

...the ... of ...



...well ...  
...with ...  
...and ...  
...of ...  
...genetic, entirely free from any trace of ...

R. SYME

Walter Stoneman

## Ronald Syme 1903–1989

NO HISTORIAN OF ANCIENT ROME since Theodor Mommsen has had a greater influence upon historical research or received greater international recognition than Ronald Syme. Already in 1940 he could be described by a critical reviewer ‘as one of the most genuine historians in a field where good philologists are many but historians few.’ His services to scholarship and to Britain brought him a knighthood in 1959 and the Order of Merit in 1976. His magisterial books, beginning with the still important volume of 1939 alliteratively entitled *The Roman Revolution*, and his vast array of learned articles were widely commemorated upon his death on 4 September 1989. He had revealed the Romans to the modern world with a clarity and force born of a phenomenal memory and a quick mind. His interpretations reflected the cosmopolitanism of a tireless traveller whose origins lay far away on the west coast of northern New Zealand.

It is not easy to grasp the magnitude of Syme’s scholarly achievement and to locate it within the rich context of a life spent in such disparate places as Taranaki, Oxford, Belgrade, and Istanbul. Syme was never generous in supplying autobiographical information. Doubtless from his own scrutiny of the careers of hundreds upon hundreds of Romans he had learned how effectively the study of family and background could undermine the barrier of privacy that most adults erect around themselves. For Syme privacy was exceptionally important. He could rarely bring himself to speak in the first person by using what he called the ‘odious pronoun’. Even to close friends he referred

to himself as 'this person'. He constructed an image of himself that remained remarkably constant from adolescence to the final days, an image that ensured that the barrier of privacy would resist every assault. *Le style, c'est l'homme*: that was how he wanted to be appreciated and understood. He was as self-conscious about shaping his own reputation as an historian of the Roman Empire as was Edward Gibbon, the predecessor he admired and imitated most. But unlike Gibbon he never wrote an autobiography, nor did he intend to. The newspaper cuttings, the letters, and the photographs that he kept in boxes were for his private delectation. Yet Syme was far too perceptive an historian not to realise that other eyes would one day look at the contents of those precious boxes. So it is reasonable to exploit at last what Syme has left behind from his jealously guarded private life to provide the background for the vast production he committed to print. The pages that follow draw liberally on the Syme papers.

Ronald Syme was born on 11 March 1903 in the small town of Eltham within the province of Taranaki, which occupies a mountainous extension of the west coast of the North Island of New Zealand. Mount Egmont dominates the landscape. In the early years of this century Eltham was a dairy town to the east of the mountain and built up, like near-by Stratford, Normanby, and Hawera, on land that had been virgin forest a half-century earlier. Syme's grandfather, George Syme (1837–1929), who had emigrated to New Zealand from Glasgow in 1862, was a builder and contractor responsible for four of the first public schools in Taranaki — in Manutaki, Hawera, Normanby, and Manaia. In 1889 the grandfather bought the Egmont Sash and Door Factory and subsequently became well known in the region for his vigorous renderings of Scottish ballads at an advanced age.

One of George Syme's five sons, David, married Florence Mabel Sellers, who came from an Auckland family. These were the parents of Ronald Syme. David was a solicitor in Eltham. Florence acquired a reputation as a keen horsewoman, and she was the first woman in the town to drive a car. That car must have made a profound impression on the young Ronald, who recalled long afterward climbing into it through the back seat. Ronald was the first of three children born to David and Florence Syme. His siblings were a brother Terence, a mischievous child who became deranged and died in 1977, and a sister Geraldine (Gill), who lives today in New Plymouth, on the coast to the north of Mount Egmont. Geraldine described her brother Ronald when he was at school as 'a dark, slim, good-looking boy.' By his own

admission his earliest memories were the imposing sight of Mount Egmont virtually from birth and 'the great sword of Halley's Comet in 1910.'

Ronald's academic talents were already apparent when he began his education at the Eltham primary school in the year of the comet. But an exceptionally severe case of childhood measles, which left the boy with a permanent injury to one eye, intensified his commitment to learning. He resolved at that time to memorise as much as possible of what he read in case he should one day go blind. At the age of twelve he was transferred to the District High School in Stratford. There he did so well that he was moved again, this time in 1918 to the New Plymouth Boys' High School, where he immediately became dux of the school. It is obvious that his father's deep love for Latin literature influenced the son in a scholarly direction from an early age. David Syme had a good library of Latin texts, to which Ronald soon applied himself. This early fondness for Latin was notably strengthened by the Latin teacher at Stratford, a certain Miss Tooman, whom Syme later liked to mention with particular warmth. In those years he also developed an interest in French literature and a great attachment to cats, and his affection for both continued undiminished throughout his life. There is little evidence that the sociable interest he professed in gardening in his later years sprang from any serious attachment to the soil in his youth. Apart from ancient Rome, French, and cats the boy had, as his sister Geraldine has acknowledged, no hobbies. She has written that even then 'he was very private and perhaps secretive.'

He was not, however, averse to publication despite his tender years. An undated letter signed 'Ignorant Schoolboy' from the pages of a local newspaper of this period already heralds the author of *The Roman Revolution* in unmistakable phrases and with trenchant argument: 'I was pleased to see in your Monday's issue a letter pointing out some of the "errors of John Doe" perpetrated in the Saturday edition . . . But, grammar apart, there are serious mistakes of matter . . . John Doe erroneously supposes that the "cold-blooded Caesar" was the great Julius. Nothing of the kind. The reference was to Octavianus Caesar, his grandnephew . . . Without doubt other mistakes quite as serious could be adduced . . . , but I am not in a position to do so, as I have ever confined my reading to what is instructive or entertaining.'

In late 1918 Syme was awarded a Junior Scholarship in the New Zealand University Entrance Examinations but was unable to take it up because he was too young. So he remained until 1920 at the school

in New Plymouth. Upon taking the examinations again he emerged as the top candidate in New Zealand with a still legendary score of ninety-six per cent in chemistry, slightly ahead of his score in Latin. He took up his scholarship at the Victoria University College of Wellington, not far to the south of his home in Eltham. In 1922 he began the study of Greek at an astonishingly advanced age for one who was soon to demonstrate extraordinary proficiency in that language. At about the same time, in a characteristically audacious move, Syme applied for a vacancy as an Assistant Lecturer in Classics at Auckland. He was awarded the position. As a result in 1923, although still a student at Wellington, he moved to Auckland to begin teaching. In a bizarre turn of events the Professor of Classics at Auckland, H. S. Dettmann, resigned to become headmaster of the Sydney Grammar School in Australia; and the young Ronald Syme found himself acting head of the Auckland department. In that capacity he assumed responsibility for preparing students for the same nationwide examinations as he had himself to take as a Wellington student. A rumour is still current that he marked his own examinations, but this should be discounted. That work was done by overseas assessors.

In 1924 a new professor, A. C. Paterson, arrived in Auckland, allowing Syme to return to his normal teaching and to the MA examinations at the end of the year. These he passed with Double First Class Honours in both Latin and French. This distinction brought him a postgraduate scholarship that took him in 1925 to Oriel College, Oxford. Except for short visits he was never to return to Taranaki or to New Zealand again. He took with him to England his mastery of the classics, his love of French literature and cats, and a feeling for the rugged integrity of the provinces of a great empire. He left behind his aged and rowdy grandfather, his Latinist father, his car-driving mother, a beloved sister, and a deeply troubled brother.

For the next two years Syme devoted himself to the ancient history and philosophy that comprised the 'Greats' programme of the Oxford Honour School of *Literae Humaniores*. (With his overseas degree he was able to bypass the first two years of 'Mods'.) His tutor in history at Oriel was the redoubtable Marcus Niebuhr Tod, for whom he formed a lifelong regard. The two men, both uncommonly learned and uncommonly precise, remained in touch over the years, and Syme preserved the letters that Tod sent to offer congratulations — conveying the palpable pride of a former teacher — at important stages in his pupil's career. Syme also took care to preserve the delicious verses that he

composed in honour of Tod, presumably much later for some commemorative feast in Oriel. They deserve to be quoted in large part, for they tell more about their author than their subject:

*Marcus Niebuhr Tod*

I sing of Marcus Niebuhr Tod  
Who found the autograph of God.

Carved on a Sinaitic cliff  
He found Jehovah's hieroglyph.  
A casual glance assured the date  
as B.C. 1698.  
Convinced that no epigraphist  
Had entered it on any list,  
The worthy Marcus looked around  
And found in fragments on the ground  
An interesting Hebrew text  
Concerning this world and the next.  
With scrupulous and loving care  
He joined the pieces lying there,  
And with a scholar's zeal restored  
Words written by the living Lord.

"Go, worship other gods than me:  
I feel the need of company.

"And copy bird or beast or fish  
In wood or stone if that's your wish.

"Rightly or wrongly, take my name:  
To me it's very much the same.

"If toil on week-days you must shirk,  
Then keep the Sabbath for your work.

"If what you want's a good long life,  
With parents keep continual strife.

"Kill anyone who troubles you;  
It's easier, and safer too.

"And if your neighbour's wife is free,  
Of course commit adultery.

"If others have what you have not,  
Why not take steps to steal the lot?

"False evidence against a friend  
Brings much advantage in the end.

"If someone has what takes your eye,  
Ask, and you'll get it by and by."

These mystic words did Marcus find  
 And laid them carefully to mind,  
 But not before, upon his knees,  
 He knelt and took a loving squeeze.

This rewriting of the Ten Commandments is one of many manifestations of a heretical streak that characterised much of Syme's work. After all, in his first published article (in 1930) he began by describing Domitian as 'that able and intelligent emperor.' It appears that in his years at Oriel (1925–7) he and his friends often amused themselves with fabricating irreverent texts and scenarios about their elders. One such invention Syme enjoyed retelling throughout his life: when the austere Genner approached old Phelps in the Senior Common Room at Oriel after dinner, the 'Phelper' is alleged to have cried out, 'Sit you down, sit you down, my good man, and take a glass of wine with me.' Genner protested, 'I had rather commit adultery than allow wine to pass my lips.' And the Phelper responded, 'So would we all, my good man, so would we all.' Few who heard Syme tell this story in the sixties, seventies, or eighties, would have guessed that he had made it up as an undergraduate, or that he had, at the same time, created an extravagant version of it in Homeric hexameters. The final moment was rendered as follows:

ἐνθ' ἄρα μιν πρὸς μῦθον ἀμείβετο κερδαλέος Φέλψ.  
 "Γέννερε, οἶον εἶπες· ἐλοίμεθά κεν τό γ' ἅπαντες,  
 πάντες ἐλοίμεθα, πάντες ἐλοίμεθ', ἐλοίμεθα πάντες."  
 ὡς φάτο καγχάζων, ὑπὸ δὲ μέγα πάλλετο πάγων  
 αὐτοῦ καγχάζοντος· ὁ δ' αὐτίκα Γέννερος ἥρωσ  
 δάκνυτο μύστακ' ὁδοῦσι, φίλον κεχαραγμένος ἦτορ.

Syme's later reflections on the author of the *Historia Augusta* as a rogue scholar undoubtedly drew upon his efforts in a similar genre. It was, as we shall see, a genre he never altogether abandoned.

As an undergraduate at Oxford Syme carried off a series of major classical prizes. In 1926 he won the Chancellor's Prize for Latin prose, with a rendering of Macaulay in Ciceronian Latin, and in the same year he also won the Gaisford Prize for Greek prose with a Platonic version of a piece from More's *Utopia*, just four years after he had begun to learn Greek. In the following year he won the Gaisford Prize for Greek verse with Homeric hexameters that were born, one suspects, about the same time as the exploits of Dr Phelps.

In the midst of his Greats programme, in 1926, Syme announced his engagement to a New Zealand woman, Dr Vera Reader, who was

then doing research at the Rockefeller Laboratory in Oxford. The announcement was made in the New Zealand press on 25 June 1926, but it appears that none of Syme's contemporaries was aware of it at the time. The marriage never took place. The engagement was known later to a very few of Syme's friends, and the whole matter remains mysterious today. Dr Reader seems to have been the first in a series of remarkably intelligent and sophisticated women with whom Syme formed attachments, although he never again seriously contemplated marriage, as far as can be told. As with Dr Reader, Syme maintained a strict code of secrecy about his female friends.

Syme took the Greats examinations in the late spring of 1927, and there is considerable oral tradition about the results. Some have denied the report that he received a pure alpha in Roman history and have even maliciously attributed the report to Syme himself. But the record can now be established definitively on the basis of a handwritten letter, dated 30 July 1927 and preserved among Syme's papers. The letter, addressed to Syme by his philosophy tutor W. D. Ross, shows an unadulterated alpha for Roman history and  $\alpha$ -? for Greek history. His Latin prose brought  $\alpha$ =, his Greek  $\alpha$ -. Philosophy was another story, with upper gammas in both Logic and Morals. His First, at least by the standards of those days, was assured.

No sooner had the young Syme completed his examinations than he began to contemplate writing a book. He turned for advice and direction to the newly appointed Camden Professor of Ancient History, J. G. C. Anderson, who — together with Tod — was the principal backer of Syme at Oxford in those early years. Anderson was a Scot, and Syme clearly found him congenial — possibly, in part, because of his own Scottish ancestry and also perhaps because now, as later, he always felt more at ease with the non-English. In the 1980s Syme characterised Anderson in print with words of high approbation — 'that sagacious and economical scholar.' A letter from Anderson on 23 November 1927 reveals that Syme had proposed a book on Domitian for publication by the Clarendon Press. In the following year he made his first visit to Germany to explore the emperor's frontier policy and the archaeological sites on the Rhine. Syme's subsequent article on Domitian suggests that the book he was planning would have offered a strongly revisionist account. But Anderson was realistic: 'Of course one cannot assume they would be willing to publish such a work as you have in mind.'

In 1928/29 Syme was a member of the British School at Rome,



where he figured prominently among the promising young classical scholars then in residence. These included Ian Richmond, Colin Hardie, and Togo Salmon. An artist, Alan Sorrell, who was Rome Scholar in Painting that year, has left a vivid, if obviously fictionalised portrait of Syme in an unpublished *roman-à-clef* about the British School. Of the character that Sorrell called Clarence Sims, we read: ‘He was more like a bird — a hungry young robin, always skipping about, perky and cheeky; and then his talk had a sort of glitter about it, and by accentuating unexpected words, and sonorously mouthing and repeating phrases he could turn the dullest conversation into something fantastically “Simian.” He was very slight and thin, with a rounded back and a chest so flat that it seemed positively to cave in, and his head was narrow, and his hair sleekly black, and his close set brown eyes forever twinkling.’

Ronald Syme was, by all accounts, very thin at this period, if perhaps not quite so cadaverous as Clarence Sims, and his eyes were green, not brown. But they were probably forever twinkling. The sleek hair, black and later white, was a consistent feature of Syme’s public image. And his love of words, however trivial, stayed with him to the end. As Sorrell wrote, he mouthed words and phrases sonorously and with such relish that even the most familiar expressions could suddenly seem hilariously fresh. During the last three decades of his life, when he was often in the United States, Syme loved to tell the story of the railway conductor on the train from Boston to New York who announced the first major city south of Boston. Unlike the rest of us, Syme heard the apocalyptic call of an Old Testament prophet as the man cried out, ‘Providence! Providence!’

Syme’s sensitivity to vocabulary was only the most conspicuous part of his deep love of literature. He knew by heart vast quantities of poetry in many languages, and those who have heard him declaim Swinburne or Vigny will perhaps forgive him for having had no interest in music at all. His music was the sound of words and the rhythm of verse. So profound a commitment to literature is rare among historians. In Syme’s case it not only led to interpretations of Virgil, Horace, and Ovid that still command respect: it meant that his own scholarly writing was accomplished in a carefully crafted, elegantly concise, and highly dramatic style. As he once observed, ‘Style abides.’ By contrast, modern scholarship ‘all too often allows the facts to be choked in verbiage or sunk in bibliography.’

At the end of February in 1929 Syme received a letter from H. E.

D. Blackiston, the President of Trinity College, Oxford, with an offer of a fellowship. The incumbent would teach both Greek and Roman history, and — since Blackiston thought this ‘hardly a full time job’ — some tuition in Honour Moderations would be thrown in. The appointment was to be for a term of seven years on condition of no marriage. The total salary package came to £500 a year. Syme accepted the offer and thus became, later that year, a Fellow of Trinity. With an interruption during the war years he remained in that position until he assumed the Camden Professorship in 1949. He was very happy at Trinity, where the conservative and rather old-fashioned atmosphere suited him perfectly. As time went by, it became clear that this New Zealander was becoming perhaps over-assimilated in Oxford. He particularly enjoyed telling stories about the more eccentric and conservative dons of earlier years. He adored gossip and croquet after lunch with the Fellows of Trinity.

Syme’s first published scholarly article appeared in the *Journal of Roman Studies* in 1930 during his second year at Trinity. This was the paper on Domitian that represented a part of the research about which he had corresponded with Anderson three years before. But in the new decade Syme turned to broader themes that were to preoccupy him for much of his life: one was a prosopographical interpretation of provincial élites in the Roman Empire, and the other was the frontier policy and military arrangements of the Julio-Claudian and Flavian emperors, for which Syme’s visit to the Rhine frontier in 1928 was an inspiration and incitement. The project on the provincials led to a substantial manuscript of sixteen chapters with a provisional title of *The Provincial at Rome*, to which Syme made reference in the Preface to his *Tacitus* of 1958. He described the work as ‘a book begun many years ago, soon interrupted, and not yet terminated.’ It survives incomplete in a box dated 1934. One may suspect that Syme’s studies of military history took up most of his time in the middle thirties, since he was obliged to meet deadlines for volumes X and XI of the *Cambridge Ancient History*. When he resumed his prosopographical investigations, it was *The Roman Revolution* of 1939, not *The Provincial at Rome*, that brought them before the public.

In the published record Syme seemed to move from military to social history. His brilliant analysis of the Augustan northern frontiers appeared in 1934 in *CAH X*, and of the Flavian frontiers in 1936 in *CAH XI*. Both were accompanied by papers on particular problems, such as ‘M. Vinicius’ in 1933 and ‘Lentulus and the Origins of Moesia’

in 1934. A detailed treatment of Augustus's Spanish wars appeared in the *American Journal of Philology* in 1934, finding no echo at all in the *CAH* but reflecting a careful examination of David Magie's paper on that subject, published fourteen years earlier in the same journal. Syme thus became known principally as a military historian, even when *The Provincial at Rome* already lay upon his desk in draft form. It was probably J. G. C. Anderson, as Camden Professor, who proposed Syme for the *CAH* chapters and thereby redirected his energies away from élite prosopography for a time. Anderson himself contributed the chapter on Augustus's eastern frontiers for *CAH X*. When Syme's chapter on the Flavians appeared in 1936, Anderson was dead, and his successor in the Camden Chair was now Hugh Last.

Syme returned then to the material he had gathered on the Roman provincials, and he extended his scholarly contacts in Germany to include the master prosopographers Friedrich Münzer and Arthur Stein. His correspondence suggests that he was seeking their criticisms of his new work. In the ominous shadow of rising Fascism in both Germany and Italy he was constructing a fresh and iconoclastic account of the rise of Augustus. He rejected the old Mommsenian legalism in favour of a cool assessment of power, as achieved through a nexus of marriages and client relationships among the old and new aristocrats of Rome. Syme drew his inspiration from hostile remarks in the opening pages of Tacitus's *Annals* and other hints of the largely lost opposition to Augustus, and he recognised in Gibbon a predecessor who had also understood the dark side of the early Principate. When *The Roman Revolution* appeared in September of 1939, its author acknowledged that it contained much that would make the new Camden Professor raise his eyebrows. The first important review, by the young Italian refugee, Momigliano, whom Last had helped bring to England, observed cautiously, 'It is premature to guess how far Mr. Syme will go in this evolution of a moralist historian from a first-rate researcher in military history.' Momigliano scarcely concealed his, and no doubt Last's, disapproval when he wrote, 'Spiritual interests of people are considered much less than their marriages.' But among historians and educated readers generally *The Roman Revolution* had a great impact, even during the war years (as Isaiah Berlin confirms). Nothing that Syme wrote later ever had quite the same influence outside the world of classical scholarship.

Syme's natural streak of rebellion, now directed against current orthodoxy about Augustus, was, however, not part of an evolution, as

Momigliano supposed. The manuscript of *The Provincial at Rome* stands as proof. Much of the doctrine that is associated with *The Roman Revolution* is already articulated with force and elegance in those handwritten pages. That earlier work had been 'an attempt to expose certain fallacies of category, the legalistic, the racial, and the geographical, and substitute for formulae and schemata the study of men and affairs in their own environment.' Syme had already debunked the so-called constitutional settlements of 27 BC and 23 BC, and he had offered a luminous tribute to a master prosopographer, Matthias Gelzer. In fact, this manuscript also contains the germs of many of Syme's opinions on provincial society as they were to appear in his *Tacitus* of 1958. *The Provincial at Rome* is important because it shows that the Syme of later years was almost fully developed in the early 1930s, if not before. The letter from an 'ignorant schoolboy', which must antedate 1920 (when Syme went to Wellington), suggests in embryo the Octavian of *The Roman Revolution*.

Despite his manifold scholarly preoccupations in the 1930s Syme still found time for learned and inventive jokes such as his friends at Oriel had joined him in propagating when he was an undergraduate. In March of 1932 and again in February of 1936 some astonishing Latin prose was published in the *Oxford Magazine* over the name Pogon. The style was brilliantly Tacitean, although the matter was contemporary. An attack on the Buchmanite movement was entitled 'The Group Movement: A Tacitean Fragment': *Apud patres varie ea res habita; irridebant alii. Fuere autem qui occulti laetarentur, vel ultro faverent: vile damnum, si campus et scholae deserantur: moribus homines, non mente aut studiis aestimari.* The second piece, entitled *De Coniuratione Bodleiana*, introduced such witty names as C. Crutellius, Alsatius Tilia, and Lapicius Niger, all worthy of the author of the *Historia Augusta*. A Tacitean fragment on Titus and Berenice, perhaps also composed in this period, was first published in Syme's *Roman Papers* VII, soon after his death, not only with his prior knowledge but with a learned commentary that he wrote — or revised — for the publication (with references as late as 1988).

As the 1930s drew to a close, the outbreak of World War II abruptly broke off Syme's richly productive academic career at Oxford. Like so many gifted scholars of the age, he was recruited into the nation's service. His studies of the Roman frontier in the Balkans led in 1940 to an appointment in Belgrade as Press Attaché to the British Legation, and he remained in that post for about a year. Concerning this period

of his life Syme was always exceptionally uncommunicative, even for him. When asked directly if he had been engaged in intelligence operations for the Allies, he regularly issued a denial. As a faithful government officer, he took his secrets with him to the grave. But there can be little doubt that he did contribute to the intelligence effort. The documents now at Wolfson College reveal that in 1940 he left Belgrade for a trip lasting two months that took him to Capetown, Durban, Cairo, Adana, Ankara, and Istanbul. In the following year he reported to the Foreign Division that he had seen to the dissolution of the Press Office in Belgrade and the systematic destruction of its files after the coup of 27 March. The uprising removed Prince Paul of Yugoslavia, who had just signed a pact with the Axis powers, and replaced him with King Peter, who was favourable to the Allies. On 2 April, just four days before Hitler began his devastating three-day blitz of the Yugoslav capital, Syme left Belgrade for a trip that took him to Athens, Cairo, Jerusalem, Adana, and Ankara.

Syme's friends at Oxford feared for him in the months after the bombing of Belgrade. Miss M. V. Taylor, the redoubtable editor of the *Journal of Roman Studies*, wrote to him in Ankara on 13 July 1941: 'Only yesterday did I learn . . . that you were at Ankara and had missed the Belgrade blitz. We had all been very anxious about you. When the *Times* published accounts of the exciting adventures of the Yugoslav legation — an odyssey — we all imagined you in the midst of it and expected to see you here soon.' But Syme was not to return to Oxford until the end of the war. In 1942 he was appointed Professor of Classical Philology at the University of Istanbul, and he insisted ever afterwards on the great interest shown by the Turks at that time in the study of Latin literature. But virtually no one has ever believed that so talented — and close-mouthed — a scholar would have spent three years of the war simply teaching Roman history and Latin to the Turks (although he did indeed do this with characteristic brio).

Istanbul during the war was a diplomatic crossroads, where messages could be given and received. The personal contacts formed by Syme in these years show him intimately involved in polyglot diplomatic circles. Two women with whom he had formed close relationships during his time in Belgrade stayed in touch throughout the Istanbul period, and one of them, married to a Turk, saw him frequently in Istanbul. The other, a Russian married to a British diplomat, wrote frequently and was acquainted with diplomatic circles that were clearly familiar to him. The mastery of Serbo-Croatian, which led Syme to be

called Simovič in Yugoslavia, was matched by a comparable control of Turkish (although he was reluctant to admit it). Among his papers is a piece, in an artful and old-fashioned style, *Romada Dil ve Siyaset* ('Language and Politics at Rome'). In later years the only memory of Istanbul in the war that he saw fit to reveal was of the charm and abundance of its cats — and the gentle noise he made to attract them. Sometimes, ten came at once, *on kedi*. That phrase, and a typically Turkish habit of prefixing an *m* on a repeated word (*şarap-marap*, for wine) were among the few harmless hints that Syme would give of his life in Turkey.

In 1944–5 he devoted his scholarly energies to Strabo as a result of 'the chance acquisition of a text at Istanbul,' and his detailed studies of the Anatolian material in Strabo's *Geography* have survived. They prove that Syme used his residence in Turkey to pursue his longstanding interest in historical geography. He also maintained a lively academic correspondence with a German economic historian, Alexander Rüstow, who had been resident in Istanbul since 1933. Rüstow admired *The Roman Revolution* and gave it its first German review — in a journal of the economics faculty of the University of Istanbul.

Syme's service to Britain during the war was likely to have been substantial and not forgotten. His friend and *fautor* subsequently, Isaiah Berlin, was himself deeply involved in wartime diplomacy and had contacts in common with Syme. Sir Isaiah was most properly awarded the OM, and when Sir Ronald ultimately received the same honour in 1976 he felt free to tell certain intimate friends that he was sure that the initiative had come from Sir Isaiah. To some this appeared the closest he ever came to acknowledging the true nature of his work during the war. But Berlin himself maintains that the OM and his support of Syme came solely in recognition of intellectual merit. In any case, Syme was often heard to declare that Isaiah Berlin was 'a kind of lay saint.' Of no one else did he speak in such terms. This was Syme's highest praise.

The course of the war had delayed the impact of *The Roman Revolution* in the scholarly world at large, but its importance was undoubtedly recognised by the Fellows of the British Academy when they elected Syme to join their number in 1944. Frank Adcock conveyed the news of Syme's election to the Camden Professor. It was a matter of some delicacy since Hugh Last was not (and never became) a Fellow of the Academy. He wrote to Syme on 21 September to say that he had heard 'the news that you had joined that Academy of

theirs.' Irony was not a weapon that Last could wield with much skill. His displeasure cannot have escaped Syme's watchful eye: 'Well, well. My respect for you is such as to survive even heavier blows than that. But the thing does become more futile with the years, and the publications of its members which discredit British scholarship more numerous.' By February of 1945 Last felt free to write, 'British Academy — All right: I put it down to an altruistic addiction to slumming on your part.' Last went on to denounce the Oxford D. Litt., with adverse reference to Dr (Cyril) Bailey, Dr Bowra, and Dr Sutherland. 'The new D. Litt.', he wrote to Syme with ill-concealed venom, 'might enlist your missionary zeal.'

Last was obviously jealous, and it was only a matter of time before his hostility to Syme would erupt openly. He found a *casus belli* in one of Syme's weakest pieces. This was a review-article on Harald Fuchs's edition of the first six books of the *Annales* of Tacitus: it appeared in the *Journal of Roman Studies* for 1948, the very year in which Syme assumed the Presidency of the Society for the Promotion of Roman Studies. The Editorial Committee for the journal at that time consisted of Adcock, Last, and Syme. All three had accordingly seen the article through the press. In his review Syme espoused a highly conservative approach to the textual criticism of *Annales* I-VI, for which the Medicean manuscript was (and is) the sole witness. 'A conservative approach to M', wrote Syme, 'is recommended not merely by disillusion and by distaste for all the emendations . . . , but by sound doctrine.' Later on he declared, 'Glosses and interpolations have had their day', and 'Fidelity to the Codex Mediceus is now not only to be commended but firmly to be enjoined.' Finally, Syme pronounced Fuchs, by virtue of his taste for emendations, a representative of 'an outworn tradition of scholarship.'

Last appears not to have protested much at the time out of deference to a fellow member of the Editorial Committee. His patience must have been tested further in 1949 when Syme was elected to succeed him in the Camden Chair of Ancient History. But he pounced at last when an opportunity came in 1951 in the form of a serious discussion by C. O. Brink, again in the *Journal of Roman Studies*, of the textual criticism of Tacitus. Brink took polite but firm exception to the methodology enjoined by Syme, and he used the emendations of Justus Lipsius to invalidate the blind reliance on M that Syme had recommended to modern critics. Last decided that this was the moment for a showdown with his successor, who, as it happened, was now

completing his term as President of the Roman Society. He offered to resign from the Editorial Committee. The letter of resignation explains the notorious hostility between Last and Syme that overshadowed their final years together and, to some extent, coloured the relations between Syme and other colleagues for the rest of his life.

The letter is dated 28 December 1951 and is addressed to Miss M. V. Taylor, editor of the journal, with copies to Adcock and Syme.

Now that *JRS* xli is out, and Christmas is over, it is time at length to dispel the cloud which has been hanging over the Editorial Committee for three years. This I do by resigning from it. May I ask you to communicate the following explanation to the Council?

First, let me make four preliminary remarks. One is that this is a most painful letter, which I write with the greatest possible reluctance and without any anger, though my attitude to bad scholarship and lowered standards is as remorseless as ever. The second, that, since any man may make a slip and all of us are lamentably ignorant of items in the literatures of our subject which we ought to have read, defects of these sorts are venial. The third, that ever since the Council did me the great honour of appointing me to its Editorial Committee in 1926 I have tried to support my colleagues in raising the quality of the contents of the *Journal*. And the fourth that I most willingly pay the warmest tribute to the services rendered to that end by Professor Syme on subjects of which he is in command.

In 1948 however Mr. Syme sent in a review-discussion of H. Fuchs's edition of Tacitus, *Annals* i-vi. As soon as I saw it I was shocked; and, though I hold most firmly that members of the Editorial Committee should be scholars of a calibre to justify our practice of refraining from sitting in judgement on the contributions of one another, I ventured to take the first opportunity in this case of offering a comment. What is more, seeing that the effect was small, I asked a friend to give what might be a more acceptable warning. Unfortunately the results were negligible.

By the time the review-discussion was published (*JRS* xxxviii, 122-131), a vacancy in the Camden chair was impending, and action in this matter was temporarily out of the question. I therefore decided unwillingly to wait until the work had attracted public comment, which it has now received (without the slightest instigation from me) in Professor Brink's article in *JRS*, xli . . .

To some our differences may seem trivial: to me the difference is between bad scholarship and good. And believing that an attempt to maintain a high standard of scholarship is one of the conditions required if the *Journal* is to maintain and increase its reputation, I also believe that a serious blow was dealt to its good name when this review-discussion appeared over the signature of a member of the Editorial Committee. In these circumstances, since I am not prepared to belong to an Editorial Committee whose members' work needs the supervision of their colleagues, since again there is nothing to prevent the first disaster being followed by others, and also since I have



found silence irksome when it has been suggested that the scholarship of this review-discussion seemed to me good enough for *JRS*, I resign.

Last wrote a personal letter to Syme on 2 January, saying that he felt relieved not to have to be hypocritical any more toward him and that he considered what had happened 'almost irrelevant to our relations as members of a College.' (Last was now Principal of Brasenose, and Syme, as Camden Professor, was a Fellow.) Syme's reply, of the next day, confessed his 'perplexity' and asked whether the Council of the Roman Society 'shall be asked to debate and decide questions of right and wrong about classical texts and emendations. This seems hardly practicable, or fair to the Council.' In the end Last's letter of 28 December was not brought before the Council. It was Syme himself who left the Editorial Committee, not Last, and he was replaced by Arnaldo Momigliano, who, like A. H. M. Jones (the incoming President of the Society), belonged clearly to the supporters of Last. Last had won this round. The whole affair left a legacy of bitterness, forcing many scholars in England and elsewhere to take sides when they had no desire to do so. The gifted and cultivated Isobel Henderson was among the very few who boasted openly that she was on friendly terms with both Last and Syme.

In subsequent years, especially after Last's death in 1957, the hostilities subsided and were eventually eclipsed by the torrent of international honours that descended upon Syme. But his relations with Momigliano never recovered despite occasional protestations of good will, and Syme never authorised the republication of his review of Fuchs in any of the volumes of his collected papers. The poison had lost its toxicity, but the damage was never wholly undone.

During the forties and fifties Syme's influence upon ancient history was growing conspicuously, and it drew scholars back to the sources and methods upon which he had himself depended. The prosopographical analysis used to such telling effect in *The Roman Revolution* had its origins, as Syme acknowledged, in the pioneering studies of Hermann Dessau, Matthias Gelzer, and Friedrich Münzer. In the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries the preparation of entries for the *Prosopographia Imperii Romani* and Pauly-Wissowa's *Real-Encyclopädie* had provided the impetus for the German prosopographical work, but Syme had been the first to turn their studies of families and careers into compelling narrative history. His achievement was thus very different from that of Sir Lewis Namier for British history of the eighteenth

century. Syme always insisted that he had not even read Namier's work until *The Roman Revolution* was finished.

But the combined taste for military history and prosopography that characterised Syme's work in the thirties had been shared, with comparable expertise, by his good friend and coeval, Eric Birley, whose work on the officers of the Roman army remains authoritative today. Birley's mastery of career patterns in an alien military system was directed during the war to the German high command with spectacularly successful results. Many a German Officer was later amazed to discover that Birley's intimate knowledge of the German army was based upon experience in Roman prosopography. The methods of *The Roman Revolution* were given due credit in William Stevenson's account (1976) of wartime intelligence operations under the title *A Man Called Intrepid*.

Syme's vivid and precise account of Roman politics and society — rejecting the primacy of legal and constitutional issues — and perhaps the glamour of its pertinence to modern warfare galvanised both the old and the new generations of Roman historians after the war. Münzer and Syme replaced Mommsen and Last. In England the publication of H. H. Scullard's *Roman Politics 220–150 B.C.* in 1951 testified to the power of Syme's work upon a historian whose first book, on Scipio Africanus, had appeared in 1930. E. Badian's *Foreign Clientelae* represented the new generation of prosopographers. Badian was only the second of Syme's doctoral pupils (the first was Walter Schmitthenner of Germany, working on a military topic), and he brought his dissertation to completion during the period 1950–6. The only voice raised publicly in opposition to *The Roman Revolution* was that of Hans Erich Stier in Germany. In general German historians of that time tended not to follow Syme's lead, despite the signal contributions of their own predecessors, in pursuing prosopographical research. His most important followers in Germany, Werner Eck and Géza Alföldy, came a decade later and represented a still younger generation, and a much more international one. Alföldy is Hungarian by origin, and Eck has long been at home among scholars in Italy and Spain (more recently England and the United States as well).

Syme himself had always been a scholar of broad international horizons, but the unpleasantness with Last and his supporters encouraged him to look beyond England even more than before. In the autumn of 1956, through the good offices of Isaiah Berlin, he took up an invitation to teach at Harvard University for a term, and there he

made many friends among colleagues and students alike. Far from the tensions of Oxford, he was visibly more relaxed and socially forthcoming. As earlier, he had always seemed to feel more comfortable with the non-English, and especially provincials. America responded to his obvious delight by lionising him. There were many receptions, dinners, lectures, and informal talks. After that term at Harvard Syme's productivity and prestige began to rise with a dizzying speed. In January 1958 he returned to the New World to give a set of lectures at McMaster University in Canada on 'Colonial Élites' in surroundings that he evidently found congenial. He brought out his monumental two-volume study of Tacitus later the same year, and in the year after that he was knighted. In the autumn of 1959 he returned to the United States as Sather Professor of Classical Literature at the University of California in Berkeley. He had now become, as the French scholar Marcel Durry put it in 1964, 'the emperor of Roman history', and he was to remain enthroned until his death.

With his *Tacitus* Syme established a model for the study of an ancient author in his historical context. The work as a whole is simultaneously a meticulous examination of the imperial history for which Tacitus is our primary source and an equally meticulous examination of the age in which Tacitus is supposed to have written. The double focus naturally encouraged a reinterpretation of the ancient texts as covert commentary on the time in which they were composed. In the case of the *Annales* the chronology of composition was — and remains — controversial. It was hardly surprising that Syme failed to persuade all his readers when he drew parallels between the early years of the reigns of Tiberius and of Hadrian. A. N. Sherwin-White registered his disagreements in a long review in the *Journal of Roman Studies* but nonetheless concluded that in Syme's *Tacitus* 'the School of *Literae Humaniores* may salute what in this age of specialization is the most remarkable and the most successful of its products.' *Tacitus* inspired many works of similar character, although of less amplitude, on major authors, beginning with Syme's own *Sallust* (1964) — a reworked version of his 1959 Sather Lectures. Books by various Anglophone scholars — Fergus Millar on Cassius Dio (1964), T. D. Barnes on Tertullian (1971), C. P. Jones on Plutarch (1971) and Dio Chrysostom (1978), Miriam Griffin on Seneca (1976), and most recently, and in Symian proportions, John Matthews on Ammianus Marcellinus (1989) — all reflect the powerful impact of *Tacitus*.

The foregoing examples suggest that the influence of Syme grew as

much, perhaps more, through his published scholarship than through his actual teaching at Oxford. As Camden Professor he had little more than a half-dozen formally enrolled doctoral students during the entire term of his appointment. In the aftermath of *The Roman Revolution* there were only Schmitthenner and Badian, and one cannot miss the fact that the former was German and the latter Viennese (although educated in New Zealand). In the immediate aftermath of *Tacitus* Syme took on successively as doctoral candidates Fergus Millar (a Scot), the writer of the present memorial (an American), and Miriam Griffin (also an American). The last two had first met Syme in his class at Harvard in the autumn of 1956. In 1960 he accepted his first English graduate student, Anthony Birley, but it must be said that Birley was not only the son of an old friend (Eric Birley) but half-Scots as well. A few years later Syme added T. D. Barnes, a Yorkshireman, to his small group of graduate students. The unmistakable internationalism of Syme's graduate instruction was not lost upon his colleagues at Oxford. They complained of his lack of interest in local issues and his lack of commitment to Oxford teaching. In the sixties it was often remarked that Syme was out of Oxford more than he was in it. Yet he always fulfilled his statutory obligations by offering a set of lectures and a class each year, and he gave solid and unwavering support to those few he undertook to supervise. He never imposed doctrines or methods upon any of them. A review of their names is sufficient to illustrate the diversity of style and breadth of interest that he brought to his teaching.

After his visits to Harvard, McMaster, and Berkeley in the late fifties, Syme returned frequently to North America to renew the friendships he had made there and to lecture widely. In 1959 the American Philosophical Society had elected him a foreign member, and among that Society's most agreeable practices was its covering the costs of hotel and sustenance for all members during its general meetings. Syme much enjoyed the company at those meetings, to say nothing of the hospitality: and with a lecture here or there he could put together a trip to North America once or twice a year with virtually no expense. He was never a person to spend money lavishly or even readily, and he sometimes spoke with dark disapproval of those who took vacations in luxurious hotels. But he was a highly appreciative guest and always considered the communication of erudite opinion a proper exchange for hospitality. It never occurred to him that some of his North Ameri-

can hosts were actually paying out of their own pockets when departmental entertainment funds were exhausted.

At the Institute for Advanced Study in Princeton Syme had two good friends in Andr as Alföldi and J. F. Gilliam, who welcomed him periodically for short visits. It was in the early sixties that Alföldi was organising a project for the study of the imperial biographies known collectively as the *Historia Augusta*. With the support of Johannes Straub, the professor of ancient history at Bonn, Alföldi set up an annual colloquium of invited scholars to discuss the *HA* in the pleasant ambience of the Rhineland. From the second colloquium in 1964 Alföldi made sure that Syme as well as his Institute colleague Gilliam were regularly included. The annual Bonner-Historia-Augusta-Colloquium, as it came to be called, met from 1970 onward at the Seehotel in Maria Laach, and the enterprise proved extremely fecund in Syme's intellectual development. He warmed to the subject with obvious relish. He judged the author of the *HA* to have been a 'rogue scholar', or rather a scholar on holiday — fashioning erudite witticisms just as he had done himself in former time. Syme's new enthusiasm for the postulated author, and his mysterious sources such as '*Ignotus* — the good biographer,' led to four books on the subject between 1968 and 1983. Some of Syme's Oxford colleagues thought the *HA* unworthy of him, and Syme himself told a revealing story of meeting Eduard Fraenkel on the High Street in Oxford when *Ammianus and the Historia Augusta* (1968) was in proof. 'It is very good', declared Fraenkel, 'if the *Historia Augusta* makes you work on Ammianus.'

Syme's views on the *HA* met serious opposition, not, of course, within the group at Maria Laach but among those scholars who craved a more profound explanation of the work's eccentricities than the frivolity of a scholar. Momigliano, as the author of an important paper in 1954 on the *HA* as 'an unsolved problem of historical forgery,' led the attack. A brief but sharp review in the *English Historical Review* clearly angered Syme, and he chose to respond in an Olympian manner. He published an entire book to refute Momigliano in a style that was at once distant and derisory. For the most part, he did not even use Momigliano's name but referred simply to 'the critic.' The whole work, entitled *The Historia Augusta: A Call for Clarity* (1971), manifestly took as its inspiration Edward Gibbon's massive *Vindication*, written in response to the critics of the fifteenth and sixteenth chapters of the *Decline and Fall*.

From that time onward Syme and Momigliano no longer tolerated

one another's company, as I discovered to my cost when I once invited both of them to dinner at Harvard in the mid-seventies. When offered a drink, Momigliano, who never took anything alcoholic, asked for fruit juice, whereupon Syme promptly asked for vodka. Momigliano then solicited Syme's opinion on several recent scholarly books. Syme sniffed and cleared his throat in a manner familiar to all who knew him, before replying tartly, 'I prefer to read the ancient texts.' And so it went. The evening was a disaster.

In 1970 Syme reached the standard retirement age of sixty-seven and had therefore to vacate the Camden Chair. Personally this was a terrible blow for him because, like all college fellows at retirement, he was obliged to leave his rooms at Brasenose. He had been there for just over twenty years. The familiar surroundings were always a comfort: the long entrance corridor lined with books and redolent of stale cigar smoke, the large sitting room with a broad bay window beneath which a running seat concealed masses of manuscript pages, and the study and bedroom beyond, containing the precious prosopographical files arranged in cigar boxes. Syme never forgave Brasenose for what he perceived as putting him out, even though the college had simply followed its normal policy. Isaiah Berlin played an important role at this sensitive moment by securing a place for Syme in the new Wolfson College, of which Berlin was to be the first President. Unfortunately in 1970 the college was not yet built, and so Syme chose to live for several years out of a suitcase until he could move in. Why he did not take an apartment, which he could easily have afforded, is unclear. For most of his life he was the invited or elected guest of some sponsoring body, and it may never have occurred to him that he could find a place for himself. It is known that he was ashamed to be seen shopping in a market and preferred, if possible, to do so with a female companion whom he could appear to be assisting chivalrously. In any event, when Wolfson opened its doors, he took up residence in an attractive penthouse suite which became his home henceforth.

The seventies were necessarily a time of adjustment for Syme. Since 1952 he had been Secretary General of UNESCO's Council for Philosophy and Humanistic Studies, but in 1971 he felt able to take on the Presidency of the Council for a four-year term. He was also now more free than before to attend colloquia and symposia, to give lectures in various countries, and to enjoy the hospitality of friends. Throughout this period he showed an increasingly overt desire to be invited — as a visiting professor, as a scholar in residence, as a lecturer. He did not

hesitate to ask his friends to intercede with colleagues at academic institutions to see if they would be interested in 'a lecture from this person.' Although he would never have put it in these terms, he was fearful of being marginalised. Yet this was a time in which a series of great distinctions came to him: the Kenyon Medal of the British Academy in 1975, election to the German order *Pour le mérite — für Wissenschaften und Künste* in the same year, and the OM in 1976. In addition to these honours and numerous honorary degrees, Syme cherished his *fauteuil* as a *membre associé* of the Académie des Inscriptions et Belles-Lettres, to which he had been elected in 1967. He professed always to have in his coat pocket an envelope addressed to him as *Membre de l'Institut*, so that his importance would be promptly discovered in the event of a serious accident. But Syme knew that all these distinctions recognised past achievement. He was determined not to rest on his laurels.

Two wholly new works came out of this period — *History in Ovid* (1978) and *Some Arval Brethren* (1980). Meanwhile the selective republication of earlier articles had begun with *Ten Studies in Tacitus* (1970) and *Danubian Papers* (1971). Two volumes of *Roman Papers* were planned for his seventieth birthday in 1973, but the painstaking annotations of the editor, E. Badian, together with delays resulting from an abortive attempt to create a full index, postponed publication until 1979. Syme was not at all pleased by the late appearance of *Roman Papers*, and his vexation was one of many small indications of his concern that time was running out. His productivity grew prodigiously in the seventies and eighties, providing material for succeeding volumes of *Roman Papers* under the expert editorship of Anthony Birley, who continues today to devote himself unselfishly to the publication of Syme's work, now principally the *inedita*. At Syme's death in 1989 volumes VI and VII of *Roman Papers* were in press. Meanwhile in 1986 Syme published, to the amazement of everyone, a huge book of 504 pages (plus seventeen genealogical stemmata), *The Augustan Aristocracy*, which brought him back to many of the personalities and themes of *The Roman Revolution*. The new book was, even for Syme, unusually dense and allusive, and few are likely to have read it through consecutively from beginning to end. But all marvelled at the energy and erudition of its octogenarian author.

For over fifteen years Wolfson College provided an elegant and comfortable refuge for Syme. His habit of referring to the college as *Wo'fson* (dropping the letter 'l'), with an explosive accentuation of the

first syllable, recalled his familiar conversational use of an emphatic 'Woof' to highlight important items in his discourse. He knew how important Wolfson was to his life. Scholars of his acquaintance would sometimes be invited on his nomination to reside in the college for a term or more, and he was thereby assured of interesting company (and a certain amount of patronage). In 1983 the college sponsored, through the initiative of Fergus Millar and Erich Segal, a memorable symposium to commemorate Syme's eightieth birthday. The event led to a volume of essays on Caesar Augustus that served as a substitute for a *Festschrift* — something of which Syme was known to disapprove. Isaiah Berlin's successors at Wolfson, Henry Fisher and Raymond Hoffenberg, were both firm in their commitment to the productivity and happiness of their eminent emeritus professor.

Syme had no interest in seeing doctors and little confidence in their competence. When he was confined to St. Luke's Nursing Home outside Oxford in late 1987, after a fall in Bellagio, he complained vigorously that he was not being made to walk enough. He would not have trusted prognostications about his health in 1989. After nearly two decades of retirement, filled with writing, lecturing, and travelling, he seemed to many of us to divine that the end could not be far off. Yet he continued to plan for the future. He accepted an invitation to lecture in Princeton the following spring, and he turned up in black tie and gown for the Foundation Dinner at Wolfson College on 16 June. An extraordinary photograph taken on that occasion shows him beside Isaiah Berlin in a pose that betrays both ebullience and pain. When he moved to the ground floor from his penthouse at Wolfson, he spoke of going back upstairs soon. But his health gave way in late August, and he fell into a coma a few days later. His sister Geraldine rightly observed, 'He would have hated a long illness.' Death came shortly before the Oxford University Press was to hold a party celebrating the fiftieth anniversary of the publication of *The Roman Revolution*. Syme had been looking forward to it.

The scholarly achievement of Ronald Syme is stupendous, and it will endure. The presence of the man — his wit, elegance, and precision — can, to some extent, be felt in the writings. But what we have lost and will not soon see again was a deep and abiding passion for Roman history that inspired and nourished the work of others. Syme encouraged all who knew him, students and colleagues, young and old, to work at the highest level of which they were capable and in their own way. He always preferred to give positive comments rather than



negative ones. He was never a destructive critic: his criticism took the form of a call for greater clarity. He never blocked the publication of interesting research on the grounds that it was not quite ready. He never wasted time in refuting those few scholars he judged incompetent. Such generosity of spirit, which could move so many on several continents, will be sorely missed. It is rare enough in academic life, but rarer still among those who have achieved so much themselves.

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*Note.* This Memorial could not have been written without access to the Syme archive (which includes a large collection of photographs) in Wolfson College, and I am most grateful to Fergus Millar for making it possible for me to review this material in June 1992. He has also generously sent me copies of other documents in his possession and provided valuable comments on several drafts of the present notice. Anthony Birley has shown me important material from the new Syme volumes he is currently preparing, and he has generously communicated many memories of his long friendship with Syme. Miriam Griffin commented most helpfully on the second draft of this article, as did Jasper Griffin. Isaiah Berlin responded to a draft of my paper in an extraordinarily perceptive and helpful letter. I am indebted as well to Peter Wiseman for drawing my attention to Alan Sorrell's unpublished novel (from which I quote with the kind permission of his son, Mark Sorrell), and to Brian Bosworth for showing me his notes on *The Provincial at Rome* (which he read through in the summer of 1991). Charlotte Roueché put me in touch with her father, C. Wrinch, who was a contemporary of Syme's at Oriel and witnessed the creation of the Homeric *Φελλπὸς Ἀριστεία*. The verses were first published in the *Oriel Record* of 1980 and kindly made available by Simon Hornblower. (I give the English version as I heard it often from Syme himself, rather than as printed in the *Oriel Record*.) N. A. S. Levine was helpful in the matter of the Belgrade blitz. Inevitably much of what I have written draws upon my own memories of Syme and of conversations with him as well as upon letters I have received from him. I have made use of conversations with many of his friends in many countries. In 1980 I published a review-article about Syme in *The New York Review of Books* (6 March, pp. 8–13), which adumbrates some of the views expressed here. In an obituary for the *Proceedings of the American Philosophical Society*, 135 (1991), 117–22, I included some additional anecdotal material. I have found valuable several earlier assessments of Syme and should like to mention particularly F. Millar, *Journal of Roman Studies*, 63 (1973), xi–xii; and *id.*, *Journal of Roman Studies*, 71 (1981), 144–52; A. Birley, *The Independent*, 7 September 1989; M. Griffin, *Journal of Roman Studies*, 80 (1990), xi–xiv; Géza Alföldy, 'Die römische Revolution' und die deutsche Althistorie, Sitz.-Ber. d. Heidelb. Akad. d. Wiss., Phil.-hist. Kl., 1983; and *id.*, 'Two Principes: Augustus and Sir Ronald Syme,' *Athenaeum*, 81 (1993), 101–22. As of this writing the Oxford Univer-

sity Press is planning to publish a volume of Syme's studies in Strabo under the title *Anatolica*, as well as an eighth volume of *Roman Papers* (including the draft chapters of *The Provincial at Rome*). A. Birley is the editor of both books.