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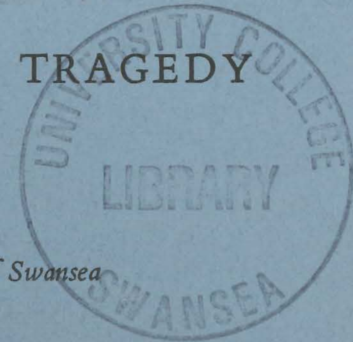

an Inaugural Lecture
delivered at the University College of Swansea
on 17 February, 1976

by

PROFESSOR C. COLLARD
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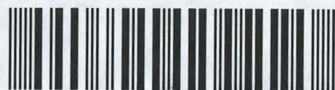
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THE STUDY OF GREEK TRAGEDY

Mr. Vice-Principal, Ladies and Gentlemen:

I discover that I am the seventh holder of the Chair of Classics in this College: I have the information from the *History* of the University of Wales written by its first holder, Sir David Emrys Evans, later Principal of our sister College at Bangor.(1) Every new professor is conscious of his chair's tradition, of those who have held it before him and how their achievements give him uncomfortably much to emulate. I hope not to be invidious in recalling now only my immediate three predecessors; and I may do this with just pleasure, because I have had the fortune to know them.

Ben Farrington was Professor from 1935 to 1956. In the early 1960's he spent a year in the University of Liverpool, where I was then beginning my career, at the invitation of his old friend and colleague Roland Austin, Professor of Latin at Cardiff until he went to Liverpool in 1954. I cannot say I knew Ben Farrington well, but enough to understand the affection for him which still lingers here. In the parlance of his native Ireland, he was a lovely man; and his learned writings were as easy, over long spans of thought and science—but this has been better and more fully said in the eloquent eulogy composed by Mr. Alfred Moorhouse and appended to the last Report of the College Council.(2)

George Kerferd, Professor from 1956 to 1967, and John Gould, Professor from 1968 to 1974, now hold the Chairs of Greek in Manchester and Bristol; as well as for their scholarship, both are greatly esteemed for their wise advice and energy in the general cause of Classical Studies. It is my honour to be appointed to succeed such men.

Mr. Vice-Principal, there are one or two things of which I particularly wish to make inaugural and happy acknowledgement. The first is a debt to the College I share with all past and present members of my Department, for the funding and steady expansion over the years of the Library collection in our subject: it is solid and broad, and work there an easy pleasure; and it is increasingly precious in a time when university presses and academic publishers suffer most cruelly from inflation.

As a newcomer to the College, I can record, I think without side, my special pleasure at its support of Egyptology, and its acceptance of the

valuable Wellcome Collection of Egyptian Antiquities, whose housing in the Department is important for both teaching and research. Such provision accords with the generous tradition of the University of Wales; and it is widely known through the publications of Professor J. Gwyn Griffiths, Dr. Kate Bosse-Griffiths, who curates the Wellcome Collection, and Dr. Alan Lloyd.

My last acknowledgement is quite personal: it is of the open and universal friendliness of my welcome to Swansea.

Probably no university publications are studied so anxiously as new professors read, often with despairing envy, their colleagues' inaugural pronouncements. I have read—since joining the College I have also heard—and I am envious. Evocation and invocation, devotion, apologetics or disclaimers before the solemnity of the occasion: opening paragraphs are mosaic variation on the theme of rite and victim; my predecessor descanted on it with beautiful irony.[3] The ritual scene in premonition is real enough for the one the fates have chosen, I assure you; but its awful inevitability was truly borne in by the hearty dinner the College so thoughtfully provided not an hour ago for the condemned man. You may be amused, as I was when my wife told me recently she knew of a study in the sociology of the inaugural lecture; the public anticipation of tonight, and now our formal gathering, makes me see its reason, although I think it may make a better satire than a new section for the College Handbook. But for today—the rites have duly started, and it will not be propitious to delay them further.

When I was casting about for a subject for this lecture, my title seemed prudently vague; in preparation, it looked impossibly ambitious, even arrogant, to pronounce so broadly; but Greek Tragedy is my special interest, and I accept my inaugural duty of illustrating a general topic from my own work. While I shall say something historical, to be personal means also to be partial, and I ask you to piece me out with tolerance as well as thoughts.

The study of Greek Tragedy in itself needs no lengthy *apologia*. It is the first tragic drama of Europe in time, some would say also in quality, and its influence on subsequent drama, not only tragic, enormous. It is represented for us almost wholly in a small selection of plays by its three greatest poets, Aeschylus, Sophocles and Euripides—just over 30 plays from their combined

production of about 300, and that huge number only a fraction of the total output of Greek tragedians. These 30 plays, moreover, span the 70 years of Athens' zenith as a city-state, in that wonderful Fifth Century Before Christ dominated by her ambition and splendour, when the confidence of empire and liberal democracy made her the artistic and intellectual centre of Greece, but also the prey to self-destruction and enmity, in the great war with Sparta and the Peloponnesian powers recorded by Thucydides. A small corpus of Tragedy, then, from a brief but intensively active age, a drama both direct and profoundly poetic, a drama that was consciously public, celebratory and religious, communal, evocative of tradition but also contemporary in its address. This richness alone compels our continuing study, but knowledge of Greek Tragedy increases, in two ways: it is one of the literary genres in which discoveries of previously unknown, if fragmentary, texts are greatest, preserved on papyrus from Greco-Roman Egypt; and new light on the surviving plays or evidence for reconstructing lost ones comes steadily from vase-paintings of Tragic myth.

Such accretion of texts or secondary evidence does not itself explain the ever wider study of Tragedy which marks our Century. It is a common but fair question to ask the student of Classical literature, what useful detail remains unrecognised, what not suggested in interpretation, analysis or synthesis, after so many hundred years of work, most of all on this small corpus of Tragedy. My answer goes beyond the simple if true assertion that every generation reinterprets its cultural inheritance, from whatever time or place; the historian of events and causes, the historical philosopher, any student of language and literature, of man in his entirety, will say the same. Need one explain the fecundity of Shakespearean criticism? There are distinctive features of Greek Tragedy, in its own quality, then and now; in its large contribution to the letters of the West; and in the manner of its long absorption.

Its study is as old as the plays themselves: the poets were often the first performers or directors too; they thought and wrote about their art, and sought improvement in its practice. Such immediate and productive reflection is typical of a literate society, and has become unsurprising, even expected; it was new in the Fifth Century, and one more facet of that early Age of Enlightenment: poets, historians, scientists and thinkers all comment on their role and work; and it is the time when the nature of language, and its craft, are first formulated.

One of the first critics of Tragedy—and the most important—who was not himself a poet, was Aristotle; his *Poetics* was written from direct acquaintance with a still living art, and presumed the same in his audience. He died only a year after his pupil Alexander the Great; and in the division of Alexander's Empire the Greek world changed fundamentally. Tragedy was swiftly in decline, overtaken by Comedy as the dramatic form more responsive and adaptable to altered social needs, sharing the general eclipse of high poetry in public or religious celebration, its place in the theatre retained at the cost of theatricality or revamping of the Fifth Century masters. Yet in devoted nostalgia for the great poets and writers of earlier centuries, in recognition as it were of their classicism, the librarian-scholars of Alexandria in Egypt, where the Ptolemaic kingdom fostered learning, collected and edited literary texts, including Tragedy. The nature of this editing is still not completely clear to us, but it was the first deliberate and without question the most important stage in the transmission of Greek texts from antiquity to their partial recovery in the Renaissance. Not much later commentators on Tragedy were at work, first only on grammar and diction, then on matter, mythology, theatre performance, with infrequent critical judgements.

Two centuries after Alexander, most of the old Greek world was occupied or influenced by Rome. Having lost its life in the theatre, despite occasional revivals, Greek Tragedy began its life as literature or educational text: translated or imitated in Latin, indeed performed for a century or so, as the Romans were captured by their captive; an armchair recreation for the lettered or leisured, a source or model for the schoolboy and fledgling orator—yet there survive a few critical assessments of Tragedy by stylists and moralists which show their response to more than niceties of tone or arrangement. In the service of these interests Tragedy was digested by grammarians, glossators and commentators: the idiom of its language, the context of its theatre, its world, had retreated so far from the ready understanding of its new public.

We need not be surprised at the annexing of Tragedy by the rhetorician or scholar. We are not yet so remote from the greatest periods of our own literature that we can read its works or, here in point, see and hear its plays, only with the aid of commentaries and handbooks; but we approach that time; and it should worry us that even some writings of our Century are kitted out with notes and model examination answers once they attain

prescription for G.C.E. Criticism of Shakespeare was primarily dramatic for the century or so after his death, because his world and language were near enough to his critics' own, and many of them were dramatists themselves; but when the 18th Century brought an interest in textual quality, Shakespearean criticism became philological and literary. I read that his qualities as a dramatist were defended, particularly from adherents of Classicism, precisely for his irregularities and untutored genius. The importance of Coleridge as the founder of a more judicious but more liberal criticism in this country at the beginning of the 19th Century—however much he owed to the freer thoughts and enthusiasm of the Germans like Lessing, Herder, Goethe and Schlegel, or to native critics like Johnson, Morgann, Hazlitt and his friend Lamb—Coleridge's stimulus affected also Greek Tragedy in England, as Romanticism influenced it in Germany.

But to begin the modern history of our study, I need briefly to trace the fate of Tragedy from antiquity to the 18th Century. The 30 or so plays we have, survived the division and wreck of the Roman Empire, the swift contraction of the learned world and its resources to a few places in the Byzantine East, the suspicion of the Church, in its turn the collapse of the Byzantine before the Ottoman Empire, and above all the physical hazards of preservation in perishable manuscript—the 30 plays survived through a mixture of miraculous chance and devoted husbandry. For there were intervals, two in particular, when the study of ancient Greek literature renewed and even flourished, and crucially: in the 9th and 10th Centuries most extant Greek texts were transcribed into a newly devised bookhand, and the old exemplars disappeared; in the 13th and 14th Centuries a favouring dynasty at Byzantium allowed some multiplication of copies, with editing and annotation, using such ancient commentaries as had survived—unmethodical and often simple-minded, this work may seem, but in its time, given the resources and expertise, a considerable accomplishment. Hardly was it done than the opportunity had gone. Within a century the Byzantine learned world was dissolved and in flight to the West, to be welcomed by the Greek-hungry humanists of the Italian Renaissance.

During the 15th Century Greek manuscripts were reassembled and copied, but the invention of printing was important in more than distributing Classical authors to a much wider readership. First printing tended to fix as canonical texts which were of inferior quality when better were in existence, because in a poorly documented age printers inevitably struck off the nearest

available manuscript. (The first tragedies printed were four plays of Euripides, in 1496; within 20 years or so nearly all the extant plays, of Aeschylus and Sophocles too, were in print.) More than three centuries passed before editors of Greek Tragedy—of the Classics in general—engaged scientifically with the manuscript evidence, instead of reconstructing their texts almost wholly by conjecture on the basis of printed books.

The 16th Century was the first age of modern philology. Editors offered notes; seldom except on the text or its emendation. On the other hand, the reading principally of Aristotle's *Poetics* caused some discussion of Tragedy as poetry and drama. Translations into Latin were made, almost as soon as Greek texts were printed; into the vernaculars, for the main part in the second half of the Century. Lectures on Tragedy began, in English universities at least, at Oxford in 1517, at Cambridge after 1535; the plays were read in schools both here and on the Continent, though in no great number.

The 17th and 18th Centuries increasingly occasioned editions with commentaries of new scope, informative on matter as well as language, and intended for a wider public; but translation and notes were in Latin and their aim was admission of the reader to a literature of taste, replete with moral lessons. In the later 18th Century there was a surge in Tragic scholarship, partly to be explained by the age's attraction to the classicism of form and language marking Athenian art and literature in Tragedy's time. Still larger editions appear, with more recognition of the importance of manuscript evidence, but little achieved in its discovery or use. It is the greatest age of English Classical scholarship—apart from the present Century, when native talent has been invigorated by so many brilliant refugees from Hitler's Europe, and by teachers invited from the world. Two generations of scholars, from the 1760's to the 1820's, nicely observe linguistic use and the common processes of textual corruption, so purging Tragic texts.

Continental scholarship in Tragedy during this time had something of the same character, but nothing like the quality, except in the work of Gottfried Hermann. The narrowness of the philology he exemplified was increasingly questioned in Germany by the advocates of a new and comprehensive approach to antiquity. The very coinage of its name, in the modern language and not Latin, '*Altertumswissenschaft*', 'the science of antiquity', marked a desire to understand the Greco-Roman world in its entirety, and in its lasting significance, the task later so crisply formulated by the historian who gave his name to the Warburg Institute: 'Was bedeutet das Nachleben der

Antike?'(4). One of the champions of this new approach, Otfried Müller, published in 1833 an edition of Aeschylus' *Eumenides* which offered for the first time not only Greek text with translation into the modern language rather than Latin, but discussed the play's background, assumptions and issues, and its performance in the theatre. The great German scholar Wilamowitz, reviewing the study of Greek Tragedy until his own day, the late 19th Century, noted how Müller failed in this attempt to widen its interpretation, because his contemporaries—particularly Hermann—could not take the inclusion of such general matter in an edition.(5) On the contrary, in Germany at least, critical editions with linguistic commentary began to proliferate, supported on a flood of conjectural activity in journals and pamphlets. Studies of Tragedy as drama or poetry, as a product of its own time or the forces of tradition, are published separately; their results are noticed by textual critics, or gain admission to commentaries, by infiltration.

In this country the impact on literary and dramatic criticism of the Romantic movement, especially in the example of Coleridge, had special consequences for Greek Tragedy. Efforts were made at both Oxford and Cambridge to vitalise the syllabus. In the 1840's Oxford prescribed the reading of a dozen or so tragedies. A few years earlier, it has been remarked, the great age of English Classical scholarship, in the sense of pure philology, at its end "coincided almost exactly with the foundation of the Classical Tripos at Cambridge".(6) A small group of dons there, led by the historian Connop Thirlwall, were so attracted by the ideals of *Altertumswissenschaft*, that they tried to give the Tripos a more liberal character. (It is worth remarking that one of the first, and still one of the most rewarding, studies of dramatic irony, was written by Thirlwall in 1833.)(7) In the last quarter of the Century, Britain offered its schoolboys and undergraduates reading Tragedy something richer than mere grammatical interpretation, in Jebb's great commentary on Sophocles and in the commentaries on Aeschylus and Euripides published, through three or four editions, by Paley. Part of an ambitious series which from the 1850's printed the major Greek and Latin authors with notes and prefatory essays in English, Paley's brief and thoughtful commentaries hint more than they say, and show him a critic awake to the broader problems of understanding Tragedy—and the need to introduce them to students.(8) Nor was Paley alone: individual plays of all the tragedians appeared in the newer style; and as early as 1880 an editor of Euripides' *Bacchae* writes, "My endeavour throughout has been to supply in a convenient and comprehensive form, a kind of handbook to the criticism,

interpretation and archaeological illustration of the play".[9] In these years was founded the reputation of British scholarship for basic but wide-ranging commentaries on Classical texts, especially on Greek Tragedy.

Since Wilamowitz at the end of the 19th Century set out his requirements for the modern study of Greek Tragedy, in its cultural totality, what has been achieved? What may be hoped that lies within knowledge, and from new approaches?

The fundamental task remains that of the textual critic, editing the Greek text into a form as close to the poet's autograph as can be secured by historical evaluation of the manuscript evidence; aided by the comparative grammatical and linguistic material compiled in the philology of centuries, ancient commentaries and lexica as well as modern handbooks; and working in a deeper appreciation of Tragedy "as a work of art and at the same time (like all works of art) a social document" (I quote the author of one of the most admired of modern editions).[10]

The years since the Second World War have brought a new realism to what is attainable by recension of manuscripts: we are nearer to establishing what texts were available to readers at any one time, from antiquity to the present, and their quality; but the recognition that most medieval manuscripts of Tragedy are contaminated, and not in stemmatic relation, both tends to leave more to the judgement of the editor, admittedly within a narrow room, and offers chance still to the conjectural critic. Partly in this realisation, that our texts are unlikely to be much improved, except by new and startling evidence from papyrus, but equally in delayed response to demands like those of Wilamowitz, there has been rapid and closer attention to the plays as poetry, as structures of formal utterance, as registers of tone, mood and vision. That I use in those last words a vocabulary of criticism already trite, I dare say, almost jargon, to colleagues in the Faculty of Arts, must not conceal its fresh importance to Greek Tragedy in the critical and evaluative method it connotes.

One basic instrument of detailed verbal and poetic analysis is the concordance. Indices, even dictionaries, to the Greek tragedians were compiled in the 18th and 19th Centuries, but their completeness and quality varied. Aeschylus is well served by an index made as recently as the 1960's; for Sophocles we still use a lexicon of the 1870's, a work whose full and wise discussion puts it in that rare order of scholarly books which do not age.

Euripides had to wait till the 1950's for his first complete concordance, but as soon afterwards as 1971 I was able to publish a supplement to it, taking account of new if fragmentary papyrus texts, and of fresh evidence for the extant plays, which ran to more than 4,000 entries.[11] The Euripidean corpus, plays and fragments, is very nearly twice as large as that of Aeschylus and Sophocles put together; so I sometimes misdoubt my intention of compiling a lexicon, not a revised concordance, to him.[12] In recent months, however, I have been encouraged by the offer of an Euripidean word-list, printed out by computer from the reference-store to all Greek literature being prepared in the work for a *Thesaurus* of the language, at the Irvine campus of the University of California.

Indices, concordances and dictionaries are one basis; a second is careful categorisation of grammar and syntax. That foundation too was well enough laid in the later 19th Century for Wilamowitz to remark that the next objective was illustration of syntax from the individual sensibility of the poet, responding to the formal linguistic and metrical conventions of his art, as they had been historically determined; responding also to the connotations and nuances of words and their synonyms in idiomatic grouping.[13] Here in Swansea Mr. Alfred Moorhouse is writing a study of the syntax of Sophocles, and I look forward to its dividend for my own work on Euripides.

To some degree there are a diction and a usage which are special to Tragedy, but no tragedian chose and ordered his words in the consciousness only of Tragic precedent: he was a poet of his people's whole language, literature and experience, and of his own city and time. So the exacting part of Tragedy's verbal criticism is to balance invention against these many pressures. Appraisal of metaphor and imagery is most difficult, but methods well tried in modern literature already bring illumination. Mechanical and still useful lists of figures and images we have had for years, but scrutiny of their meaning and effect, in the absolute, in context or thematically, is new. American scholars have led the way in these studies, but I should like to mention the important work on Euripides' imagery done by my friend and former colleague at Canterbury, Dr. Shirley Barlow.[14]

An aspect of Tragedy which most eludes precise discussion is its internal variety of dramatic form. This variety is more complex than a simple relief afforded by regular interchange of speech and dance-song, of episodes in dialogue separated by choral lyric; indeed, within the extant plays the

speaking actor gradually extends his role, asserting his voice also lyrically, sometimes in couple with the chorus, increasingly in a solo aria. Scholars in Germany and Austria particularly have done important work in tracing the development of action and theme across these formal boundaries, and knowing the implication for tone and meaning of the interplay of voices:[15] now in dialogue of natural and uneven pace; now in stylised exchange, either a formal debate which moves through argument in long set speeches to altercation and, usually, stalemate; or that most perplexing of forms, *stichomythia*, a dialogue sometimes as long as 100 verses in which two or rarely three voices question and answer, inform or explain, expose and develop, but with each person's utterance confined to a single verse, or half-verse, neither more nor less. To continue the list: expository prologues; elaborate monologues or soliloquies, expressing attitude, dilemma or reaction; richly coloured and fast-moving messenger-speeches; divine epiphanies and pronouncements *ex machina* of baffling directness; or, in lyric of bewildering subtle modulation, choral odes, hymns, invocations, laments, even antiphonies; or actors' monodies; stanzaic or free. All these formal resources, variously combined or consecutive, need the most careful visual enquiry and, I emphasise this, registration by the ear. We must measure them separately, then gauge them in transition as well as aggregate, if we are to judge their part in the whole intention.

I have been passing in review the verbal and formal resources of Tragedy, but a drama as rooted in cult and convention as Greek Tragedy affected its audience, moved them, no less in what it re-enacted and so interpreted suggestively to their immediate experience, and through its reliance on implicit or traditional values. Now all study of the past is subject to contemporary ways of seeing and thinking, for these are expressions of present need. The wider study of Tragedy in modern years has therefore tolerated many and quickly changing perspectives, some already abandoned: interpretation from its poets' lives and attitudes, an almost circular approach, since we know but little of their lives and must hypothesise their attitudes largely from their plays; reading as *Geistesgeschichte*, a dramatic document of its age's thought and spirit, especially its social and ethical preoccupations, so that each play is found some motive of comment or exhortation; its working expounded from modern psychology, not least the casting of its characters, in the attempt to describe what Tragedy was for the Greeks, and is for us, as human beings, in our inner response; or, in deliberate contrast, it has been denied any higher aim than dramatic and theatrical perfection, with action

its mainspring and its characters subordinate. The Aristotelian criteria are perpetually re-examined; his severe description of the tragic effect passes in and out of favour; battle ever renews to determine what *he* meant by *hamartia*, the mistake which brings about the tragic change of fortune, whether mistake of fact or error of intention, and what degree of moral responsibility attached.[16] More important, the Aristotelian definitions, which were, and could only be, formulated upon Greek Tragedy, are tested against later drama, and against modern definitions—especially by German scholars against the theories of German poets and philosophers like Lessing, Goethe, Hegel, Schopenhauer, Hebbel and Brecht.[17]

Many say the latest claims to insight reflect a spiritual insecurity of the 20th Century, the will to relate Tragedy most closely to its origin in cult; to find its essence in religious and social expression, and in that its universal meaning for the condition every age of man has made itself. To want this from Greek Tragedy is neither new nor possible only to Greek Tragedy, or to drama; it may explain why some of the most powerful of modern plays have been reworkings of Greek Tragic myth; it does explain, I think, the determination, if not commitment, of some who study Tragedy this way. I find very difficult much recent work on Tragedy in its relation to cult and unwritten ethical institutions, and particularly the character of Greek myth as their vehicle. It may be 'true', it may be historically objective, it may be sound in anthropological method; but for me, it affects my response to Tragedy as I study it; I risk saying, for me it diminishes Tragedy as art; it is a horizon my spirit does not want. I can in that, perhaps should in that, be accused of closing my studious eye to a new dimension, which deepens as it reveals; but at its most extreme, the structuralist analysis of myth, for example, brings arid truth, and I warm to a recent protesting voice: "the algebra of Levi-Strauss, for all its co-ordinated complexity, is one of intellect, not emotion".[18] Greek Tragedy *was* emotive, publicly and ritually emotive, and it is good to be reminded of its exacting directness in the original experience, and its power still, now, as an experience; this in a major book, by a Professor of English and not of Classics, entitled 'Towards Greek Tragedy' and subtitled 'Drama, Myth, Society', which accommodates some of the newest approaches to an openly responsive but not less searching criticism.[19]

For many of you who kindly listen to me now, and, probably, to those who may read this lecture in print, I will appear to have emphasized the

verbal and the formally poetic in Tragedy at the cost of the ritual, the mythic, the ethical, the social, the theatrical, even the tragic itself. I hope, not by too much, and the emphasis reflects my own work. Also, I want brief space to insist how the findings of specialised study can best be shared with the unspecialising student. The only form of book which can properly be comprehensive is the commentary, which should store fact, evidence and interpretation handily; summarise problems and evaluate criticism or refer compendiously to them; and suggest to further study or closer engagement. Advances in knowledge and method, and new perceptions, have been so many that new commentaries on the plays are essential. Cost of production is their major obstacle. I am lucky therefore to have published a commentary on a play of Euripides last year.(20) Reviewers will judge how successfully I have treated those aspects of Tragedy I have discussed, or met the demands from a commentary I have just put. If I may offer a hostage—two hostages—to my reviewers: it is six years since I began my manuscript, three years since it went to press and I endure the common author's agony of infelicity, plain shortcoming or unrealised opportunity. First, I now better understand *how* religious and ethical presuppositions are important in Tragedy, in their relation to mythic plot, and think I did not do enough in commenting them.(21) Second, I may have stated too much but suggested too little, not prompted the further imagination, a fear sharpened for me by reading Dr. Johnson's wisdom in the *Preface* to his *Shakespeare*. His often cynical observations on the office of the commentator—and the failure to discharge it —include such shafts as "thus the human mind is kept in motion without progress"—but how right his determination not to be "very diligent to observe . . . poetical beauties and defects"! "Judgment, like other faculties", he goes on, "is improved by practice. . . . I have therefore shown so much as may enable the candidate of criticism to discover the rest".(22) In other words, the commentator may serve the understanding and its improvement, but his nicer duty is to measure what he suggests to the sensibility.

My last topic is one that bears very importantly on the work of most university Departments of Classics, and on all secondary and further education: it is the study of Classical literature, especially Greek Tragedy, in translation. The post-War World, in which traditional Classics have declined, shows an ever-increasing attraction to antiquity, and eagerness to read its writings. The phenomenon has often been remarked, but I single out its prophetic comment as long ago as 1953 by the distinguished German Hellenist Wolfgang Schadewaldt, in a lecture on contemporary views of

Greek Drama:(23) he noted the special interest of theatrical directors and playwrights; and his own translations have great success and reputation, I believe. The paperback revolution has provided both appetite and food, and one may fairly speak of an industry in translating the Classics, but Greek Drama in particular. It is incidentally significant that new bilingual editions are being issued, or old translations revised and set beside Greek texts, in most European countries. The English-speaking world has been served in this way since 1900 or so by the well-known Loeb library. It happens that the Loeb Sophocles and Euripides are equipped with superannuated verse-translations, and the Loeb Trustees are at present commissioning new volumes, a laudable but expensive undertaking. I have been invited to contribute to Euripides; the thinking is, that the users of the Loeb, who range from school pupils to university professors but have in common some knowledge of Greek, will be best served by translation as accurate of the original's meaning as contemporary idiomatic prose allows. I repeat, the Loeb translations will aid readers of the original, and claim no merit beyond helping them to read it with clarity and understanding. All translation is interpretation, and for the Loeb purpose prose has the advantage over verse in tending to be less subjective. The Loeb editions, and those like them in other languages, have a secondary importance, however, for the study of the Classics purely in translation: they supplement the apparatus of commentaries and critical works in helping the translators; nor of Greek Tragedy alone, but of any writing which Tragedy affected—the comedy of Aristophanes, for example, or Virgil's *Aeneid*.

I mentioned earlier a distinctive contribution by American scholars to the study of imagery. They have an even prouder lead in making verse translations of quality, for students and the general public of Greek poetry. I dodge the word 'quality' for the moment; but Richmond Lattimore and Robert Fitzgerald are truly classical translators, for they will outlast their time, as surely as has Dryden's *Virgil* or Pope's *Iliad* and will, I think, Day Lewis' *Aeneid*. All those translators have fame too as themselves poets, but again I leave this point aside. Lattimore was joint editor with David Grene of the first of three major enterprises in the United States in the translation of Greek Tragedy: their collection, commonly known as the 'Chicago Series',(24) showed what could be achieved, in English of the mid-20th Century, to reproduce for the literate and sensitive common man meaning, form and tone, but also poetic individuality.

With those words I must confront the problem of quality. I believe that translators should always use the language of the present, whether their ambition is to be literal or literary, for their prime duty is to the present, and its language is the only one they and their readers honestly command. This was the claim and hope of Dryden, rashly condemned as an *ignis fatuus* by Mr. Bernard Levin in last Sunday's *Observer*;(25) he was reviewing one more poetic and creative translation of Aeschylus, from America. Perhaps reviewers *must*, but should *not*, judge translations: time alone will prove them, if their present language will speak as well to the future.

I cannot resist citing here, apropos of my contribution to the Loeb Library and as a text for my sermon, a remark of Gilbert Highet in his expansive work on *The Classical Tradition*: at the end of a long discussion of translating he says, "The most interesting and vital ideas in translation have come from the amateurs. . . . The professors . . . have a killing touch".(26) I hope, because my aims are ordinary, I do not bring his latest death to Euripides; and I think Highet would now disown his censure on my kind, for he wrote before many of these recent American translations.

There is hardly a professional student of Greek Tragedy who does not comment nowadays on the problems of translation, whether he himself translates or not, and the qualities a version must have to give its reader without Greek a chance of appreciating accurately the original in its original setting, as a work of contemporary theatre in a strongly traditional form.(27) I mention, as index of the difficulties and their international debate, that scholars in Eastern Europe held an entire conference on them a few years ago; the published papers are most valuable.(28)

In this country the Penguin Classics translations of Tragedy have dominated, reasonably enough, for the series broke new ground and is still alone in range and price. Some of the versions have aged, and were in any case not at first intended for study, but for reading and acting; but the translator of Euripides has revised his versions—and his introductory essays—I suspect, in response to an increasing demand from students, and, more, to the example of the American translators. To these I now return.

The second of the three enterprises had issued translations of 11 tragedies, by outstanding and sympathetic scholars, when in 1974 the publishers, Prentice-Hall, suspended the series, I believe for business reasons.(29) Its general editors were the classicist Eric Havelock and the critic Maynard

Mack, recent editor and commentator of Pope's *Homer*; the latter writes in the Series Foreword that the intention is to offer "each play in a context of exacting scholarship which seeks to make available to Greekless readers what the original Greek audiences responded to as they watched and listened to a performance. Under the English dress . . . as far as humanly possible the Greek identity has been accentuated rather then obscured . . . The notes are in the first instance conceived as a corrective to shortcomings that no translation can avoid . . . they undertake to instruct the reader about conventions of idiom and imagery, of legend and illusion which are native to the Greek situation and indispensable to a proper understanding of it".

An admirable prospectus, to which the contributing translators are for the most part commendably true. One states that his version "makes no attempt to be poetic, or even literary; it tries to render the sense faithfully and to reproduce the impact made by the idiom more closely than a translation with greater literary ambition could do".(30) Another writes, " . . . matter, tone, implication and images are preserved minutely enough so that a Greekless reader does not have to fear he has based an argument on some fancy of the translator".(31) Only one or two of the contributors declined to fetter their imagination in recreating significant variations of diction, tone or nuance, or the vital immediacy of a play-text.(32) The importance of this venture is very great, and it is a pity that these 11 plays are available only singly, and at high cost: they are the first attempt, and a successful one, to provide annotated translations of Greek Tragedy for students without Greek, which enable them to read the texts with their meaning closely rendered; with linguistic and stylistic idiom or tone remarked in the notes if not registered in the translation; with problems of theatre, precedent, myth, religion—all "background" matters—aired and often quite fully discussed. The most telling mark of their quality is their usefulness to the student *with* Greek, and to the professional scholar, for they are largely more recent than corresponding conventional editions with commentary, and they excel many of them in the range of their response to modern critical demands.

The Prentice-Hall translations are for the student. The third American series began in 1973, entitled *The Greek Tragedy in New Translations;* it is edited by the accomplished critic and translator William Arrowsmith, who contributed to the earlier 'Chicago Series'. In his words, the series "is based on the conviction that poets like Aeschylus, Sophocles and Euripides can only be properly rendered by translators who are themselves poets. Scholars

may, it is true, produce useful and perceptive versions. But our most urgent need is for a *recreation* of these plays—as though they had been written, freshly and greatly, by masters fully at home in the English of our own times". (I remind you of Dryden's hope.) Arrowsmith goes on, "collaboration between scholar and poet is . . . the essential operating principle of the series", where scholar and poet do not fortunately coexist. The purpose is to make "the reading of the plays as vivid as possible . . . the poetry aims at being *dramatic* poetry".(33) I do not fault the intention, which is worthy of the best ambitions of translating, and I wish the series success; it has critical essays, notes and glossaries, but not on the scale of the Prentice-Hall translations. Yet it appears to me to emulate that series in serving the student, and to want to outdo the Chicago versions in serving the general, literate reader. To the latter, too, it may sell, for the prices of the single plays—and the get-up—are a luxury. Teachers and departments are unlikely to recommend it, except for consultation; and here perhaps will lie its value to study, in stimulating us to rephrase, if not to rethink, our interpretation of text and context.

I am convinced that the study of Greek Tragedy can be pursued with accuracy and reward in translation. Of course, there must remain the untranslatable, which only the reader with Greek can appreciate, and which in its frustration will be incentive to a man without it to get himself Greek, and, once he feels it *is* like lace, to use Dr. Johnson's memorable comparison, as much of it as he can.(34) Not many undergraduates are able or willing to take the opportunity to learn Greek which every British Department of Classics offers; but they wish to read Greek Tragedy, and those of us who have Greek and read it with them, must try both to insist that they read it accurately, and to add to their feeling and criticism of it something of what we ourselves read, feel and criticise in the original. It is the hardest part of our teaching.

We have our compensation in the experience I know is common to university teachers who learned their Classics traditionally and began to teach them traditionally, in Greek and Latin, but now plan and conduct courses in translation. The undergraduate who comes to the Classics this way, from studying English or another modern literature, or the other humanities, often brings with him a more sensitive, but also more methodical, intelligence. The same advantage shows in undergraduates who since the 1950's increasingly combine sixth-form Greek and Latin, or one of

these, with English or a language, or history. I wish *I* had had that chance; and I can best illustrate my loss by saying that I have learned more about the Classics as literature from teaching them in translation than in the original, because my students have made me learn not just matter I did not know, but also ways of thinking.

Whether students of Greek Tragedy—professors as well as undergraduates—read it in Greek or in translation, they must meet its hard requirement of their energy. It is consummate, an art of drama and poetry perfected, universal, complex and subtle in its containment of genius within convention; at times majestic in its command of our emotions. All this we sense untaught, but Tragedy survives the detailed exposition of its manner and intent, of how it reaches us. It is a paradox and touchstone of all great art that it compels such study; or defies it in the end, as a lesser thing. Who can 'explain' the *Agamemnon* of Aeschylus, Sophocles' *Oedipus*, or Euripides' *Bacchae*? To feel the challenge, nonetheless, is part of humane learning, if we find in these plays something of our own humanity.

Mr. Vice-Principal, I have been insisting that the student of Greek Tragedy, in Greek or out of Greek, must get as close to the original in meaning, mode and setting as he can; he must use the accumulated scholarship and critical interpretation of centuries, fully but in its place, for I take it that his wish to engage at all with Tragedy is for its lasting immediacy to himself. I can think of no more blunt expression of this need; no demand for our beginning—and ending—in text and context; no inaugural conclusion more appropriate than a sentence from the magisterial prescription of our task by the great scholar Wilamowitz to which I earlier referred: "What matters", he wrote, "is that the old poet gets a hearing, not a modern professor".(35)

NOTES

I print the text of the lecture as delivered, except for slight rewording at one point where friendly comment showed me I had failed to distinguish adequately between my subjective and objective valuation of *some* writings on myth, cult and ethical institutions (p. 13; cf. n.21 below).

I have a special debt to these works: G. Zuntz, *An Inquiry into the Transmission of the Plays of Euripides*, Cambridge 1965; L. D. Reynolds and N. G. Wilson, *Scribes and Scholars*, Oxford 1974²; R. R. Bolgar, *The Classical Heritage and its Beneficiaries*, Cambridge 1954; G. Highet, *The Classical Tradition*, New York and London, 1949; E. J. Kenney, *The Classical Text*, Berkeley 1974; M. L. Clarke, *Greek Studies in England, 1700-1830*, Cambridge 1945; F. E. Halliday, *Shakespeare and his Critics*, London 1949; A. Lesky, *Die tragische Dichtung der Hellenen*, Göttingen 1972³; T. B. L. Webster, 'Greek Tragedy', *Fifty Years (and Twelve) of Classical Scholarship*, Oxford 1968², 88-122; the writings named in nn. 17 and 23 below; above all to U. von Wilamowitz-Moellendorff, *Euripides: Herakles*, Bad Homburg 1959³ (=1895²), *I: Einleitung in die griechische Tragödie*, 221-58 ('Wege und Ziele der modernen Tragikerkritik').

(1) D. Emrys Evans, *The University of Wales: A Historical Sketch*, Cardiff 1953.

(2) *University College of Swansea: Fifty-fifth Report of the Council* (1974-5), 126.

(3) J. Gould, *Ancient Poetry and Modern Readers*, Swansea 1969, 3-5.

(4) " . . . the untranslatable question *Was bedeutet das Nachleben der Antike?*—what is the significance of the classical heritage for Western civilisation?"; E. H. Gombrich, introducing a lecture on 'Personification', printed in R. R. Bolgar (ed.), *Classical Influences on European Culture, A.D. 500-1500*, Cambridge 1971, 247 ff.

(5) Wilamowitz, *op. cit.* 242 ff.

(6) M. L. Clarke, *Classical Education in Britain*, Cambridge 1959, 73.

(7) C. Thirlwall, 'On The Irony of Sophocles', *The Philological Museum* II (1833), 487-537. (Thirlwall was later Bishop of St. David's, from 1840 to 1874.)

(8) R. Jebb, *Sophocles: The Plays*, Cambridge 1883¹-1908³; F. A. Paley, *The Tragedies of Aeschylus*, London 1855¹-1879⁴; *Euripides*, London 1857¹-1880². For Paley's qualities as honest commentator see especially E. Fraenkel, *Aeschylus: Agamemnon*, Oxford 1950, I. 52 f. and R. Kannicht, *Euripides: Helena*, Heidelberg 1969, I. 125.

(9) J. E. Sandys, *The Bacchae of Euripides*, Cambridge 1900⁴ (=1880¹), (3rd unnumbered page of) Preface.

(10) E. R. Dodds, *Euripides: Bacchae*, Oxford 1944¹, iii=1960², v.

(11) C. Collard, *Supplement to the Allen-Italie Concordance to Euripides*, Groningen 1971.

(12) C. Collard, 'A Proposal for a Lexicon to Euripides', *Bulletin of the Institute of Classical Studies* 18 (1971), 134-43; 19 (1972), 141.

(13) Wilamowitz, *op. cit.* 255.

(14) S. A. Barlow, *The Imagery of Euripides*, London 1971; cf. R. Goheen, *The Imagery of Sophocles' Antigone*, Princetown 1951; A. Lebeck, *The Oresteia*, Washington 1971: bibliography in these works and Webster, *op. cit.* 101 f; Lesky, *op. cit.* 160, 262 ff, 510.

(15) I am not as confident as R. P. Winnington-Ingram, *Euripides and Dionysus*, Cambridge 1948, vii: "It is form . . . which provides perhaps the most objective criterion to the literary critic".

The pioneer study was W. Schadewaldt, *Monolog und Selbstgespräch*, Berlin 1926 (for its impact on Wilamowitz see W. M. Calder III, *Greek, Roman and Byzantine Studies* 16, 1975, 453); then, to name the most important only: W. Nestle, *Die Struktur des Eingangs in der attischen Tragödie*, Stuttgart 1930; W. Kranz, *Stasimon*, Berlin 1933; F. Tietze, *Die euripideischen Reden und ihre Bedeutung*, Breslau 1933; W. Ludwig, *Sapheneia*, Tübingen 1954; W. Jens, *Die Stichomythie in der frühen griechischen Tragödie*, München 1955; W. Kraus, *Strophengestaltung in der griechischen Tragödie, I: Aischylos und Sophokles*, Wien 1957; H. Strohm, *Euripides: Interpretationen zur dramatischen Form*, München 1957; A. Spira, *Untersuchungen zum Deus ex machina bei Sophokles und Euripides*, Frankfurt 1960; G. Erdmann, *Der Botenbericht bei Euripides*, Kiel 1964; E. R. Schwinge, *Die Verwendung der Stichomythie bei Euripides*, Heidelberg 1968; W. Jens (ed.), *Die Bauformen der griechischen Tragödie*, München 1971; outside German-speaking countries: J. Duchemin, *L'Agon dans la Tragédie grecque*, Paris 1945¹=1968²; H. F. Johansen, *General Reflection in Tragic Rhesis*, Copenhagen 1959; L. di Gregorio, *Le Scene di Annuncio nella Tragedia greca*, Milano 1967.

(16) See especially G. F. Else, *Aristotle's Poetics: the Argument*, Harvard 1957; J. Jones, *On Aristotle and Greek Tragedy*, London 1962; D. W. Lucas, *Aristotle: Poetics*, Oxford 1968; R. D. Dawe, 'Some Reflections on Ate and Hamartia', *Harvard Studies in Classical Philology* 72 (1968), 89-123; J. M. Bremer, *Hamartia*, Amsterdam 1969; T. C. W. Stinton, 'Hamartia n Aristotle and Greek Tragedy', *Classical Quarterly* 25 (1975), 221-54.

(17) See in particular W. Schadewaldt, 'Furcht und Mitleid?', *Hermes* 83 (1955), 129-71 (=*Hellas und Hesperien*, Zürich 1970², I. 194-236); A. Lesky, *Greek Tragedy*, trans. H. A. Frankfort, London 1967², 1-26; *id.* 'Zum Problem des Tragischen', *Gymnasium Helveticum* 7 (1953), 2-10 (=*Gesammelte Schriften*, Bern 1966, 213-9); K. von Fritz, *Antike und moderne Tragödie*, Berlin 1962, vii-xxix, 1-112, 461-74.

(18) A. B. Cook, *Enactment: Greek Tragedy*, Chicago 1971, xxi.

(19) B. Vickers, *Towards Greek Tragedy*, London 1973.

(20) C. Collard, *Euripides: Supplices*, Groningen 1975; see the Preface, I. vii-ix.

(21) I have learned much from G. S. Kirk, *The Nature of Greek Myths*, Harmondsworth 1974 and especially from the article on 'supplication' by my predecessor, John Gould (*Journal of Hellenic Studies* 93, 1973, 74-103), which was published too late for use in my Commentary. *These* are neither difficult nor confining, in the way my lecture-text describes *some* studies, and I now read my play more fully.

(22) A. Sherbo (ed.), *The Yale Edition of the Works of Samuel Johnson*, VII ('Johnson on Shakespeare'), 1968, 104.

(23) W. Schadewaldt, 'Das Drama der Antike in heutiger Sicht', *Universitas* 8 (1953), 591-99 (=*Hellas und Hesperien*, Zürich 1970^{2}, I. 187-94).

(24) R. Lattimore and D. Grene (eds.), *The Complete Greek Tragedies*, Chicago 1959 (some plays were published individually from the 1940's).

(25) J. Dryden, 'The Dedication of the *Aeneis*', 2007-9 *in Thc Poems of John Dryden*, ed. J. Kingsley, Oxford 1968, III, 1055; B. Levin, 'Aeschylus Lives!', *The Observer*, No. 9628, 15 February 1976, 27.

(26) Highet, *op. cit.* 489 f.

(27) Two particularly useful discussions: P. D. Arnott, *An Introduction to the Greek Theatre*, London 1959, 180-207; P. Green, 'Some Versions of Aeschylus', *in* M. H. McCall, Jr. (ed.), *Aeschylus: A Collection of Critical Essays*, Englewood Cliffs, 1972, 164-83 (partially reprinted from P. Green, *Essays in Antiquity*, London 1960).

(28) J. Harmatta and W. O. Schmitt (eds.), *Uebersetzungsprobleme antiker Tragödien* (Görlitzer Eirene-Tagung, Bd. 3), Berlin 1969.

(29) E. A. Havelock and M. Mack (eds.), *Prentice-Hall Greek Drama Series*, Englewood Cliffs, 1970-4.

(30) H. Lloyd-Jones, *Agamemnon by Aeschylus*, 1970, 6.

(31) T. Gould, *Oedipus the King by Sophocles*, 1970, 11.

(32) A. P. Burnett, *Ion by Euripides*, 1970, xxviii; K. Cavander, *Iphigeneia at Aulis by Euripides*, 1973, xxv f.

(33) W. Arrowsmith (ed.), *The Greek Tragedy in New Translations*, New York 1973-, London 1974-. I cite the Editor's Foreword, pp. vii f. in all the volumes.

(34) G. B. Hill (ed.), *Boswell's Life of Johnson*, rev. L. F. Powell, Oxford 1934, IV. 23.

(35) Wilamowitz, *op. cit.* 257: 'Es kommt vielmehr darauf an, dass der alte Dichter zum Worte komme, nicht ein moderner Professor'.

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