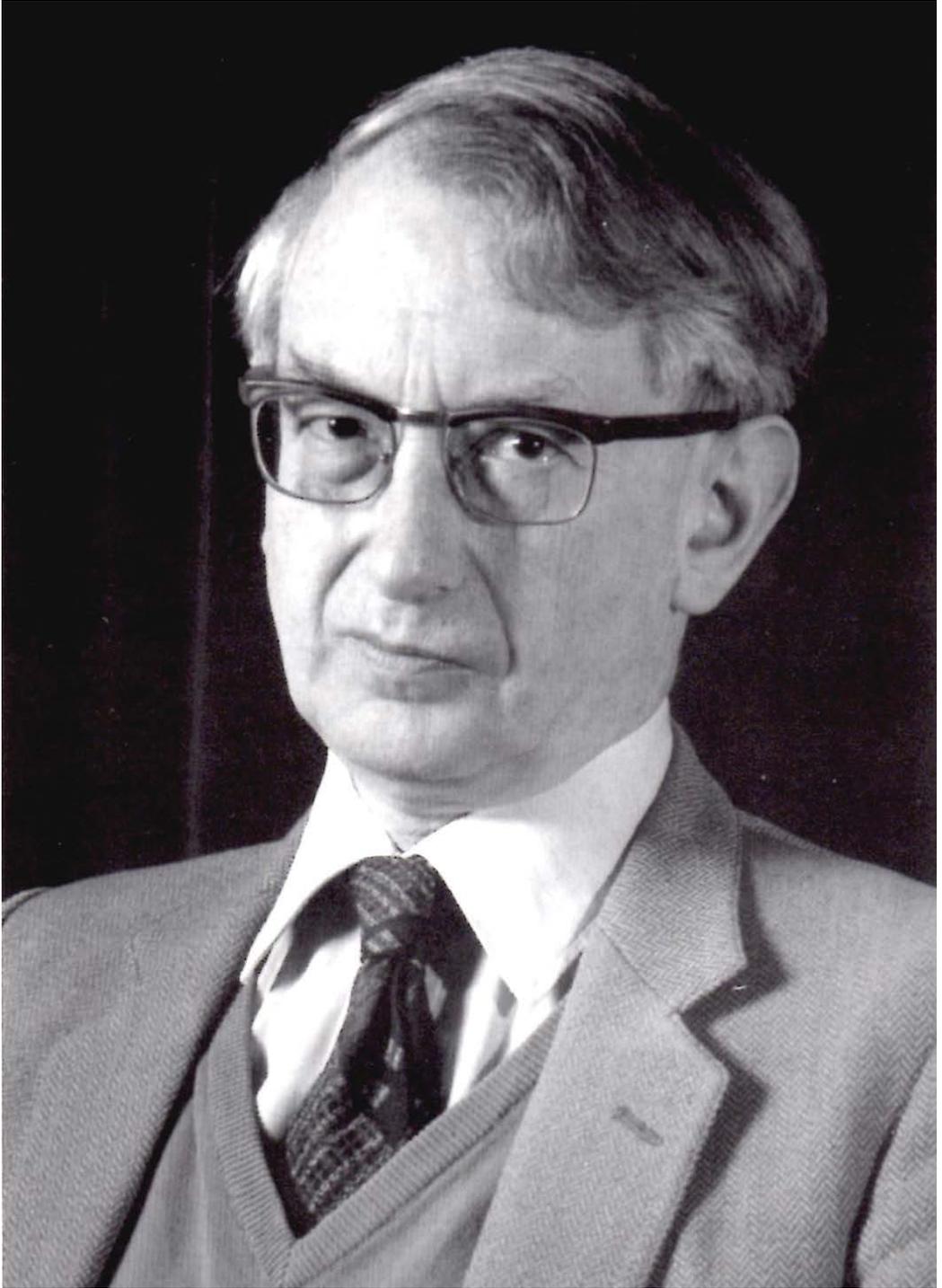
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MARTIN WEST

Martin West was one of the greatest Hellenists of modern times. Although working largely within the boundaries of traditional classical philology—editing texts, writing commentaries, reconstructing literary history—his enormous oeuvre can be called revolutionary in the sense that nearly everything he wrote decisively affected the course of scholarship. Revolutionary without question is his work on the ancient Near Eastern background of Greek literature, culminating in *The East Face of Helicon* (Oxford, 1997). The conviction, evident already in the commentary on Hesiod's *Theogony* (Oxford, 1966), that early Greek literature must be understood in this wider, eastern Mediterranean context, had few advocates before him, mere voices in the wilderness; as a result of his labours, awareness of the Near Eastern background has become obligatory for all Greek scholars. A similar view of Greek myth, philosophy and religion was championed by Walter Burkert (1931–2015), whom West first met while studying at Erlangen in summer term 1960 under the great Hellenist and historian of ancient religion Reinhold Merkelbach (1918–2006). This was a serendipitous meeting, for apart from their lifelong friendship Burkert was the scholar West admired most among his contemporaries. They had in common a determination both to document the formative influence of adjacent cultures upon the Greek, and to trace its ancestry—in Burkert's case, back to early hunting societies and their rituals of sacrifice; in West's case, to the Indo-Europeans, leading ultimately to *Indo-European Poetry and Myth* (Oxford, 2007). Though for this branch of study West could claim many fine predecessors, here too his research was transformative. Overall, the output is astonishing in both quantity and quality; many of these books in themselves would be a satisfactory life's work.¹ No Hellenist is more frequently cited, and West will continue to be cited for as long as the subject survives.

¹Thirty-five books and three volumes of *Hellenica* (Oxford, 2011–13; they contain ninety-four shorter writings selected from some 550). The book count excludes second editions, partial reprints, translations into other languages and the edited papers of W. S. Barrett, but includes the posthumous edition of the *Odyssey* (Berlin, 2017) which S. R. West has seen through to publication. It includes also *The All Souls Mallard: Song, Procession, and Legend* (All Souls College, 2001), slight though it is, since West counted it as a book in his list of publications. The list (up to 2014) is most easily consulted on the All Souls website, <https://www.asc.ox.ac.uk/asc-person-section-publication/79/4/999> (accessed 27 April 2018); there are some differences in the years post-2003 from the list published in P. J. Finglass, C. Collard and N. J. Richardson (eds.), *Hesperos: Studies in Ancient Greek Poetry Presented to M. L. West on his Seventieth Birthday* (Oxford, 2007), pp. xxix–lvi. Note also the lists by category at the end of each volume of *Hellenica* (Oxford, 2011–13). Addenda: 'The classical world', in M. Stausberg and Y. Sohrab-Dinshaw Veivaina (eds.), *The Wiley Blackwell Companion to Zoroastrianism* (Malden, MA, 2015), pp. 437–50; 'Epic, lyric, and lyric epic', in P. J. Finglass and A. Kelly (eds.), *Stesichorus in Context* (Cambridge, 2015), pp. 63–80; 'Early poetry in Cyprus', in G. A. Xenis (ed.), *Literature, Scholarship, Philosophy and History: Classical Studies in Memory of Ioannis Taifacos* (Stuttgart, 2015), pp. 25–36; 'Mythological and political interpolations in Homer', *Eikasmos*, 26 (2015), 13–25; 'The formation of the epic cycle', in M. Fantuzzi and C. Tsagalis (eds.), *The Greek Epic Cycle and its Ancient Reception: a Companion* (Cambridge, 2015), pp. 96–107; 'Odysseus re-routed', *Eikasmos*, 27 (2016), 11–23; 'So what is it to be?', in D. Gunkel, J. Katz,

Martin Litchfield West (Litchfield was the maiden name of his paternal grandmother) was born on 23 September 1937 at Eltham General Hospital; his parents lived at the time in Orpington (then in Kent, now part of Greater London), but moved shortly before the outbreak of war in 1939 to Hampton, Middlesex, where his father, Maurice, was appointed resident engineer at the waterworks operated there by the Metropolitan Water Board. His father's family were from the Home Counties, but that of his mother, Catherine Baker Stainthorpe, were from Yorkshire and Durham. His paternal grandfather, Robert West, lectured in electrical engineering; his maternal grandfather, John Stainthorpe, was a railwayman from Pickering. In a sparkling and typically amusing (unpublished) memoir of his childhood written for his family, West tells how on both parents' sides he could lay dubious claim to royal ancestry: John Stainthorpe's mother was said to have been an illegitimate daughter of George, the second Marquis of Normanby, and thus descended from James II; Robert West traced his lineage (via a great-great-grandmother who had eloped with the gardener) to Sir William Courtenay, 'de jure eighth Earl of Devon and second Viscount of Powderham Castle'. Consequently, West calculated, he was tenth cousin to the Queen. More than that, the ultimate ancestor of all the royals, Egbert of Wessex, was separated by a mere twenty generations from Woden. 'Once', he confesses, 'in filling up a form for some French biographical reference work, I amused myself by naming him as my ancestor. And so it appeared in my entry: "Ascendance: Woden, dieu germanique".' Among other earthly connections, the mother of the aforementioned Sir William Courtenay was a distant descendant of the brother of Archbishop Henry Chichele, founder of All Souls College, so that when West arrived there he could lay 'tenuous claim to membership of that blessed fraternity, Founder's Kin'. All of this was, he admitted, 'sentimental nonsense', but it does relate to his strong sense of rootedness in his native country, embracing both Germanic and Celtic heritage:

B. Vine and M. Weiss (eds.), *Sahasram Ati Srajas: Indo-Iranian and Indo-European Studies in Honor of Stephanie W. Jamison* (Ann Arbor, MI, 2016), pp. 486–98; 'Editing the *Odyssey*', in C. Tsagalis and A. Markantonatos (eds.), *The Winnowing Oar—New Perspectives in Homeric Studies: Studies in Honor of Antonios Rengakos* (Berlin and Boston, 2017), pp. 13–28; 'Aristophanes of Byzantium's text of Homer', *Classical Philology*, 112 (2017), 20–44; the edition of the *Odyssey* (Oxford, 2017); 'Gilgāmeš and Homer: the missing link?', in B. Dignas and L. Audley-Miller (eds.), *Wandering Myths: Transcultural Uses of Myth in the Ancient World* (Berlin, 2018), pp. 259–75; (with L. Bendall), 'Evidence from the written sources', in I. S. Lemos and A. Kotsonas (eds.), *A Companion to the Archaeology of Early Greece and the Mediterranean* (Malden, MA, forthcoming); 'What next?', in C. A. Stray, M. J. Clarke and J. T. Katz (eds.), *Liddell and Scott: the History, Methodology and Languages of the World's Leading Lexicon of Ancient Greek* (Oxford, forthcoming).

One does have—at least I have—a deep-seated desire for a tribal identity. I always thought of myself as an Englishman, and now I have learned how I can think of myself as a Briton too. Having grown up during the Second World War, I could hardly avoid being imbued with patriotic feeling, which I have never disavowed. I cannot imagine living permanently in another country, and have more than once turned down invitations to do so.

At the age of four West began his education at Denmead, a private preparatory school about a mile from the family home. While nothing of academic significance seems to have occurred there (the Latin teacher was ‘an ignorant thug who knew only the declension of *mensa* and the present indicative active of *amo*’), West’s promise must have been obvious, and when he turned eleven one of his teachers persuaded his parents that he should put in for a scholarship at Colet Court, the junior school for St Paul’s. Heroic cramming with the aid of a Latin grammar purchased by his father did not compensate for the shortcomings of the thug’s instruction, so West did not win the scholarship; but he was offered a fee-paying place, and his parents resolved to make the necessary sacrifices.

At Colet Court, as at St Paul’s, Latin and Greek held pride of place in the curriculum. Here West discovered his interest in languages, including Esperanto, though this proved to be ‘the least useful of all the languages I have ever studied’. At age fourteen he invented a competitor dubbed Unilingua, complete with dictionary and a sampling of texts. The memoir also records passions for astronomy, stamp-collecting, coin-collecting, bus-spotting, plane-spotting (passing the wartime test at age five): if the Child is the father of the Man, such matters are worth mentioning here, since one of the outstanding characteristics of West the scholar was his love of complicated formal systems and his ability to impose order on large masses of unruly data. Subjects such as Greek metre, music, manuscripts, mythical genealogies or comparative philology were almost bound to attract his attention. In the case of astronomy, the interest continued throughout his life; his first three professional publications were on topics in historical astronomy, and his expertise informed many writings at all periods of his career, especially the commentaries on Hesiod. Several numbers of a journal *Starry Nights*, which he began at Denmead and continued at Colet Court, survive; partly printed with a hand press owned by West but mostly written in the distinctive, boyish hand that never changed throughout his life, they inform the reader (for instance) how to correct variable star observations for atmospheric absorption, or that on 3 October 1951 Jupiter will be in its most favourable opposition for years, magnitude -2.5 . In addition to such instruction, they offer a menu of news, poems, quizzes, art, notes from the editor—everything a proper journal should have. Touches of sly Westian humour appear frequently. Also surviving is an essay, ‘A theory

concerning the history of the solar system', whose grandiose title anticipates other, equally ambitious ones, such as 'Greek Poetry 2000–700 BC'.²

In summer 1951, West sat for and won a scholarship to the main school. As at Colet Court, Latin and Greek dominated the curriculum, with a strong emphasis on composition; a not very balanced education, West allowed, 'but for a budding classicist it was superb'. He was taught by two great teachers, E. P. C. Cotter and W. W. Cruickshank; for the latter West and other ex-pupils composed a *Festschrift*, a rare honour for a schoolmaster.³ He raced so far ahead of the other boys (excelling also at mathematics) that he was advanced to the Upper Eighth (as the nomenclature at St Paul's had it), and so sat the four-day examination for a scholarship to Balliol a year early. His teachers thought he might manage to win the lesser award of an exhibition, and his own expectations were not high, but instead of an exhibition he carried away the top scholarship. Kenneth Dover, later President of the British Academy, was then at Balliol and Tutor for Admissions. At the bottom of the formal, typed notification he wrote: 'When I won the same scholarship in 1938 Cyril Bailey wrote to me "Paulinus Paulino tibi gratulor" ["congratulations from one Pauline to another"]. This is the first time I have been able to use the same words as Classics tutor!' Dover departed for St Andrews that summer, so West was never among his pupils at Oxford. West's principal tutors were Donald Russell and Michael Stokes in Greek, Gordon Williams in Latin, Russell Meiggs in Ancient History and Dick Hare in Philosophy. Among his peers were Anthony Leggett, who took a first in Physics the year after he took a first in Greats, and went on to win a Nobel Prize, and Peter Gregson (1936–2015), who became Permanent Secretary first of the Department of Energy, then of Trade and Industry.

The memoir ends with arrival at Balliol, its author describing himself as a 'serious-minded but light-hearted youth of seventeen ... already marked with the lineaments of the man I was to be'. The description is apt. Serious about scholarship, of course, he worked hard and without interruption until the last day of his life, taking few holidays. The lightness of heart, however, might not have been obvious to those who knew him only casually. Notoriously taciturn in conversation, he could have been

²M. L. West, 'Greek poetry 2000–700 BC', *Classical Quarterly*, 23 (1973), 179–92; repr. with suppl. notes *Hellenica* 1, pp. 1–21. (No Greek poetry actually survives from the period in question.) I owe sight of these documents to Alan Cameron FBA (1938–2017), a keen fellow member of the 'Herschelian Society', as it was called; Cameron and the distinguished Roman historian John North started studying Greek with West at Colet Court on the same day in 1949.

³*Apodosis: Essays Presented to Dr. W. W. Cruickshank to Mark his Eightieth Birthday* (St Paul's School, 1992).

mistaken for a typically shy, unworldly scholar, wholly engrossed in his own mental universe. All Souls College, most ivory of towers, elected him Senior Research Fellow in 1991, offering an escape—as West saw it—from the bureaucratic horrors of university life.⁴ Here he was truly at home, and the College never had a more devoted Fellow. Yet he was not obsessive like his scholarly hero Ulrich von Wilamowitz-Moellendorf (1848–1931), who worked two hours before breakfast every day. Scholars who take themselves too seriously do not publish spoofs of German philology, in German, in German journals.⁵ Scholarship gave meaning to life, but it was not all-consuming for West; he made time for other pursuits (music, literature, cricket). His writings are full of wit and sharp observations of life—not the work of someone disconnected from ordinary human discourse.⁶ A secret extrovert seemed to lurk within, who might show himself, for instance, in an *alta voce* declamation of an ancient Greek hymn while touring Delphi;⁷ or in theatrical openings to lectures on Homer, in which he would adapt famous Homeric similes to describe the swarm of undergraduates before him (or perhaps regale them with the story of Goldilocks in the style of the Homeric bards); or in mimicry of famous scholars and politicians; or in the enthusiastic discharge of his duties as Lord Mallard at All Souls College (being paraded about, shoulder-high in a sedan chair and singing the Mallard Song, among other things).⁸

West's precocious ability, particularly in languages, was already abundantly clear upon arrival at Oxford. In 1957, he netted a haul of undergraduate prizes (Chancellor's for Latin Prose and Verse, Hertford, de Paravicini, Ireland), though when it came to sitting Greats he took only a second. (At that time, Greats still consisted of philosophy and ancient history; West liked philosophy and found Greek history tolerable, but he was allergic to Roman history. He was allowed to offer a special paper on Homer, for which he received tutorials from E. R. Dodds and C. M. Bowra—a good foundation for postgraduate work, but the First still proved elusive.) Other lifelong pursuits already in place were writing poetry, short stories and music (though he was secretive and somewhat diffident about the latter; a movement from a piano sonata in late Romantic style—his seventh, no less—was performed at his All Souls memorial event, to the complete surprise of most of those in attendance). What was lacking at school, and came with university, was exposure to professional classical scholarship. This

⁴M. L. West, *The East Face of Helicon* (Oxford, 1997), p. xii, quoting two verses from the so-called Orphic tablets in which the initiate exults in having escaped the 'grim circle of deep grief' and won eternal bliss. The book is dedicated to the College, where his fellowship gave him time to acquire the necessary Near Eastern languages.

⁵See *Hellenica* 3, p. 498. To one he signed his name 'M. L. W. Eggheider'.

⁶He assembled his own favourite remarks on scholars' behaviour in '*Obiter Dicta*', *Hellenica* 3, pp. 485–9.

⁷The incident is recounted in the preface to M. L. West, *Ancient Greek Music* (Oxford, 1992).

⁸See West, *The All Souls Mallard*.

took the form of Eduard Fraenkel's renowned seminars, which were a decisive influence. Over forty years later, West recalled:

Here we saw German philology in action; we felt it reverberate through us as Fraenkel patrolled the room behind our chairs, discoursing in forceful accents. As he spoke of his old teachers and past colleagues—Leo and Norden, Wilamowitz and Wackernagel—it was like an *apparition de l'Église éternelle*. We knew, and could not doubt, that this was what Classical Scholarship was, and that it was for us to learn to carry it on.⁹

Fraenkel's monumental edition of the *Agamemnon* had appeared in 1950; West dedicated his own edition of Aeschylus to his memory, citing in the preface the words Orestes addresses to his dead father in the *Choephoroi*.¹⁰ The first and most abiding lesson of the seminars was that textual criticism was the foundation of scholarship, a point West emphasises at length in the sequel to the passage just quoted. It was a craft to which he was in any case naturally predisposed, and in which he showed himself a master from his first book (written at age twenty-nine), the edition of Hesiod's *Theogony*. Of his thirty-five books, eighteen are editions or commentaries, to which one may add his manual of textual criticism and his work on the *Supplement* to the Greek lexicon of Liddell, Scott and Jones.¹¹ We have the entire corpus of archaic Greek poetry, with the exception of the lyric poets (i.e. Sappho, Alcaeus and the authors edited in D. L. Page's *Poetae Melici Graeci*: Oxford, 1962) in authoritative editions by West, much of what he edited accompanied by commentary, and much of it he translated too, including the lyric poets (who also received invaluable attention in numerous articles; had he lived, his next project was to be an edition).

As is clear from the above quotation, it was in these seminars that West learned fully to value the achievements of German classical scholarship. Again, it was a case of a call falling upon willing ears. His instinct was always to find concrete answers to concrete questions. He had little sympathy with literary or anthropological theory evident in much French and American work throughout his career, and he scorned

⁹ M. L. West, 'Forward into the past', in Finglass, Collard and Richardson, *Hesperos*, pp. xx–xxviii at xxi. The address is wrongly identified as the acceptance speech for the International Balzan Prize for Classical Antiquity, 2000; it was composed on that occasion, but the actual acceptance speech was different. Both are available at <http://www.balzan.org/en/prizewinners/martin-litchfield-west> (accessed 14 November 2017). On Fraenkel and his seminars, see S. West, 'Eduard Fraenkel recalled', in C. Stray (ed.), *Oxford Classics: Teaching and Learning 1800–2000* (London, 2007), pp. 203–18.

¹⁰ M. L. West, *Aeschyli Tragoediae cum incerti poetae Prometheo* (Stuttgart, 1990), dedication, p. lv, quoting *Cho.* 315–19 ('What might I say or do to bring you here on a gentle wind, from far away where your place of rest detains you?').

¹¹ M. L. West, *Textual Criticism and Editorial Technique Applicable to Greek and Latin Texts* (Stuttgart, 1973); acting editors, H. G. Liddell, R. Scott, and H. S. Jones, *Greek–English Lexicon: a Supplement*, ed. E. A. Barber, with the assistance of P. Maas, M. Scheller and M. L. West (Oxford, 1968). On the latter (and its 1996 successor), see West, 'What next?'.

those who thought ‘positivism’ a dirty word. His own work combined the best of the older English and German traditions: the former characterised by textual emendation based upon the most precise knowledge of the classical languages; the latter founded on the conviction that to explicate a text, one must bring to bear any and all data that may shed light upon its problems—literary texts of any genre, inscriptions, papyri, works of art; linguistics, historical context, philosophical background and so on. This tradition reached its apogee in the career of Ulrich von Wilamowitz-Moellendorff, whose portrait hung in West’s study and with whom he has often been compared for learning, impact and sheer philological power. He shared with Wilamowitz also a lack of pedantry, a sharp focus on primary sources and a talent for bold hypothesising. West did not, however, embrace the ideal of German *Altertumswissenschaft*, which (naively, as it must seem nowadays) sought to know the whole of antiquity in order to understand any of its parts. In theory, in this scheme all subdisciplines (literature, history, philosophy, art) were on equal footing, supporting a *Gesamtbild* of antiquity built up in the all-conquering scholar’s mind. West was a literary scholar first and last. All of his books were on literary or closely related topics. His brand of literary history, to be sure, made room for mythology (wellspring of Greek literature) and early philosophy (whose cosmology was a calque on Greek myth); but he wrote nothing on political history or art, for instance, and his interest in mythology did not induce him to write on the cultic aspects of ancient religion (he was himself antipathetic to modern religion). West also described himself simply as a scholar of early Greek poetry. He was not much interested in the artificialities of the post-classical poets and wrote little on prose authors (and almost nothing on Latin). Of course, he knew the later texts well and published notes of various kinds throughout his career; as a paragon he edited the *Anacreontea*, a Roman and early Byzantine collection of poems notionally in the style of and attributed to the archaic poet Anacreon.¹² But the focus remained relentlessly on early Greece. His only book with substantial post-classical content, *The Orphic Poems* (Oxford, 1983), had as its ultimate purpose the explication of the Orphic texts and traditions of the early period, for which it was necessary to unravel the tangled skeins of their later testimonies and echoes (see also below p. 112).

Fraenkel’s seminars must also have confirmed West in his inclination to pursue research. After graduating he embarked on a DPhil, at a time (1959) when doctoral students were quite rare birds. His supervisor was Sir Hugh Lloyd-Jones FBA (1922–2009); West was Lloyd-Jones’s first supervisee and the only one before he was appointed to the Regius Chair of Greek in Oxford (1960). West was also the first holder of the Woodhouse Junior Research Fellowship at St John’s College, Oxford. The relationship

¹²M. L. West, *Carmina Anacreontea* (Leipzig, 1984; 2nd edn 1993); see also ‘The *Anacreontea*’, *Hellenica* 2, pp. 385–90.

with Lloyd-Jones as supervisor was highly satisfactory, as West records in a lecture delivered in his memory; he also wrote the *Times* obituary (9 October 2009).¹³ West later disagreed with Lloyd-Jones about several issues close to the latter's heart: the authenticity of *Prometheus Bound*, the conception of Zeus in Aeschylus and the idea of the inherited curse in Greek literature (the second of these being the subject of the lecture just mentioned, and the third being published, somewhat surprisingly, in Lloyd-Jones's *Festschrift*).¹⁴ The review of the Oxford Classical Text of Sophocles produced by Lloyd-Jones and Nigel Wilson, while stressing more than once the great superiority of the edition over others, did not pull its considerable critical punches.¹⁵ These exchanges put a strain on the relationship, but West's obituary of Lloyd-Jones was a warm and sincere tribute; he had fond words to say also in his Balzan acceptance speech.¹⁶

As a doctoral student West needed little supervision, and the commentary on the *Theogony*, which became the book of 1966, easily won the Conington Prize in 1965 for the best classical dissertation of the year. It was worth half a dozen doctorates. The poem, by a late eighth-century BC (on West's dating) Boeotian poet, recounts in some 1,000 hexameters the birth and genealogies of all the gods; it is both a theogony and a mythological cosmogony accounting for the origins of the universe. West's commentary opens with a survey of worldwide theogonic poetry; a section exploring the links with Anatolian and Mesopotamian literature foreshadows *Early Greek Philosophy and the Orient* (Oxford, 1971) and especially *The East Face of Helicon: West Asiatic Elements in Greek Poetry and Myth* (Oxford, 1997). (In the Balzan acceptance speech, West credits Merkelbach with opening his eyes to this vast new panorama.) He expresses here his conviction that Hesiod antedated Homer, a view he defended stoutly throughout his life.¹⁷ The treatment of the manuscripts, papyri,

¹³ *Hellenica* 2, pp. 175–7, and 3, pp. 482–4.

¹⁴ 'Ancestral curses', reprinted in *Hellenica* 3, pp. 287–301 (see also *Hellenica* 2, pp. 164–70). Lloyd-Jones responded in 'Curses and divine anger in early Greek epic: the Pisander Scholion', *Classical Quarterly* n.s. 52 (2002), 1–14, reprinted in *The Further Academic Papers of Sir Hugh Lloyd-Jones* (Oxford, 2005), pp. 18–35.

¹⁵ M. L. West, 'The new Oct of Sophocles', *Classical Review*, n.s. 41 (1991), 299–301. West reviewed many books throughout his career; he always balanced praise with blame where merited, but his criticism could be expressed in cutting, sometimes insulting terms. Lloyd-Jones and Wilson responded in *Sophocles: Second Thoughts* (Göttingen, 1997), accepting some of the points made, other times robustly defending their position. See also Lloyd-Jones's review of West's *Aeschylus* in *Gnomon*, 65 (1993), 1–11, reprinted in *The Further Academic Papers of Sir Hugh Lloyd-Jones*, pp. 163–80.

¹⁶ Above, n. 9.

¹⁷ West, *Hesiod, Theogony*, p. 46, with n. 2. At the other end of his career see 'Echoes of Hesiod and elegy in the *Iliad*', first published in *Hellenica* 1 (i.e. 2011), pp. 209–32 (p. 232: 'Those not yet accustomed to the idea of the Homeric epics as products of the seventh century should shake themselves down and come to terms with it'). Many scholars still accept the traditional order.

indirect traditions, metre and dialect are models of their kind. The judgement and learning displayed in the constitution of the text and the commentary, which is a treasure house of information and insight, are mature far beyond their author's years. There is room for disagreement of course, particularly on the amount of interpolation (West diagnosed much less than was fashionable), but the most qualified reviewer, a scholar many years West's senior, while having quite different views, was unstinting in his praise.¹⁸

Yet this was not West's first publication; he started in 1960 with an article on Anaxagoras. By 1964 he had written on Lucretius, Persius, the Orphic hymns, Empedocles, Musaeus, Nonnus, Hesiod (notes, and an article on the manuscript tradition), Hecataeus, Apollonius of Rhodes, Oppian, Nicander, Quintus of Smyrna, Archilochus, Megasthenes and Servius, along with a substantial article on Presocratic cosmologies and two lexicographical notes. Three of the articles were in German. In 1964, there appeared in volume 11 of *Greece & Rome* (pp. 185–7), the now legendary tour de force 'Two versions of Jabberwocky', one in Homeric hexameters, one in Nonnian ('taking due account of the Humpty-Dumpty scholia'). In 1965, he published substantial articles on Trypho, Alcman, the Dictaeon Hymn to the Kouros and (with Merkelbach) the Hesiodic Wedding of Ceyx, plus a note on Euripides; the year the *Theogony* appeared, he also published 'Conjectures on 46 [sic] Greek poets', plus other notes and the usual clutch of reviews.

Thus began the publishing career that saw its author elected Fellow of the British Academy in 1973, still, at the time of this writing, the second-youngest person to be elected after Bernard Grenfell (1905, aet. 35). In 1963, West was elected Fellow and Praelector in Classics at University College, Oxford; in 1974, he was appointed to the Chair of Greek at Bedford College, London, and later at the merged Royal Holloway and Bedford New College. He moved to All Souls in 1991, retiring formally in 2004 but remaining an active presence in the College to the end.

In what follows, I will assess West's contribution according to the same categories and in the same order as he arranged his *Hellenica*, before concluding with remarks on the general character of his scholarship.

First, then, epic. West left us editions and commentaries on Hesiod, *Theogony* and *Works and Days*; with Merkelbach, an edition of the fragments of other poems by, or attributed to, Hesiod;¹⁹ a book on the fragments of the Hesiodic *Catalogue of Women*;

¹⁸F. Solmsen, *Gnomon*, 40 (1968), 321–9.

¹⁹Only a small portion of classical literature survives intact, through the medieval manuscript tradition; for lost works, we are dependent on fragments, i.e. partial quotations in surviving authors, or scraps of ancient copies on papyrus or occasionally other materials. It is a basic task of classical philology to assemble the scattered fragments of lost works and attempt their reconstruction.

two Loeb editions (one of the fragments of archaic epic other than the *Iliad* and *Odyssey*, and another of the *Homeric Hymns*, ancient lives of Homer and Homeric apocrypha); a commentary on the epics about Troy in the first Loeb volume; editions of the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*; a book on the textual transmission of the *Iliad*, with a commentary on hundreds of selected passages; a book on the composition of the *Iliad*, and another on the composition of the *Odyssey* (each containing many more comments on individual passages); plus numerous articles.²⁰

It is convenient here to speak in detail of West's Homeric studies. The problem confronting the editor is not, as often with Greek and Latin authors, a paucity of evidence, but rather an abundance of it: over 1,500 fragments of ancient copies of the *Iliad* and 566 of the *Odyssey*, as well as hundreds of fragments of other texts quoting Homer;²¹ hundreds of medieval manuscripts; a forest of ancient and medieval commentary; a mountain of modern scholarship. Traditionally, the task of the editor is to reconstruct as closely as possible the text as written by its author; in the case of Homer, because of the texts' background in oral poetry and the fluidity of ancient witnesses to the text, one has more basic questions to settle first: what was the nature (and date) of the original text? And is our evidence sufficient to enable an intelligent reconstruction of it, or must we be satisfied with, say, the medieval vulgate? An influential argument in recent decades has been that the tradition was completely oral in its early stages, and was not totally stabilised until the second century BC; the extra verses and variant readings found in early papyri and quotations reflect, on this view, an ongoing tradition of composition-in-performance. In such an environment, individual performances, even by the same poet, could vary greatly from each other in their details, while being recognisably instantiations of the same traditional story. The practice of recording such performances in writing grew only slowly, as did the notion of a single, fixed text of 'Homer' (there was no original genius, only a name for the tradition); consequently, what arrived at the library of Alexandria was a series of different recensions, upon which the great scholar Aristarchus succeeded in imposing lasting

²⁰ There is also M. L. West, *Sing Me, Goddess* (London, 1971), a translation of *Iliad* I into the metre of the Kalevala (most familiar from Longfellow's *The Song of Hiawatha*), a typically original move. The translation well reflects the rapidity and syntactic simplicity of the original, but the metre has a jauntiness not all readers would think suitable. See J. B. Hainsworth in *Classical Review*, n.s. 23 (1973), 265. Re-reading it myself after many years, I found it much more appealing and successful than I remember thinking when it first appeared. It is not great poetry, but one must admire the easy navigation between faithfulness to the original and natural idiom in English, the Scylla and Charybdis of translation.

²¹ All these West inspected personally where possible. The *Iliadic* papyri are all listed in M. L. West, *Studies in the Text and Transmission of the Iliad* (Munich and Leipzig, 2001), pp. 88–138, with catalogue numbers, dates, lines covered, editions, images where available etc.—a small example of his extraordinary thoroughness and industry. For the *Odyssean* papyri, see his edition of the *Odyssey* (Berlin, 2017), pp. xxvii–xlv.

order in the second century BC, at least in respect of the number of lines. If this reconstruction of the early tradition were true, editing an original *Iliad* and *Odyssey* of the seventh century (as West dated them) would be futile; instead, one would attempt an edition that reflects these multiple recensions, putting all the variants and extra verses on equal footing. One can see why this scenario has proved attractive: it takes account of what, on one view anyway, was the state of epic poetry in ‘Homer’s’ day; and secondly, it responds to a suspicion that scholars’ inability to agree, after two hundred years of debate about the status of readings in manuscripts and papyri, and the contribution of Aristarchus and his ancient peers, is the sign of a problem misconceived. There are, however, decisive arguments against this theory, some of them put forward by West.²² The texts of the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey* were certainly recorded in writing at the time of their composition (probably by two different poets, as West consistently argued and most people now believe), and were faithfully preserved thereafter; the variation in early texts can easily be accounted for by the ancient (loose) manner of citation and liberties taken by rhapsodes who recited the poems (as some actors treated the texts of tragedy), and it is clear that all the variants take their bearings from a single point of reference. So, the problem is to find a convincing interpretation of the extraordinarily difficult evidence about the pre- and post-Alexandrian text, and on this basis to decide, line by line and word by word, what one judges the first author to have written. The problem is of a magnitude and complexity greater than any other in classical studies, and has attracted the concentrated attention of many great Hellenists. Nonetheless, even in a field so well ploughed as this, West characteristically found convincing new answers, or new arguments in support of old and neglected ones.²³ The knowledge of the sources and the scholarship is matchless; sovereign judgement is on display every step of the way. The argument is laid out in his *Studies* in crystal-clear prose. It and the editions should be definitive for many years to come.

When it came to constituting the text itself, West fearlessly followed his conclusions where they led him, so that, for instance, he was prepared to designate many more lines of the poems as post-Homeric interpolations than is standard nowadays (in addition to Book 10 of the *Iliad* in its entirety, which most scholars agree is intrusive).

²² See West, *Studies in the Text and Transmission of the Iliad*, esp. pp. 158–161, various chapters in *Hellenica* 1, and M. L. West, ‘Response to *BMCR* 2002.11.15’ (i.e. to two reviews of *Studies*), in *Bryn Mawr Classical Review*, 2004.04.17. All the arguments are laid out by B. Currie, *Homer’s Allusive Art* (Oxford, 2016), pp. 13–22.

²³ An important foundation was laid by Stephanie West in her book *The Ptolemaic Papyri of Homer* (Cologne, 1967); she went on to write ‘the best commentary on any four books of the *Odyssey*’ (M. L. West, *The Making of the Odyssey* (Oxford, 2015) p. viii). West dedicated this book to her, and comments that she ‘has supported my Homeric and other studies for over half a century’. One can imagine many conversations over the dinner table.

West also took the trouble to update and expand the list of ‘testimonia’ compiled by earlier editors; these are quotations of Homer in other ancient authors, numbering in their thousands. They are listed in their own register between text and critical apparatus: another chalcenic labour. This edition of Homer is one of the monuments of Classical scholarship; it is a masterpiece of patient brilliance and one of West’s great achievements.

West sets out his theory about the identity of Homer in an important article, ‘The invention of Homer’.²⁴ Briefly, the putative author of the poems was not a real person but the mythical eponym of the ‘Homeridai’, the guild of professional bards identifiable from the late sixth century onwards who thought of themselves as notionally ‘descended’ from someone named Homer (like doctors, the Asclepiadai, from Asclepius). West revives an older argument of Marcello Durante that the root *hom-* refers to an assembly of the people, a festival at which epics were performed (like an eisteddfod), so that a projected figure—‘Homer’—would be its embodiment. All the traditional poems of which these singers were the guardians were the work of ‘Homer’, but in the early archaic period most poems were simply anonymous. Though drawing for the most part on views already on offer, West here offers the most cogent explanation of all the evidence, and ably accounts for all aspects of the preservation and subsequent reputation of the poems.

When it comes to the question of how these two poets composed their works, however, West’s views are less apt to command assent. It is necessary to explain something of the history of Homeric criticism. Beginning with Friedrich August Wolf in the late eighteenth century, the ‘Analytical’ school argued that the poems were products of successive compilation of originally independent lays, which could be separated from one another by analysis of their language and content in order to identify earlier and later strata in the poems. Younger dialect forms, for instance, created a presumption of lateness of the passage in question; supposed contradictions in the content of two passages meant they could not both stem from the same hand. The bewildering variety of competing analyses on offer tended to discredit the method, and a ‘Unitarian’ school, mainly American but also German, arose, which demonstrated beyond question the essential artistic integrity of the poems. Milman Parry’s proof in the 1920s that formulaic composition-in-performance was in the background entailed that any given line might combine older and younger dialect forms, since they all belonged to the traditional vocabulary learned (and updated) by each generation of bards. This discovery greatly favoured the Unitarian view, and scholars began to explain the poem’s characteristics in terms of the exigencies of live performance.

²⁴M. L. West, ‘The invention of Homer’, *Classical Quarterly*, n.s. 49 (1999), 364–82, reprinted in *Hellenica* 1, pp. 408–36. Cf. West, *The East Face of Helicon*, pp. 622–3.

West was a Unitarian, but not an oralist. He fully appreciated the relevance of the oral background to analysing the formulaic language of the poems, and naturally he accepted (sometimes) that many plot motifs and turns of phrase were common bardic stock and thus insufficient to establish specific links between two passages that employ them. On the other hand, he believed that a literate frame of mind took hold relatively quickly in the wake of the *Iliad*, so that the ‘rhapsodes’ creativity was able to express itself in novel ways: by adding new sections to these texts, transcribing passages from one into another, or making forced combinations of separate pieces’.²⁵ He spoke habitually of this line or that being ‘adapted from’ or ‘modelled on’ or ‘copying’ another one in our surviving texts, as if the poet might not have heard similar lines in who knows how many performances. Although scholars have recently started to argue that intertextuality can be quite precise even in an oral environment, West’s view of the bards’ procedures often makes them look much like an Apollonius or Virgil.

Moreover, West thought that the Analysts had drawn attention to many problems in the poems—inconsistencies, inconcinnities of one sort or another—which had never been satisfactorily explained, least of all by the oralists. Not believing in multiple authorship like the Analysts, he posited that the two poets of the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey* had both written their poems down, but had revised and expanded them over the years and decades. The conditions of early writing—the expense of the writing material, the many rolls needed for poems of such length—meant that such revisions would be accommodated not by recopying the whole poem, but by cutting the rolls and pasting in new passages, or by writing shorter changes in the margins. Inevitably, this process resulted in the irregularities and contradictions we now see in the text.

West had already identified some passages in Hesiod’s *Theogony* and *Works and Days* as author’s insertions.²⁶ The Homeric case is fully argued in *The Making of the Iliad* (Oxford, 2011) and *The Making of the Odyssey* (Oxford, 2014). In these books, West repeatedly cites the Analysts, fully aware that he would puzzle and infuriate a generation of scholars raised in the oralist faith and taught to despise such antediluvians. The former book opens with a vigorous defence of their (and his) procedures. Now the theory seems perfectly possible; if Homer wrote his poems down, he could have made changes in the manner posited. That authors’ revisions have left traces in the manuscript tradition is accepted for some later writers, while another scholar has

²⁵ M. L. West, ‘*Iliad and Aethiopsis*’, *Classical Quarterly*, n.s. 53 (2003), 13–14, reprinted in *Hellenica* 1, p. 261. On the next page he begins his conclusion ‘Once we shake the oralists off our backs.’

²⁶ See M. L. West, *Hesiod: Works and Days* (Oxford, 1978), p. 58 n. 1; see also M. L. West, ‘Is the *Works and Days* an oral poem?’, *Hellenica* 1, pp. 146–58. G. P. Goold, ‘The nature of Homeric composition’, *Illinois Classical Studies*, 2 (1977), 1–34, had the same view about Homer. West diagnoses author’s insertions in Euripides at *Hellenica* 2, pp. 302, 311–17, and in his review of D. Mastronarde’s *Phoenissae*, *Classical Philology*, 85 (1990), 315–16.

diagnosed alternative versions of the same material in Hesiod's *Works and Days*.²⁷ The principal difficulty, however, is that the offence felt by Analysts and West too often depends on modern and unexamined common-sense judgements about what is acceptable, expected or 'logical' in matters of archaic composition and style. For all that the texts were written down, the oral, performative environment in which they were composed and delivered must determine both aesthetics and poetics. If in the Embassy scene in *Iliad* 9 there seem now to be two ambassadors, now three, would ancient poets and audiences be much bothered? If it looks as if the Greeks and Trojans will come to blows in Book 2, is it a problem that Agamemnon's crisis of confidence postpones the battle for nine books? If Thetis in her anguish weeps that Achilles will die as soon as he kills Hector (*Il.* 18.95–6), is it a problem that he is not in fact killed right away?²⁸ Are an unusual present tense and a vague pronoun enough to prove that a passage originally had another home (*Od.* 7.103–31)?²⁹ Can the supposed 'organic' qualities of an epic poem's episodes (or the lack of them) allow inferences about multi-stage composition? Such questions arise repeatedly, and their answers can have far-reaching implications for one's understanding of the poets' art and for literary history. West knew these poems better than anyone (large tracts by heart) and he made many brilliant observations, which one must take into account. It should not be forgotten that his Unitarian analysis of Hesiod's poems successfully defended the authenticity of many passages on the basis of a better understanding of the poet's procedures. Nonetheless, his strongly anti-oralist perspective is one shared by few scholars, even those who accept the early fixity of these texts.

In rounding off this section on West's studies of epic, a word on *The Hesiodic Catalogue of Women: its Nature, Structure, and Origins* (Oxford, 1985) is appropriate. This poem of the sixth century BC is a revision of a Hesiodic original, a continuation of the *Theogony*, whose subject is divine unions, with an account of the offspring of gods and mortal women. In recounting his genealogies, the poet refers summarily to

²⁷L. E. Rossi, 'Esiodo, Le Opere e i Giorni: Un nuovo tentativo di analisi', in F. Montanari and S. Pittaluga (eds.), *Posthomeric*, vol. 1 (Genoa, 1997), pp. 7–22. These alternatives would offer a choice of scripts for recitation on different occasions, which is a slightly different idea but envisages a similar use and subsequent history of the manuscript. In his new Oxford Classical Text of Herodotus, N. G. Wilson has diagnosed author's insertions; for discussion, see his *Herodotea* (Oxford, 2015).

²⁸*Hellenica* 1, pp. 251–2. The two events are causally and symbolically linked.

²⁹This passage is West's prize exhibit: see M. L. West, 'The gardens of Alcinoos and the oral dictated text theory', *Acta Hungarica*, 40 (2000), 479–88, reprinted in *Hellenica* 1, pp. 265–76 ('incontrovertible', p. 268), and *The Making of the Odyssey*, pp. 94 ('irrefutable'; the intrusion of present tenses is 'wholly unparalleled and unconscionable'), 132, 188. Contrast I. de Jong, *A Narratological Commentary on the Odyssey* (Cambridge, 2001), pp. xiii (under 'description'), 176 for the generic norm that is here not observed and the reason why. To explain a new problem arising from his analysis, West had to advance a secondary, ad hoc hypothesis (*The Making of the Odyssey*, p. 188 n. 65).

the great exploits associated with these offspring; he thus offers a poetic history of the heroic age of Greece, down to the Trojan War and its immediate aftermath. Knowledge of the poem gradually improved in the course of the twentieth century with the appearance of papyri, but leapt forward with the publication of volume 28 of *The Oxyrhynchus Papyri*, containing nearly as many papyri again as had hitherto been found; a further substantial fragment appeared in 1981. These discoveries enabled the edition of Hesiod's fragments jointly published by West and Merkelbach in 1967, and provided the basis of a reconstruction of the *Catalogue*, begun by Merkelbach and finished by West. This poem was, among other things, the well-spring of the mythographical tradition in antiquity. As the commentary on the *Theogony* had included a worldwide survey of theogony, and the commentary on the *Works and Days* a similar survey of wisdom literature, the *Catalogue* book collects examples from all over the globe of genealogical poetry. Anyone who has tried to find their way through the bewildering morass of variants that is Greek mythology has reason to be grateful for this superb book. It will still take a determined effort to work through West's treatment—that lies in the nature of the subject. But diligence will be rewarded not only with enhanced admiration for this early poet's feat, but with an appreciation of the cultural and political importance of genealogies in archaic Greece. As West patiently maps both the wood and trees of this unusually dense forest, one cannot but marvel at his skill, learning and powers of combination. This is another work of genius.

To move on to lyric poetry, early in his career West produced *Iambi et Elegi Graeci ante Alexandrum cantati (IEG)*, in two volumes (Oxford, 1971–2); the advent of the 'New Simonides' and other finds necessitated a second edition (1989–92).³⁰ His qualities as an editor are especially conspicuous in these volumes: superb philology; clarity of layout and ease of consultation; judicious selection of supporting materials; brilliance in conjectural emendation of manuscripts and supplementing lacunae in papyri. The last quality irritated more conservative critics. Bruno Gentili, co-editor of the Teubner edition of the elegiac poets, objected to West's practices, challenging also his use of evidence in assigning fragments and reconstructing poems.³¹ He was particularly

³⁰The 'New Simonides', sc. Oxyrhynchus Papyrus 59.3965 published in 1992, was one of the more spectacular papyrus discoveries of the late twentieth century (its overlap with *POxy* 22.2327 enabled that papyrus, hitherto anonymous, also to be identified as Simonidean). West made a decisive contribution to the understanding of the text and its place in Simonides' oeuvre, both in the first publication and in his 'Simonides Redivivus', *Hellenica* 2, pp. 111–18 (originally published 1993). For studies, see D. Boedeker and D. Sider (eds.), *The New Simonides: Contexts of Praise and Desire* (Oxford, 2001).

³¹B. Gentili, *Gnomon*, 52 (1980), 97–101.

exercised by what West had done with the gibberish transmitted in the single manuscript that preserves Semonides fr. 10a:

καὶ μήτ' ἀλλ' οὕτως γὰρ ἂν εἶ μεθ' ὕδωρ θαύμαζε μὴ δὲ [. .]ύρη γενειάδα· μηδὲ
 ῥυποχίτων ἔση ἔν τε χόρα

which West turned into:

καὶ μήτ' ἄλουτος γαυρία σύ, μήτ' ὕδωρ
 θαύμαζε, μηδὲ [κο]υρία γενειάδα,
 μηδὲ ῥύπῳι χιτῶνος ἔντυε χόρα.

and translated as:

Do not be proud of never washing, nor
 a water-maniac; grow no bushy beard,
 nor wrap your body in a filthy cloak.

In the apparatus West notes simply 'correxī', which as he well knew should be used only when an editor thinks no doubt can be entertained about what he has printed. Gentili gave this as his principal example of the work's 'most obvious limitation, West's very conception of a critical edition as a bravura arena in which to parade one's skill in inventive conjecture'.³² Another reviewer, however, more of West's way of thinking, closed by remarking 'one must sincerely raise one's square [hat] to salute a scholar who can dig this out of a corrupt παράδοσις'.³³ Douglas Gerber and Bruno Snell both accepted the reading in their editions. West was as capable as anyone of defending an unjustly impugned paradosis, but like Housman he had no tolerance for critics who placed unreasoning faith in the manuscripts. He expounded his procedures with his usual force and clarity in the near contemporary *Textual Criticism and Editorial Technique* (Stuttgart, 1973), a book that teems with excellent practical advice on every aspect of the craft, and which has done good service for many, not just for classical editors. Whatever one may make of his bolder readings, they are unfailingly intelligent, often arresting and always thought-provoking. We shall say more of this when considering the edition of Aeschylus.

Critics complained with greater justice that the information offered in the apparatus of *IEG* was too sparse, that testimonia to the authors' lives and works were all but omitted, and that West was less scrupulous than he might have been in reporting other scholars' conjectures. In keeping with the editorial policy of the Teubner series, Gentili and his fellow editor Carlo Prato gave the reader far more in the way of testimonia,

³² *Ibid.*, 97: 'Il suo limite più evidente è nell' idea stessa che il West ha dell' edizione critica, concepita come una palestra di bravura, in cui dar prova di capacità inventiva nel congetturare.'

³³ G. Bond, *Classical Review*, n.s. 25 (1975), 181. West first proposed the reading in *Maia*, 20 (1968), 196. The paradosis is the tradition as received in the manuscripts.

parallels, conjectures and bibliography, so that the edition was also a basic commentary. One is often grateful for such information, even if it makes consultation less easy. It can be overdone. In reviewing Gentili–Prato, West was relatively mild in his criticism,³⁴ but in the witty choliambic verses he wrote as prefaces to his own volumes (who else but West would do that?) he permitted himself a fairly sarcastic barb, partly for the sake of an ingenious pun on their names.³⁵ Specialists need to consult the fuller texts, and Gerber's Loeb edition with its translations is the first port of call for students and non-specialists, but the qualities of *IEG* make it for many scholars the working edition to have to hand.

As a companion volume to *IEG* West published *Studies in Greek Elegy and Iambus* (Berlin and New York, 1974), as he was later to publish similar volumes of studies to accompany his editions of Aeschylus and the *Iliad*. Here one finds his groundbreaking study of the genres of elegy and iambus (the latter including the controversial argument that Lycambes and other figures in iambic poetry were not real people, but traditional types); his account of the history of the corpus attributed to Theognis (contested in details, but the general idea of a multi-stage development is widely accepted); his argument that Theognis lived in the latter part of the seventh century BC instead of the sixth (which has convinced almost no one); a brief account of the life and works of Mimnermus; and a commentary on selected passages. One will also find a dense and extremely rewarding chapter on the language and metre of the poets, a treatise that any aspiring philologist should study with the utmost care.

The principal texts in *IEG* were also published as an Oxford Classical Text;³⁶ the genuine Theognis (in West's judgement) from the Theognidea, along with the fragments of Demodocus, the hexameters of Phocylides (who, having written no elegies, was omitted from *IEG*) and anonymous hexameter gnomic fragments were published as a Teubner text.³⁷ The edition of the *Anacreontea* has already been mentioned; it was the first truly critical edition since the early twentieth century, and at once became standard.³⁸ The preface provides a concise discussion of sources, language and metre, history of the collection and scholarship on it; the text itself is equipped with a useful

³⁴ *Classical Review*, n.s. 31 (1981), 1–2.

³⁵ 'Strictius, puto, nullo / gramina videbis rasa gentili prato, / nec ubi redundat usquequaque laetamen': 'you shall not see, I think, the grass more closely mown on any foreign meadow, nor the fertiliser flooding everywhere' (*laetamen*: translate 'manure' if you choose). M. L. West, *Iambi et Elegi Graeci ante Alexandrum cantat*, 2nd edn, vol. 2, (Oxford 1972), p. 1.

³⁶ M. L. West (ed.), *Delectus ex Iambis et Elegis Graecis* (Oxford, 1980).

³⁷ M. L. West (ed.), *Theognidis et Phocylidis Fragmenta et Adespota quaedam gnomica* (Berlin and New York, 1978). The latter was in the Teubner 'Kleine Texte' series and so did not include the wealth of additional material mentioned, but it did have illustrative parallels and brief explanatory comments.

³⁸ David Campbell's 1988 Loeb edition is excellent and probably more widely used, given the translation and the price; but naturally it builds on West, adopting twelve of his emendations.

collection of parallel passages. Although he never edited the Lesbian poets nor those in Page's *Poetae Melici Graeci*, West made dozens of contributions in reviews and articles to the constitution and understanding of their texts. Editions of papyri routinely reported his suggestions, since any editor with sense approached him for advice pre-publication. Even so, West would often contribute his own separate treatment in an article in the *Zeitschrift für Papyrologie und Epigraphik*, usually in the next number after the edition appeared. Mention should also be made of *Greek Lyric Poetry* (Oxford, 1993), in which he translated all the poems and fragments of iambic, elegiac and melic poets, except for Pindar and Bacchylides, down to 450 BC. This is the most successful of his translations, and with its concise notes and introduction is a superb entry point to the period for students and general readers. One of his last contributions in this field, 'Pindar as a man of letters' (*Hellenica* 2, pp. 129–50), documents the breadth of Pindar's knowledge of earlier literature, and cogently argues that he must have derived a great deal of it from reading books. However one draws the balance between oral and literate in the days of Homer, scholars have consistently ignored the high degree of literacy among the intelligentsia by the sixth century BC if not before. West's article is a firm refutation of this error, traceable to Eric Havelock's influential *Preface to Plato* (Oxford, 1962), and imparts momentum to a re-evaluation of this topic now under way. The oral, performative environment had been neglected before Havelock, and we have learned much from this line of research; but the recognition that there was simultaneously a wider literate environment (literary, indeed, in a strong sense) makes a great difference in how one assesses matters such as intertextuality, real and implied audiences, the author's persona and so on.

The edition of Aeschylus' surviving plays naturally holds pride of place in West's oeuvre on tragedy. The *paradosis* presents many problems of exceptional difficulty, resulting partly from the tragedian's bold use of language, partly from the state of the manuscripts. *Prometheus Bound* offers its own set of peculiarities, sufficient to have convinced West and many others that it is not by Aeschylus (that it was written by his son Euphorion is an older suggestion developed by West with further arguments).³⁹ The edition is based for the first time on a complete knowledge of the manuscript tradition (all MSS down to and including the fourteenth century were consulted). The relationships between the manuscripts is much better understood, and the manner of reporting them (and editorial interventions) in the apparatus is at once more informa-

³⁹The full title of the edition is *Aeschylus: Tragoediae cum incerti poetae Prometheo* (Stuttgart, 1990); West is the first editor to condemn the *Prometheus Bound* explicitly in his text. See M. L. West, 'The Prometheus trilogy', *Hellenica* 2, pp. 250–86; M. L. West, 'The authorship of the Prometheus trilogy', in *Studies in Aeschylus* (Stuttgart, 1990), pp. 51–72; and M. L. West, 'Iliad and Aethiopsis on the stage: Aeschylus and son', *Hellenica* 2, pp. 227–49 (in which he suggests further plays transmitted under Aeschylus' name that may have been written by his son).

tive and economical. The register of testimonia has been improved, as in the edition of Homer. The Praefatio, in West's fine Latin, discusses the paradosis, matters of grammar, prosody, orthography; a brief section clarifies the contributions of the sixteenth-century scholars Auratus (Jean Dorat) and Franciscus Portus. An appendix provides the editor's analysis of the metres of all lyrical portions. The accompanying volume of *Studies* discusses the manuscripts and the history of Aeschylean textual criticism at greater length, including the editor's calculation of who had made the greatest number of successful emendations; far out in front is Turnebus in the sixteenth century (191), followed by Gottfried Hermann in the nineteenth (135). West himself contributed many conjectures; he also performed signal service in resurrecting neglected ones. In 'Forward into the past', he singles out the obscure K. H. Keck's brilliant restoration of *Suppliants* 599 (σπεῦσαι. τί τῶνδ' οὐ Διὸς φέρει φρήν, for the manuscript's σπεῦσαι τι τῶν δούλιος φέρει φρήν), ignored by everybody save J. Oberdick in his edition of 1869, as emblematic of the textual critic's art.⁴⁰ Another striking example of resurrection is Badham's overlooked 'Hekate' (Ἑκάτα) for the manuscripts' odd 'the fair one' ((ἴ) καλὰ) in *Agamemnon* 140. The *Studies* also contains chapters on the Prometheus and Lycurgus trilogies, and on 'The formal structures of Aeschylean tragedy'. The underlying schema imputed to Aeschylus in the latter is too general, and rests upon too small a sample (the four early plays, in which already there are significant variations) to command assent, but the observations on individual structural elements are often instructive.

The heart of the *Studies* is some 240 pages of notes on selected passages. Aeschylus is a kind of Everest of Greek textual criticism, and in the nature of things conjectural emendations are less likely to find acceptance than in other authors. By my count West made 339 conjectures (excluding the orthographica flagged up in the Praefatio), of which he admitted 119 into the text. These can be dazzlingly right—they are often original, ingenious and elegant; boldness is a common feature. But there are many times when one wishes he had considered matters a little more carefully and resisted the temptation, born of his amazing facility, to emend so much. Were all 119 corrections to be correct, West would be, on his own reckoning, the third most successful emender of Aeschylus in history. Or even the most successful: Turnebus in the Renaissance could pluck the low-hanging fruit, and so much work has been done since Hermann that the chances of this number of new conjectures being right would seem small. Another editor would mark more passages as incurable, and confine

⁴⁰ *Hesperos*, p. xxii, where he translates the paradosis as 'he is able to execute deed as soon as word of whatever his servile mind brings forth'; the previously favoured emendation (βούλιος for δούλιος) translates as 'of whatever his counselling mind brings forth'; Keck's emendation means 'he is able to execute deed as soon as word. What of these things is not brought forth by Zeus' mind?'

conjectures to the apparatus; the older Oxford edition of Denys Page (Oxford, 1972) is safer in this sense (and cheaper), and will probably be the most commonly used. West knew of course that a reading's rightness was normally a matter of probability, not certainty, but he placed the bar for admission much lower than other scholars would; the criticism levelled against *IEG* is more justified in this case. The idea, however, that minimal intervention was the more responsible course was forcefully and eloquently rebutted on several occasions by West; in respect of Aeschylus, see *Studies*, pp. 369–72. In this as in much else, Fraenkel was the link between his teacher Wilamowitz and West.

Apart from the Aeschylean work, West also produced an edition of Euripides' *Orestes* in the Aris & Phillips series (equipped with a translation and aimed primarily at students, but there are many notes valuable also to scholars and the usual clutch of emendations). One should mention also the series 'Tragica', seven articles of notes published in the *Bulletin of the Institute of Classical Studies* between 1977 and 1984 (excerpted in *Hellenica* 2).

Hellenica 3 opens with eleven chapters on Greek philosophy, or more precisely Greek cosmology, the dominant topic among early Greek thinkers. In the other branches of philosophy that preoccupied later Greek philosophers West had no interest, at least not such as provoked publication. His abiding interest in astronomy is on display here (note especially 'The midnight planet', pp. 110–15). The chapter 'Alcman and Pythagoras' stands out as a rich exposition of cosmological thought in the most unlikely of places, a seventh-century BC Spartan poet. But the most insistent theme in these essays—appearing also in several chapters in the rest of the volume—is the Near Eastern background of Greek thought. In addition to his many articles, there are three books: *Early Greek Philosophy and the Orient*; *The Orphic Poems*: not primarily focused on the interface of the two cultures, but frequently having occasion to discuss it); and the mighty *The East Face of Helicon*.

The first of these, which is dedicated to Walter Burkert, makes out the thesis that there was a period of intense Iranian influence on Greek thought between about 550 and 480 BC (with some influence before, but none after until dialogue resumed in the fourth century). He attributed the influence primarily to meetings between Greek thinkers and wandering Magi. There are extended discussions of Pherecydes of Syros, Anaximander and Heraclitus, in which the connections are explored in detail. The book was roughly handled by critics, both for its general thesis and in its treatment of the texts. In response many years later, West commented that the book

leaves a good deal to be desired, as others have noted. But it has aroused enthusiasm in some quarters, and I do not disown it entirely. The accounts of Pherecydes and Heraclitus are perhaps the most substantial contributions in it. I regret that the book has been almost totally ignored, *totgeschwiegen*, by the 'professional' historians of Greek philosophy, who remain absorbed in their own agenda.⁴¹

He clung to the idea of Iranian influence in a late article on Zoroastrian influence in Greece,⁴² which suggests that he accepted the criticism in respect of the details, but not of the general thesis. However, the more extended, if implicit, response was *The East Face of Helicon*. Although this book concentrates on myth and literature to the deliberate exclusion of science and philosophy, by documenting the myriad parallels between the literatures and mythologies of the Near East and those of Greece (in which, after all, many of the cosmological ideas were embedded), and by suggesting many ways such motifs and ideas might have crossed cultural boundaries, from the Bronze Age onwards almost without break, West implicitly concedes that the narrow window of influence in philosophy 550–480 BC is a reflection only of the surviving texts and part of a wider picture. He acknowledges that the routes of transmission were complex and mostly beyond our detection (though he still stresses the role of wandering wise men—poets rather than Magi in the case of literature).⁴³ One may detect too a mellowing of the pioneer's enthusiasm, in that the earlier book effectively claimed that the Near East deserved the credit for the brilliant innovations of early Greek philosophy:

But what invaded Greek speculation in the mid sixth century was no mere convolvulus that withered away when its season was past, leaving the sturdy stems of Hellenic rationalism to grow unimpeded as they had always meant to. It was an ambrosia plant, that produced a permanent enlargement where it touched. In some ways one might say that it was the very extravagance of oriental fancy that freed the Greeks from the limitations of what they could see with their own eyes: led them to think of ten-thousand-year cycles instead of human generations, of an infinity beyond the visible sky and below the foundations of the earth, of a life not bounded by womb and tomb but renewed in different bodies aeon after aeon. It was now that they learned to think that good men and bad have different destinations after death; that the fortunate soul ascends to the luminaries of heaven; that God is intelligence; that the cosmos is one living creature; that the material world can be analysed in terms of a few basic

⁴¹ West, 'Forward into the past', p. xxvii. Reviews: *Classical Review*, n.s. 24 (1974), 82–6 (G. S. Kirk); *Gnomon*, 47 (1975), 321–8 (M. Marcovich); *Mnemosyne*, ser. 4, 32 (1979), 389–96 (W. J. Verdenius).

⁴² West, 'The classical world'.

⁴³ '[W]e can no more count and describe the sources of all the eastern motifs and procedures than plot the flow of waters beneath the surface of a marsh'; West, *The East Face of Helicon*, p. 629.

constituents such as fire, water, earth, metal; that there is a world of Being beyond perception, beyond time. These were conceptions of enduring importance for ancient philosophy. This was the gift of the Magi.⁴⁴

The later book speaks of steady influence rather than a quasi-magical transformation, and contemplates scenarios of extended, complex interaction. The nuancing also blunts the Orientalism of the passage just quoted. These refinements apart, however, West re-emphasises in the strongest terms that the Near East contributed decisively and massively to Greek culture. The astonishing number of parallels, he argues, could yield no other conclusion, even if any individual parallel might not entail a causal relationship. The topics he raises in the peroration of the earlier book, and those in *The East Face of Helicon*, still demand assessment, and a new generation of scholars is rising to the challenge. Even where they disagree with some of his findings (the force of the cumulative argument in particular is coming under pressure), this shift in orientation acknowledges the impact of West's work. Classicists are starting to learn the languages: West himself learned Hittite, Akkadian, Ugaritic, Phoenician, Aramaic and Hebrew in order to write this book.

The Orphic Poems is another groundbreaking work. It is the best synoptic treatment of the whole Orphic tradition. There is no underlying unity in this tradition, so what West attempted instead was to establish when and by whom Orphic texts were written, and how they related to one another. The stemma he drew (see p. 264) was very complex, and one may think that, like many manuscript traditions, this one is too contaminated by cross-fertilisation between branches to yield a stemma. In 'Forward into the past' West defends the book against charges of excessive speculation and reiterates his belief in the soundness of the reconstruction. But whatever one may make of the stemma, there is no doubt about the importance of this work for its discussion of many problems.

The Derveni papyrus was a cardinal witness, and since West's role in the first publication has been a matter of speculation, it is worth reporting on it here. This remarkable text, an extremely idiosyncratic commentary on an early Orphic theogony, was first excavated in 1962. Seven of its surviving twenty-eight columns were published in 1965. West copied what he could from the papyrus itself in the museum in Thessaloniki in 1970, which added four more columns and some smaller fragments to what was known. The Greek editors made a full draft text available in 1980, which circulated in photocopies. West, who had acquired one from Eric Turner FBA (1911–1983), shared it with Walter Burkert. Regarding the situation as intolerable, Burkert persuaded Merkelbach, the editor of the *Zeitschrift für Papyrologie und Epigraphik*, to publish it without proper permission. It appeared anonymously in 1982, at the back

⁴⁴M. L. West, *Early Greek Philosophy and the Orient*, (Oxford, 1971) pp. 241–2.

of volume 47, separately paginated and unrecorded in the issue's table of contents.⁴⁵ The breach of scholarly protocol caused ill feeling, but most readers thought it was justified, given the importance of the text and the unconscionable delays. The full edition did not appear until 2006, although before then full materials were made readily available by the Greek editors to those who asked.

Music and metre are the principal topics occupying the remainder of *Hellenica* 3. On the first West published *Ancient Greek Music* (Oxford, 1992) and, with Egert Pöhlmann, *Documents of Ancient Greek Music* (Oxford, 2001), an edition and commentary on the surviving texts. These are, once again, works of fundamental importance. The monograph transformed the subject, not only patiently explaining the daunting technicalities but also providing detailed research on instruments, singing, the role of music in Greek life and the history of musical developments in antiquity. *Greek Metre* (Oxford, 1982) is the standard reference.⁴⁶ West made many refinements to the empirical system of analysis worked out by Wilamowitz and Paul Maas (1880–1964), which reflects ancient reality far better than any other, despite some claims to the contrary. The book is ordered chronologically, to make the point that metre is an aspect of literary history and, where possible, to explore aesthetic implications; a typically ingenious glossary-index helps those seeking a synchronic perspective and offers the best brief guide available to the formidable jargon of this topic.

A subject spanning all three volumes of *Hellenica* and all stages of West's career is the Indo-European heritage of Greek literature. This interest culminated in the masterpiece *Indo-European Poetry and Myth* (Oxford, 2007). Here West deployed his knowledge of yet more languages (some of which he had known since his youth). 'Most translations offered for quoted passages (Vedic, Avestan, Greek, Old Norse, etc.), are my own', he writes (p. xiii). Who knows how many languages are covered by that 'etc.', but it certainly included Germanic languages (Old English, of course),⁴⁷ and a smattering of Celtic and Slavic. The twelve chapters explore a long list of common themes, which comprise many secondary topics, all richly illustrated with examples; the bounty of this treasure house is practically beyond measure. One may query (West himself queries, p. 24) how to gauge the force of mythological parallels (as opposed to more precise linguistic connections), how many and what kind of parallels between different branches it takes to certify something as Indo-European, and in what ways exactly the inheritance we can document from our vantage point

⁴⁵For details, see W. Burkert, 'The true story of the anonymous edition', in I. Papadopoulou and L. Muellner (eds.), *Poetry as Initiation* (Washington, DC, 2014), pp. 113–14; cf. M. L. West, *The Orphic Poems* (Oxford, 1983), p. v.

⁴⁶There is also the shorter M. L. West, *Introduction to Greek Metre* (Oxford, 1987).

⁴⁷Verses of the ninth-century monk Otfrid of Weissenburg are translated from his particular dialect of Old High German at *ibid.*, p. 190.

had real traction in any given case (a wider problem, pertinent to any study of traditions). These are questions that will continue to be debated; as in *The East Face of Helicon*, West has given us the tools to do it. The book closes with an ‘Elegy on an Indo-European hero’, an affecting ode incorporating many of the motifs identified as common inheritance.

Finally, two books that were parerga of the Indo-European labours: *The Hymns of Zoroaster: a New Translation of the Most Sacred Texts of Iran* (London, 2010), and, even more impressively, *Old Avestan Syntax and Stylistics: with an Edition of the Texts* (Berlin and Boston, 2011).⁴⁸ The syntax book usefully filled a gap in the literature, and specialists need to consult it. On the other hand, these texts are extremely problematic, and no agreement exists on many questions of reading, construction and meaning. West’s critical edition offers thirty-three emendations, of which nineteen are put in the text; the translation naturally depends on these, and the syntax book had also to take a view on the construction of controversial passages. The introduction to the translation fully acknowledges the existence of many serious difficulties, but in the course of the book the author signals only ‘the most major uncertainties’ (p. viii). This policy has drawn criticism, and the tendency to disregard, or even denounce, trends that have dominated criticism in recent decades did not go down well in some quarters.⁴⁹ Yet, if one takes the view that scholarly progress depends on crossing disciplinary boundaries, one can only be grateful for someone who can conduct both sides of a conversation with such fluency. Few people when treading on alien ground would score so well in both accuracy of detail and command of the general picture.⁵⁰ Moreover, the book certainly succeeded in its stated aim of making these great texts available to a wider audience.

We have reached the end of this necessarily long overview of the major publications. West’s seemingly limitless philological prowess is obvious; it was an ability such as the world rarely sees. No one knew more Greek than he did, and no Hellenist has mastered so many other languages. The wonderful facility in Greek and Latin verse

⁴⁸ ‘At that point’, commented Robert Parker in his All Souls memorial address, ‘even seasoned West-watchers had to gasp’.

⁴⁹ West discusses his principles, and explains many of his conjectures, in ‘On editing the *Gathās*’, *Iran*, 46 (2008), 121–34. The translation was reviewed by D. Durkin-Meisterernst in the *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society*, ser. 3, 21 (2011), 379–81, and the syntax book by R. Schmitt, *Kratylos*, 57 (2012), 161–70. For West’s combative attitude to literary theory, see below p. 116.

⁵⁰ Note the review by the Assyriologist A. R. George of *The East Face of Helicon* in *Classical Review*, n.s. 50 (2000), 103–6.

composition was part of this linguistic gift.⁵¹ Perhaps unexpectedly, he read slowly, but he remembered everything; the capacity of his memory seems scarcely credible. It was coupled with an ability to marshal in orderly array the millions of facts stored within, and to present them to the reader with superb lucidity, often deploying ingenious methods of arrangement in which he took special delight. If scholars worship on the altar of Akribeia, the goddess was surely well pleased with this acolyte's meticulous devotions. It is rare even to find a misprint in West's writings. Also obvious is the amazing quantity of publications; extraordinary discipline, concentration and powers of recall must be supposed to account for such an output. The editor of the Aris & Phillips series, Christopher Collard, said that the *Orestes* commentary was the fastest ever produced. There were also scores of encyclopaedia articles and a multitude of reviews. Such contributions are one example of West's generosity, which many young scholars and visitors to Oxford experienced (including the present writer on many occasions). He was responsible, indeed, as an assiduous Dean of Visiting Fellows at All Souls, for bringing many overseas classicists to the College and further developing that successful and important programme.

West was a master stylist in prose, with a gift for happy metaphor, choice diction and graceful rhythm. His virtues as a translator have already been mentioned. Humour is apt to irrupt at any time, beginning with eye-catching titles such as 'Grated Cheese Fit for Heroes', 'Greek Poetry 2000–700 BC', 'Seventeen Distorted Mirrors in Plato', 'Two Lunatic Notes', 'Conjectures on 46 Greek Poets', 'The Way of a Maid with a Moke', 'Ringed Welkins', 'A Vagina in Search of an Author'; a seminar in Oxford about a newly discovered poem of Archilochos of Paros, in which the poet recounts a steamy sexual encounter, was billed as 'Last Tango on Paros'. Among many passages one could quote, I offer this from the tribute to W. W. Cruickshank:

Claiming to have solved the riddle of the universe is commonly a symptom of schizophrenia. What far-reaching suspicions must he then court, who bids to solve the riddle of *a hundred and eighty-three universes!* Yet such is the extravagant duty appointed for the inquirer whose ambition of the moment is to make sense of the strange cosmology of Petron of Himera. Shall we venture upon the perilous task? Shall we expose to the sniper our reputation, such as it is, for equilibrium? Of course we shall. All must be risked for science.⁵²

Non omnia possumus omnes. At the beginning of 'Forward into the past', West distinguishes 'three different approaches to the study of literature':

⁵¹ Apart from examples noted elsewhere in this memoir, see *Hellenica* 1, pp. 148–9; 2, pp. 391–3; 3, p. 134; other poems cited at *Hellenica* 3, p. 498. Of modern languages, he spoke German fluently and Italian passably.

⁵² *Hellenica* 3, pp. 134–5.

The three approaches are, firstly, consideration of the intrinsic qualities of literary works, their beauties or infelicities, the author's imaginative universe, his compositional habits and techniques, and so on; secondly, inquiry into the work's relationship to the world outside itself, its dating, its authenticity, its debts to earlier models or more loosely to the tradition in which it stands, the intellectual and cultural influences operating on the author; and thirdly—an approach which may draw on both the other two, among others—the endeavour to resolve doubts at the verbal level about what exactly the author wrote and what exactly he meant. These three approaches may be summed up as literary criticism, literary history, and philology.

He identifies himself as a literary historian and philologist. One can of course find remarks throughout his oeuvre about beauties, infelicities, compositional techniques and so forth, and views on such matters are often relevant to textual criticism. He had an unsurpassed sense of Greek literary style; that, his own beautiful English and his various creative endeavours more than justify his calling himself 'an artistic spirit' in the preface to *Hellenica* 3. But his claim here not to be a literary critic did not spring, or spring only, from a sense of limitation or lack of interest; he was hostile to much of the literary criticism practised in the academy, as numerous remarks reveal (in private, he called it 'gush'). So, for instance:

Of this mass of manuscripts a large part has still not been collated, five hundred years after the invention of printing; if scholars had devoted as much effort to this basic research as they have put into writing 'interpretations' of tragedy, we should be further ahead.⁵³

Or:

structuralism, one of the bulkier bandwagons at present cluttering the road to truth.⁵⁴

Or:

I disagree fundamentally with those modern scholars who claim that the prophet's style is deliberately esoteric and encrypted, full of intentional double or multiple meanings. In my view, where different interpretations of a sentence are possible, it is the job of the translator or commentator to try to determine which one corresponds

⁵³ M. L. West (ed.), *Euripides: Orestes* (Warminster, 1987), p. 42.

⁵⁴ *Hellenica* 1, p. 22, from a review of N. Austin, *Archery at the Dark of the Moon: Poetic Problems in Homer's Odyssey* (Berkeley, CA, 1975). In his Balzan acceptance speech (above, n. 9) West wrote: 'When I received the news of the award two months ago, it came as a total surprise, especially to one who cannot claim to have developed the study of Classical Antiquity in any previously unknown direction, or enriched it with any new concepts or methodology. I practise a style of philology that I learned forty years ago and have seen no reason to change; set in my ways from an early age, I have ignored the changing fashions of scholarship and slept through the noise of the bandwagons that pass in the night. I have from time to time asked new questions and explored neglected fields, but whenever I have done so, I have used traditional procedures.' He describes his work as being of 'a basically old-fashioned kind'.

to the author's intention. To credit him with deliberate ambiguity or multivalence is merely an excuse for indecisiveness, or for showing off the commentator's resourcefulness.

In choosing between possible interpretations the best guide is contextual coherence. The translator must try to identify the essential thought underlying each sentence—what it is that Zoroaster is wanting to say and striving to express in metrical form—and to trace the sequence of his thinking from stanza to stanza. The more coherent the sequence of thought that can be elicited, while interpreting the words in as unforced a way as possible, the more likely it will be that we have reached a correct understanding.⁵⁵

Or:

The Greek poetesses, and Sappho above all, set us a challenge, a challenge to be aware of ourselves. Let us by all means play with these figures in our romantic fantasy and seek in their lives things that we miss in our own. Let us bring them into our feminist essays or our erotic fiction as we like. Or let us investigate them as serious scholars and make the effort to interpret their verses and their lives correctly. Only let us be aware of ourselves and recognize which of these things it is that we are wanting to do; and whoever is striving for true knowledge, let him hold on to the principle of always trying to see things as they are, and not as we would wish them to be.⁵⁶

I pass over 'let him' without comment, and the insulting equivalence of feminist essays and erotic fiction. A literary critic would regard a distinction between 'serious scholars' seeing things 'as they are' and others offering feminist (or whatever) readings in the same way a philologist would gape at an unmetrical conjecture or elementary mis-translation. The number of questions begged in these comments about how meaning is produced and received (especially from alien cultures) is large. Another passage in point, too long to quote, is the broadside against 'that curse of contemporary Aeschylean criticism, the belief in the structural significance of recurrent imagery' in West's review of A. F. Garvie's commentary on Aeschylus' *Choephoroi* (*Hellenica* 3, pp. 223–6, once again a deliberate reprint to underscore the point). One may disagree with Garvie's treatment, but the role of imagery in ancient poetry (and its abundance in Aeschylus) needs systematic, not common-sense, thought; and anything one says is an 'interpretation'. What counts as coherence, and how much it matters, as I have suggested above in connection with Homer, varies from person to person and much more from culture to culture. To overlook such considerations is precisely not to be

⁵⁵ M. L. West, *The Hymns of Zoroaster: a New Translation of the Most Sacred Texts of Iran* (London, 2010), p. 35. 'In my view ... resourcefulness' was defiantly reprinted as an *obiter dictum* in *Hellenica* 3, p. 488.

⁵⁶ *Hellenica* 3, p. 335 (originally 1996). From the same essay, p. 315 n. 1: 'There are several anthologies and general treatments of the more significant poetesses, mainly of a feminist-dilettante nature.'

‘aware of ourselves’. One sometimes detects in West’s work a kind of hyper-rationalism, fuelled by unquestioning self-confidence, which regards all problems as solvable given sufficient evidence and ingenuity; it is impatient of the messiness of phenomena and expects to find everywhere the happy property of textual criticism that there is but one right answer (the ‘truth’). Would it were so.

There were some literary critics West admired; R. P. Winnington-Ingram was one, for whom he wrote the biographical memoir.⁵⁷ Winnington-Ingram had, in West’s view, the right combination of sensitivity to the text and caution about fashionable approaches; on p. 594 of the memoir West quotes him on structuralism and imposing one’s own views on a text, remarks that are echoed in some of the excerpts I have quoted herein. One point on which many readers (certainly this one) would agree with West is the pointless obscurantism of much modern criticism, which he attacked mercilessly in reviews. *Non fumum ex fulgore, sed ex fumo dare lucem*. For the most part, West stuck wisely to his last; his forays into purely literary-critical territory, such as the analysis of Aeschylean structures mentioned above, or the general assessment of the *Orestes* (‘a rattling good play’), were few.

West’s attitude to literary criticism was widely shared among classicists of his generation. Readers of this memoir will assess it as they will, as they will have different views about the merits of his bold speculations and textual emendations. When all is said, there can be no doubt that Martin West was a very great scholar, indeed a genius, comparable with the greatest of any age. There was no more famous philologist; his name was and is ubiquitous in the professional literature. The citation for the Kenyon Medal justly called him ‘the most brilliant and productive Greek scholar of his generation, not just in the United Kingdom, but worldwide’ and ‘in a class entirely of his own’. His memorial event was attended by hundreds of people from all over the globe. His books were translated into Italian, Greek, Hungarian, Portuguese, Polish. Honours accumulated: degrees from Urbino and Cyprus; memberships of foreign academies and societies (Academy of Athens, Accademia Nazionale dei Lincei, Academia Europaea, Akademie der Wissenschaften zu Göttingen, American Philosophical Society, Hungarian Society for Classical Studies); the Runciman Award for *The East Face of Helicon*;⁵⁸ the International Balzan Prize in Classical Antiquity;⁵⁹ the British

⁵⁷ M. L. West, ‘Reginald Pepys Winnington-Ingram 1904–1993’, *Proceedings of the British Academy*, 84 (1994), pp. 579–97. Winnington-Ingram’s important work on ancient Greek music was another reason West approved of him, and probably why he was asked to write the memoir.

⁵⁸ The award, named for Sir Steven Runciman CH FBA, is made annually by the Anglo-Hellenic League for a work in English on Greece or Hellenism. West’s winning was not without controversy, as some readers thought the book called into question the originality of the ‘Greek miracle’.

⁵⁹ West used part of the prize money to donate a charming fountain in the Fellows’ Garden at All Souls; there was also a substantial donation to Balliol College.

Academy's Kenyon Medal (at the relatively young age of sixty-one); first Emeritus Fellow, then (a rare accolade) Honorary Fellow at All Souls College; honorary fellowships also at Balliol, University and St John's Colleges; and to crown all, the Order of Merit in 2014, joining the *numerus clausus* of twenty-four individuals honoured personally by the sovereign for great distinction in their fields.⁶⁰ Invitations to lecture came frequently. Regrettably, he did not keep a list of those accepted, but his report to the Warden for the year 1992 (preserved among the papers at All Souls) mentions talks in Venice, Budapest, Princeton and New York; that for 1997–9 records lectures in Harvard, Cagliari, Tvärminne, Göttingen, Jerusalem, Tel Aviv and Beersheba; for 2001–3, Toronto, Union College (Schenectady), Cornell, Droushia (Cyprus).⁶¹ He was a visiting scholar at Harvard for a semester in 1967–8, at the University of California, Los Angeles, for a quarter in 1986 and did a tour of Japan in 1980.

An honour that eluded West was the Regius Chair at Oxford when Lloyd-Jones retired in 1989. The burden of administration and advocacy that the job increasingly involved, however, would not have been to his liking and would have stolen time better spent on other things. (He once headed the section on administration in his CV 'Du temps perdu à la recherche'.) The election to All Souls in 1991 was a salvation both for him and the world of scholarship. He was not a natural tutor—that taciturnity made tutorials challenging for undergraduates—and the list of his research students is not long.⁶² But he gave generously of his time to those who asked; an untold number of books acknowledge his help. He inspired affection and loyalty among those who knew him well, as his fine Festschrift *Hesperos* attests. Numerous publications were dedicated to him after his death and Balliol College has instituted an annual lecture in his memory.

West died unexpectedly of a heart attack on 13 July 2015. He is survived by his sister Jennifer Lesley Bywaters (born 1947), by his widow Stephanie Roberta West née Pickard (herself a distinguished classicist and Fellow of the British Academy; they met in Fraenkel's seminar and were married in 1960), and by his children

⁶⁰ Classicist or ancient historians in the Order before West were Richard Claverhouse Jebb (1905), Henry Jackson (1908), J. G. Frazer (1925), J. W. Mackail (1935), Gilbert Murray (1941) and Ronald Syme (1976). A. E. Housman declined the offer in 1929.

⁶¹ These reports make amusing reading. Letter of 21 February 1991 accepting the Fellowship: 'It may lengthen my life and it will certainly shorten my address.' Upon being made an Honorary Fellow of University College: 'It is a pleasant thought that when I expire the flags will be at half mast on both sides of the High.' June 2003: 'My score of 1 not out was not, as it turned out, a decisive factor in the Fellows' victory' *sc.* in the cricket match against the College staff. I am grateful to the Warden of All Souls College, Professor Sir John Vickers, for sight of these documents and permission to quote from them.

⁶² I am aware of Paula da Cunha Corrêa, †Kweku Garbrah, Sophie Gibson, W. B. Henry, J. H. Hordern, †Stephen Instone, Peter Kingsley, Letizia Palladini, N. J. Richardson and Sandra Šćepanović. At All Souls, he was academic advisor to J. L. Lightfoot and P. J. Finglass.

Rachel Ann Dillon (born 1963) and Robert Charles West (born 1965). There are two grandchildren.

At the close of his introduction to *Greek Lyric Poetry*, West wrote the following words, which may provide a suitable envoi:

It has been an enjoyable task. I do not delude myself that all parts of the end product are likely to give equal pleasure to the reader. But if I have succeeded in opening any eyes, ears, or hearts to some portion of the manifold beauty, wisdom, and wit that shines from these precious remnants of a brilliant culture of long ago, I shall be well content.

He can rest very well content indeed.⁶³

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Note on the author: Robert Fowler is Henry Overton Wills Professor of Greek Emeritus at the University of Bristol. He was elected a Fellow of the British Academy in 2015.

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⁶³I have made liberal use of published memoirs and obituaries, beginning with those delivered by Jane Lightfoot, Alan Cameron and Robert Parker at the All Souls memorial event, <https://www.asc.ox.ac.uk/sites/stage.all-souls.ox.ac.uk/files/Memorials/Martin%20West%20Memorial%20Addresses.pdf> (accessed 23 April 2018). Seven obituaries can be consulted via <https://www.asc.ox.ac.uk/person/179?m1=6&m2=0> (accessed 23 April 2018): *Oxford Mail*, 16 July 2015 (anon.); *The Telegraph*, 21 July 2015 (staff writers, with input from C. Carey); *The Times*, 24 July 2015 (P. J. Finglass), in Greek at *Ariadne. The Journal of the School of Philosophy of the University of Crete*, 20–1 (2014–15), 294–300; Το Βήμα, 26 July 2015 (A. Rengakos and C. Tsagalis); *The Independent*, 3 August 2015 (G. O. Hutchinson); *The Guardian*, 13 August 2015 (J. L. Lightfoot); *Bulletin of the Council of University Classics Departments*, 44.4 (2015), 1–3 (Armand D'Angour; cf. <http://www.armand-dangour.com/2015/08/in-memori-am-martin-west/> [accessed 23 April 2018]). I have also seen H. Bernsdorff, *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, 22 July 2015; M. Davies, *The Oxford Magazine*, 2nd week Michaelmas Term 2015; M. Davies, *TW: The Magazine of St John's College Oxford* (2015), 45–6; P. J. Finglass, *Lexis*, 33 (2015), 1–4; A. Fries, *Studia Metrica et Poetica*, 2.2 (2015), 152–8; J. Danielewicz, *Meander*, 70 (2015), 3–7; L. Lehnus, *Rivista di filologia e di istruzione classica*, 144 (2016), 182–98; J. L. Lightfoot, *Gnomon*, 88 (2016), 281–5; eadem, *Proceedings of the American Philosophical Society*, 161 (2017), 285–92; R. Jenkyns, *Balliol College Annual Record* (2016), 27–32.