

## MEMORIAL RESOLUTION

### T. B. L. WEBSTER (1905 – 1974)

After several earlier visits, Professor T.B.L. Webster came permanently to Stanford in 1968, and brought not only the distinction of his great international reputation but a love of teaching which encouraged students at all levels, from graduate students in Classics to freshmen in his large lecture courses, to learn from and be inspired by his own immense erudition. His death on 31 May 1974, after a short illness, has cut short his continuing rich contributions to the work of his colleagues, the educational experience of this University, and the progress of Classical scholarship.

He had already had a brilliant career, as an outstanding scholar, a devoted teacher, a creative administrator, and an immensely warm personality who won friendship alike from his peers in scholarship and from bewildered freshmen. He was Head Boy at a famous English public school; winner of many prizes and scholarships at Oxford; then, at the age of 26, Hulme Professor of Greek at Manchester University. He held this position for 17 years, and his energy not only attracted many younger scholars to him but made its mark on the art galleries of the city and even on the columns of the Manchester Guardian. His greatest achievements, however, came after he accepted the chair of Greek at University College London. During his twenty years there he not only served his College in many ways, including a period as Dean of the Faculty of Arts, but he worked tirelessly on committees to build the London Institute of Classical Studies, which became a home of the libraries of the Greek and Roman Societies, a center for the classicists of the scattered London colleges, and very soon a forum for international scholarship of the highest standing. He set up the Joint Association of Classical Teachers, now a powerful force for innovation and improvement in high school teaching in England. He was President of this Association, and also of the Hellenic Society and of the Classical Association; and he was honored with doctorates from Dublin and Manchester, with Fellowships in the Royal Academy and the Society of Antiquaries, and with honorary membership in the great learned societies of eight other European countries.

His interest in Greek art had begun in his undergraduate days at Oxford, where the genius of Beazley had recently brought a new era in study of Greek vases. In humorous deprecation of Latin studies, he liked to say that his first publication, a fine edition of Cicero's Pro Flacco, had been undertaken only because a travel grant was available for it and the MSS were luckily located in the same cities as the big vase-collections. A period of study at Leipzig with Körte focused his attention on Menander, and soon thereafter began the long series of books and articles on Greek art and drama, and especially the new results that could be obtained by careful correlation of his massive knowledge of both. His major contributions to Classical learning lie in his four major books (and many smaller items) on the cultural interrelationships of art and literature; in his brilliant reconstructions of the plots of lost plays; and in his masterly collections of evidence from widely disparate sources bearing on the history of the Greek theater.

There was one diversion (apart from his World War II service in the military intelligence). In 1952 came the decipherment of Linear B, the earliest Greek script, and with his unfailing readiness to pursue new lines of research, Webster set up a seminar in London that did much to consolidate and advance the new field of study. An important book on Mycenaean Greece and Homer came from his own pen. But he soon returned to the art and drama of fifth-century Athens. Some idea of his productivity may be given by the titles of books that appeared during his Stanford years; in 1969, Introduction to Sophocles (revised edition), Everyday Life in Classical Athens; in 1970, Studies in Later Greek Comedy (revised edition), Sophocles' Philoctetes, The Greek Chorus; in 1971, Illustrations of Greek Drama (with A.D. Trendall); in 1972, Potter and Patron in Classical Athens; in 1973, Athenian Culture and Society. In addition, during these years he edited a collection of his late wife's papers and the first two fascicles of her metrical analyses of her tragic choruses. He leaves in typescript a new book on early Greek myth.

This tremendous industry was never allowed to cut short the time he spent with students. Graduate students knew the quality of his scholarship and the skill with which he guided their research, and many maintained their close association with him in later years; undergraduates flocked into his art courses, and many pursued further studies in the field under his inspiration; and every student who met him felt his warmth, his enthusiasm, and his obvious personal interest in their work and their welfare. On hearing of his death, a grieving sophomore wrote from Stanford-in-Italy: "Of all the professors at Stanford, he was the one that I knew the best and admired the most....I am deeply indebted to him because he gave me direction and bolstered my confidence during my extremely painful freshman year, one of the main reasons I am still at Stanford ... His approach to life will always remain a source of inspiration to me." Students and colleagues from many countries who have worked with him over the last forty years will understand.

In 1967 the death of his wife, a classicist of distinction herself and a fitting partner in his life and work, made him willing to leave London, and the following year he accepted Brooks Otis' invitation to come to Stanford. He appreciated here the friendliness of the faculty and students, the beauty of the campus, and the charm of San Francisco. We may be glad to feel that for what were to be his last years Stanford offered Webster, whose life personified so well the highest ideals of the scholar and teacher, a congenial home.

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