

## MEMORIAL RESOLUTION

### HERMANN FERDINAND FRANKEL (1888 – 1977)

Hermann Frankel, Professor of Classics Emeritus, died in Santa Cruz on April 8, 1977. He taught in the Department of Classics from 1935 to 1953, and after his retirement continued to be active and vigorous as a scholar until stricken by the illness which led to his death.

He was born in Berlin on May 7, 1888, and grew up in academic surroundings. His father, Max Frankel, was a classical scholar and archaeologist, well known for his work on Greek inscriptions, librarian of the Koniglichie Museen and *Titular-professor* at the University of Berlin, and his mother was the daughter of a distinguished Orientalist. He studied at the universities of Bonn and Gottingen as well as Berlin, and numbered Friedrich Leo and Wilamowitz (whom he greatly admired) among his teachers. His studies were interrupted by attacks of tuberculosis (successfully treated in Switzerland) and it was not until 1915 that he obtained his Ph.D. at Gottingen with his thesis *De Simia Rhodio*. In that year he married Lilli Frankel, whose brother, Eduard Frankel, was also a classical scholar (no relation, a different Frankel family). They have two daughters and a son.

He spent the rest of the First World War as a cavalry officer in the German army, serving on the Russian front. After the war he returned to Gottingen, where he was first Privatdozent and then Professor Extraordinarius. When Hitler came to power Nazi influences in the university soon made it impossible for professors of Jewish origin to retain their posts, and (like his brother-in-law Eduard, who was a professor at Freiburg) Herman and his family left Germany for England. Eduard remained in England as Professor of Latin at Oxford, while Hermann was invited to join the faculty at Stanford.

When he came to Stanford in 1935 the situation that he met might well have discouraged a scholar coming from a country where classical studies were well established and widely pursued. There was only an occasional graduate student who had progressed far in Greek or Latin, no program leading to the Ph.D. in classics was offered, and it was not until more than twenty years later, after his retirement, that a regular course of graduate study in classics was reinstated. But there was a small number of undergraduates who had acquired an interest and some aptitude for the subject and there were others whose interest and industry could be stimulated by a gifted teacher. Frankel quickly recognized not only that their interest could be roused, but also that they were teachable, and he never underestimated their abilities or offered them a substitute for scholarly teaching. He could show the more ambitious student how to understand and appreciate Sophocles or Seneca, guide the beginner through Caesar or Xenophon, and help the "Greekless" student to discover what it was that Plato or Aristotle or the Stoic and Epicurean philosophers had to say. Classical studies were kept alive at Stanford through these years, and a large share of the credit for this must be given to him.

The range of his teaching was matched by the range of his scholarly interests, in every aspect of the ancient world, in the poetry and philosophy of Greeks and Romans alike, in

grammatical and linguistic theory, in other languages and literatures, ancient and modern, besides Greek and Latin. His example was an inspiration to his younger colleagues, who learned much from him and relied on his advice and criticism, which he gave freely.

His scholarly reputation was established in Germany by a study of Homeric similes, *Die homerischen Gleichnisse* (1921), and an important work on the history and development of the Greek hexameter, *Der homerische und der kallimachische Hexameter*. This essay was published in the *Nachrichten* at Gottingen in 1924, and subsequently republished (with some revisions), together with other papers written in the '20s and '30s, in his *Wege und Formen Fruhgriechischen Denkens* (Munich, 1955).

Before he left Germany he had made good progress on a major work about early Greek poetry and philosophy. When he came to Stanford he was quickly speaking and writing fluent idiomatic English, but he decided that it would be a mistake for him to translate into English a study which had been thought out and composed in German. It was, therefore, finally published in 1951 as a monograph of the American Philological Association "in der Sprache in der es konzipiert und ausgearbeitet worden war," *Dichtung und Philosophie des fruhen Griechentums*. He had started this book in 1921 in Gottingen and finally had it ready for the publisher in 1948. This is a book which has been widely read and appreciated by students and scholars all over the world, a study of intellectual and artistic history from Homer to Pindar. The proposal to translate it into English (with his permission) was soon made, but it was not until 1975 that the English version appeared, *Early Greek Poetry and Philosophy: A History of Greek Epic, Lyric, and Prose to the Middle of the Fifth Century*. The translation was by Moses Hadas and James Willis.

He was appointed Sather Professor of Classical Literature at the University of California, Berkeley, for 1942-43, and delivered the Sather Classical Lectures there in the winter and spring of 1943. His Stanford colleagues who were otherwise engaged in that year will always regret that they were unable to attend those lectures. He and Mrs. Frankel enjoyed their stay in Berkeley very much. The members of the Department of Classics were already old friends, and they made many new friends among faculty and students. Since the holder of this appointment for the following year had already selected Pindar as the subject for his lectures, Frankel decided to speak about a Latin poet and his lectures were about Ovid, published as *Ovid: A Poet Between Two Worlds* (University of California Press, 1945).

Like everything that Frankel wrote these lectures were full of original thought and fresh interpretations. Protesting against the tendency to regard Ovid as no more than a brilliant craftsman, he reminded the audience of the special appeal that Ovid's poetry had for readers in the Middle Ages and the Renaissance, and he sought to reveal elements in it that indicated the emergence of a new world. He showed with special skill how Ovid, without any philosophic quest for principles but with the keen insight of an artist, described human character and feeling in a realistic, highly personal manner that often offended more old-fashioned classical tastes.

Frankel had always been greatly interested in the Greek poetry of the Hellenistic period, in its way of describing character and emotion and its new way of telling a story, and in the latter part of his life his attention was concentrated on Apollonius of Rhodes. The Oxford University Press invited him to prepare a new critical edition of Apollonius' epic, the *Argonautica*, and this task kept him busy for many years, until the text appeared in 1961, in the series of Oxford Classical Texts. Here too Frankel showed originality as well as keen critical scholarship. The manuscript tradition of Apollonius is full of difficulties; in many places the scribes appear not to

have understood the poet's language; Frankel, unlike earlier editors, was unwilling to admit to his text readings which he found unintelligible or thought unworthy of the author, and he devised many ingenious emendations, some of which outraged scholars who advocated a more conservative approach to textual criticism and could not agree that the text needed so much change. Even his most ardent admirer can hardly accept every proposal that he makes (though some are clearly rigid), but his distrust of the manuscript tradition is justified. In an extensive commentary which followed (*Noten zu den Argonautica des Apollonius*, Munich, 1968), he discussed his editorial policy and had much to say about the poet's language and style which threw light on various aspects of Greek poetry. His work on Apollonius is fundamental and marks a new starting point in the study of Hellenistic literature.

He was now eighty years old, but idleness had no appeal for him, and he was at work on another book, a protest against the grammatical system in which his generation had been educated, its terms and categories and definitions, and an attempt to supply something in its place that satisfied him better. He gave three interesting and provocative Colloquia to the Department of Classics on this theme, in which he outlined some of his argument, and these were published as "Three Talks on Grammar" in *California Studies in Classical Antiquity* for 1974. Here he announced his forthcoming book as *Ein Wenig Grammatik*, but in fact it appeared with the more formal title *Grammatik und Sprachwirklichkeit* (Munich, 1974). By the time the book was in print Frankel had moved from Palo Alto to Santa Cruz and he was a sick man, with his powers of speech impaired, and he could no longer discuss his views with other proponents of new linguistic theory.

After his retirement from Stanford he served as Whitney Visiting Professor at Beloit College (1953-54) and as Visiting Professor at Cornell (1955), and spent several years in Germany, between 1955 and 1960, as Professor at Freiburg. He was a Corresponding Member of the Akademie der Wissenschaften at Gottingen and of the British Academy, and he has been recognized wherever Greek literature is studied as one of the leading scholars of his day. A complete list of his numerous opuscula, which cannot be given here, would give a more adequate account of the breadth of his learning and his contribution to scholarship. His many friends who knew him as colleague, critic, and stimulating companion remember with special pleasure the hours spent in his company.

He is survived by his wife Lilli, his son Hans, who is a Professor of Chinese at Yale, his daughters Edith Cooper and Brigitte Bojarska, nine grandchildren and three great-grandchildren. To all of them we extend our deepest sympathy.

Lionel Pearson, Chairman  
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