



PHILIP JONES

# Philip James Jones

## 1921–2006

PHILIP JONES was one of the most distinguished, complex and challenging of medieval historians. His works on the Italian city-states of the thirteenth to fifteenth centuries and on Italian agrarian history are monuments built to last, benchmarks that defined the field for a generation. This was the man who invented medieval agrarian history in Italy, and, in viewing cities from the countryside, overturned some of the dominant ideas about the Italian city republics and the culture they produced. Jones was elected a Fellow of the British Academy in 1984 and was awarded the Serena Medal for Italian studies in 1988.

He was born in south-east London on 19 November 1921 to Welsh parents, his father being a primary school teacher. It is said that one set of his grandparents were farmers in Cardiganshire, probably Welsh-speaking. Jones always presented himself as Welsh, not English: he called himself a ‘Welsh Londoner’.<sup>1</sup> This was perhaps sardonic, but had a real substratum. Loathing of the English was therefore a trait to which Jones could lay claim by inheritance: reportedly, he spoke of his grandfather keeping a bludgeon by the door to attack any Englishmen. Welshness was an origin or pattern for his self-defined outsider status: the scholarship boy at Oxford, the foreign scholar in Italy, the dissenter in the department.

In 1933 Jones was awarded an LCC scholarship to the local private school, St Dunstan’s College, Catford. From his school record there, three points stand out in the light of his later life and achievements. First, his attachment to books—the school library being the first of many libraries to which he became committed, serving as a pupil librarian. Second, his

<sup>1</sup> Cf. D. Smith, *Raymond Williams: A Warrior’s Tale* (Cardigan, 2008), pp. 1, 8.

affection for the theatre: in a production of Shaw's *St Joan*, his acting was commended for its ardour in the role—appropriate given his later reputation as a fearsome, trenchant critic—of the inquisitor ('the fact that he was very tall and thin made him seem the very epitome of the all-knowing and censorious judge': Chris Wickham).<sup>2</sup> And his particular talent was presciently spotted by his history teacher, D. A. 'Nobby' Clarke, who wrote:

Definitely a scholar with every indication of becoming a good historian. Temperamentally irascible and argumentative and rarely at pains to make a good impression. Yet has stirred up many a small town boy by his explosive argument.<sup>3</sup>

It was Clarke who urged Jones to try for admission to Oxford: he duly won a major open scholarship in Modern History at Wadham College, and matriculated in 1940.

Student life in Oxford during the Second World War would have been difficult and strange: many of the tutors had been taken into wartime service; the degree was in effect modularised to allow for its completion in sections as war service allowed; the city was host to many refugee scholars and soldiers; college food was 'meagre'; and with the age of call-up dropping to 19 in 1941, military training for two days per week became compulsory for undergraduates.<sup>4</sup> Yet the dominant effect—'a more egalitarian tone'—may well have appealed to the young Jones, who declared his atheism on enlisting in the Royal Fusiliers in 1941, and who in later life resisted all pretension, whether academic or social. He also found a mentor in the medieval historian R. V. Lennard, the 'father-figure' of history at Wadham, whose agnosticism and hostility to privilege would have resonated with him. Lennard led reading parties to the Lake District, which for Jones were perhaps his first lesson in how to combine the bookish and the bucolic: he even attended one of these parties in the 1950s, developed an interest in landscape and wild flowers, and joined the Friends of the Lake District. Jones was clearly moulded by Lennard in his scholarly direction and expectations: a lasting interest in agrarian history and the actualities of farming, which surfaced however only after his doctoral work; and an expectation, disconcerting to many of his later

<sup>2</sup> *St Dunstan's Chronicle*, 47:3 (Michaelmas, 1940), 7; C. Wickham, obituary, *Guardian*, 13 May 2006.

<sup>3</sup> St Dunstan's College, Archive, registration card for Jones.

<sup>4</sup> P. Addison, 'Oxford in the Second World War', in B. Harrison (ed.), *The History of the University of Oxford. Vol. 8: The Twentieth Century* (Oxford, 1994), pp. 169–79.

students, postgraduate as well as undergraduate, that serious historians should know German and should keep up with German historiography.<sup>5</sup> More deeply, Jones possibly took Lennard's academic persona as his own; to read a description of Lennard's character is to be reminded of Jones: 'an historical scholar of austere standards . . . impatient of shoddy work', 'a formidable controversialist', who showed 'a remorseless thoroughness', while 'the sureness of his conclusions' had 'power to dissolve some old assumptions'.<sup>6</sup>

Having enlisted in March 1941, Jones joined the Officer Cadet Training Unit in 1942. His commandant reported positively of his abilities and prospects. After a training course in Bristol, he was commissioned and posted to Northern Ireland, but he was repeatedly unwell and was discharged in March 1943 ('Military conduct: very good'). The only thing the army taught him, he later said, was how to clean shoes.

Within months he had returned to Oxford and was writing essays on Italian history ('How far is Machiavelli justified in his wholesale condemnation of the condottieri system?', "'Venice alone among the Italian states possessed the art of government" Discuss'). In response to the question, 'Had Cosimo or Lorenzo de' Medici the more secure hold upon the government of Florence?', Jones's very monarchical answer drew the tutorial response that Lorenzo 'must conform to republican tradition'—an early indication of the reaction of Florentine orthodoxy to his challenging views of the Medici. Equally pregnant is the method of his argumentation in the essay on Machiavelli: he first presents Machiavelli's condemnation of *condottieri*, and the supporting consent of scholars, then presents the critics, before declaring that such criticisms, 'valid though they are . . . are no more than marginal comments, mere appendices to Machiavelli's initial indictment'. His later practice of pro- and contra-argument was clearly grounded in his student experience.

Jones took a First in Modern History in 1945 and was appointed to a research studentship (Senior Demyship) at Magdalen College. There he was certainly influenced by Bruce McFarlane, historian of the English late-medieval nobility: perhaps in his focus on the formation and mores of historical aristocracies, perhaps in his perfectionism as a writer (McFarlane was 'a famous non-finisher with a writing block which was

<sup>5</sup> Catherine Kovesi recalls being told: 'Please don't tell me you are one of those people who thinks not knowing a language is an impediment to reading an article in it! Just get yourself a good dictionary.'

<sup>6</sup> *The Times*, obituary, 7 March 1967, and letter, 18 March 1967.

inherited by most of his pupils and associates').<sup>7</sup> Jones was highly enthusiastic of McFarlane's posthumous publications—the book on Memling ('art history to end art history', he reportedly called it) and the letters.

How and why he chose to embark on research in medieval history—and medieval Italian history—is a key question to which only a speculative answer can be given. At school he had learned French and German, not Italian. It seems that he had not attended the lectures given in Oxford by Nicolai Rubinstein (one of the refugee scholars) in the early 1940s. Given the influence of Lennard, it might have been expected that Jones would choose an English medieval topic—if a medieval one at all, for in the 1950s he wrote 'I hated medieval history as a student' (though in the context, of discussion about hand-outs for students at Leeds, this might be interpreted as a hatred for how it had been taught: 'but I don't really blame my tutors for not giving me a class-book. If I'd read more . . .').<sup>8</sup> What seems to have happened is that he was inspired by a remark in Collingwood's *Autobiography* about reading Dante,<sup>9</sup> and decided that he would learn Italian in order to read Dante for the first time himself. (When I, as an undergraduate at Brasenose, had signalled an interest in research in Italian history, Jones stopped me in the street and told me to read Dante.) Presumably as an undergraduate he took Cecilia Ady's Special Subject on Renaissance Italy. Then the Chichele Professor of History, E. F. Jacob, suggested the research topic of Carlo Malatesta and the closure of the schism in the fifteenth-century church, on which Jones started, under Ady's supervision (an appropriate choice given her work on fifteenth-century Italian rulers). But Jones soon put this topic aside and chose instead to work on the whole Malatesta dynasty, from the thirteenth to the fifteenth centuries. It seems unlikely that he would have got on well with Ady: she was heavily involved in the Anglican church, whereas he was an atheist; her approach to history was strongly biographical, whereas his left little space for the individual. In later life he rarely mentioned her, though he sometimes referred approvingly to some of her work, and he would have seconded her remark, delivered in a lecture in 1935, that though 'Italy is a land of cities . . . the atmosphere in which the

<sup>7</sup> C. Wickham, obituary, *Guardian*, 13 May 2006.

<sup>8</sup> Leeds University Archive, School of History, Departmental Files, Professor J. Le Patourel, Box 2, Jones to Le Patourel, 22 July 1957.

<sup>9</sup> 'I taught myself to read Dante, and made the acquaintance of many other poets, in various languages, hitherto unknown to me': R. G. Collingwood, *An Autobiography* (Harmondsworth, 1944; first published 1939), p. 11.

men of the Renaissance lived was deeply rural'.<sup>10</sup> Whatever the relation between them, Jones pursued his new topic with the help of an Amy Preston Read Scholarship in 1946 and a Bryce Research Studentship in 1947, making his first visit to Italy, to Rome, in the summer of 1947 (the Vatican Library was shut; he became ill). In these early research trips, Philip often felt isolated and lonely. At Fano his only consolation was listening to the BBC radio comedy programme, ITMA (his neighbours used to come and stare at the strange Englishman convulsed by laughter at a radio programme). Of research in Pesaro he said: 'the archivist talks all the time, and the only place to stay is . . . with the archivist'. Nevertheless, Jones persisted and his D.Phil. thesis—two volumes, 820 pages of text, 33 pages of bibliography—was awarded in 1949 (a revised version was eventually published in 1974).

Meanwhile, Jones had secured a temporary teaching post at Glasgow University. This proved to be a key moment in his life, for also working at Glasgow, as *assistenti*, were a pair of Florentine girls, Carla Susini, an academic high-flier, and her friend Anna. Philip's daughter tells the following story. Carla developed asthma and went back to Florence. Anna happened to meet Jones and his friend, John Cooper. She told Carla that she had met two intelligent young men, and invited them to Florence. To his death, Jones still had a photo of the corner around which Carla came when he first met her. Jones was immediately smitten, and decided that night that he wanted to marry her—undaunted, it has to be said, by the evident obstacles: she had had a very privileged life (servants, hand-made gowns, a titled and well-connected milieu), was already engaged, and did not much like Jones at first. But her family provided no support or recognition of her academic and intellectual interests, and Jones began to woo her with books and reading lists.

In the following year, Jones took up his first permanent post, in the History Department at Leeds University, filling the place left by Walter Ullmann. Here he taught Medieval Forms of Government, English Constitutional History, History of Political Ideas, and a special subject on Manorialism. It might be said that he prospered during his thirteen years at Leeds. He made solid and lasting academic friendships, especially with John Taylor and Gordon Forster. He published a series of pioneering articles and made substantial progress on a first book. He was promoted to Reader (1961). Outwardly at least his relations with the head of department, John Le Patourel, were amicable. His attachment to the countryside

<sup>10</sup> St Hugh's College, Oxford, Archive, Ady papers.

was consolidated: his home for a number of years was close to good walks on the Yorkshire moors. He discovered with great appreciation the Brotherton Library and played an important part in building up its Italian collection. He married Carla Susini in July 1954 ('in the Pazzi Chapel an' all', as he half boastfully, half defensively reported to a colleague;<sup>11</sup> to other friends he apologised for marrying in church, 'but it was in the madmen's chapel'). They had children. But seeming prosperity did not change his rebellious and impatient nature. His academic career and Italian wife distanced him from his own domineering mother (just as Carla's father almost cut her off). The physical surroundings of home and work were not exactly likable: he lived for a while in a British Council postgraduate hostel that was 'much in need of restoration', and the department was housed in what was known as 'Slum Cottage', a cold building with poor heating. One colleague recalls late evening sessions at which Jones would 'hold forth on the misfortune which had placed him in this part of the world' (shades of Ovid?). Part of the problem was pollution in Leeds: one former student recalls that it was 'so bad even the birds woke up coughing'. This became a consideration when Jones began to apply for posts elsewhere: 'Carla's special horror is soot, and Bangor, I imagine, is not industrial', he commented in 1957 when the possibility arose of a vacancy at this north-Welsh institution.<sup>12</sup> There could well have been some injury to his *amour propre* from the pattern of his teaching: his own special subject, Florence in the Middle Ages, rarely if ever recruited, it seems, and it is reported that no student knew of his Italian interests. He was impatient at the slowness with which his articles were considered by journals. Of his first article, he was complaining in 1951, 'Nothing, of course, from the EHR . . .', and again in 1952, 'If I knew my article was to be printed, it would restore some confidence to me, but still I hear nothing.'<sup>13</sup> In 1953, it was his submission to the *Economic History Review*: 'my Lucca paper has been for three months in the hands of Prof. M. M. Postan, with what issue . . . it is impossible to predict'.<sup>14</sup> He was casting around for projects: he was offered, but declined, an invitation from the Associated British and Irish Millers to contribute to a history of flour and flour-milling (notice, though, how much knowledge he later showed

<sup>11</sup> Jones to John Cooper, 25 May 1954.

<sup>12</sup> Leeds University Archive, School of History, Departmental Files, Professor J. Le Patourel, Box 2, Jones to Le Patourel, 1 July 1957.

<sup>13</sup> Jones to John Cooper, 3 Feb. 1951 and 7 March 1952.

<sup>14</sup> Jones to John Cooper, 6 Jan. 1953.

of different types of wheat);<sup>15</sup> ‘the possibility of something in the new *Encyclopedia Britannica* . . . then Rubinstein has asked me to join him in editing a collection of documents on the communes’ (neither project came to anything).<sup>16</sup>

The biggest problem, however, lay in his relations with the Head of Department, John Le Patourel. This originated in Le Patourel’s scheme for teaching medieval history comparatively. Jones simply thought that this was beyond the capacities of staff, students and library. ‘The turmoil here has begun. The new syllabus (devised by Le Patourel) is threatened with collapse, and the last to be blamed will be its original author, you may be sure’, he wrote in January 1951. In February, ‘it is threatening to come to open war within the department about this syllabus, and my sympathies are not on the side of professorial authority’. He goes on to report a departmental meeting in which ‘the rebel of the department . . . blew off his long overcharged blunderbuss to the complete discomfiture of the professors. Chapman groaned and looked like death; Le P was still pink two hours later’.<sup>17</sup> In the end, as J. C. Holt put it, Le Patourel ‘had to let the scheme drop. He had advanced beyond the practical.’<sup>18</sup> ‘Even a worm will turn’, was Jones’s comment. Though the hostility outlasted the issue—‘Le Patourel this morning failed his driving test’, is Jones’s barbed envoi to a letter in 1955<sup>19</sup>—as the years passed Jones and Le Patourel seem to have become friendlier. Nevertheless, it was presumably this quarrel that impelled Jones to start applying for jobs elsewhere: first Bristol, then chairs at Liverpool and Newcastle (‘All the jobs I’m interested in are further north!’ he exclaimed to Gordon Forster), and a sequence of Oxford colleges (St Catherine’s, Merton, finally Brasenose).

The years at Leeds saw Jones working in two directions: publishing articles derived from his D.Phil. thesis, and shifting the focus of his archival research to Florence. His first publication, in the *English Historical Review* for 1952, examined the papal vicariate—a sort of licence to govern—granted and re-granted to the Malatesta in the century and a half between 1350 and 1500. The main substance of the article consists of a systematic survey of the privileges and duties awarded or imposed by these grants, but this is preceded by nearly eight

<sup>15</sup> M. M. Postan (ed.), *Cambridge Economic History*, Vol. 1, *The Agrarian Life of the Middle Ages* (Cambridge, 1966), p. 372.

<sup>16</sup> Jones to John Cooper, 26 April 1950.

<sup>17</sup> Jones to John Cooper, 9 Jan. and 11 Feb. 1951.

<sup>18</sup> J. C. Holt, ‘John Le Patourel (1909–1981)’, *Proceedings of the British Academy*, 71 (1985), 589.

<sup>19</sup> Jones to John Cooper, 16 Feb. 1955.



pages of more general analysis of vicariates, going back to their origin, nature and purpose, as first granted by the Emperors, and placing the Malatesta vicariates within Jones's own 'realistic' assessment of power relations in the Papal State. Already in this article some characteristics of Jones as a historian and writer were made evident: the condensed generalisation; the annoyingly severe abbreviation of footnote references; and the eye-catching use of salty quotations (as when the cardinal legate is quoted as saying that despots oppressed their subjects 'like bulls among cows').<sup>20</sup> A sequel to this article—on the end of Malatesta rule in Rimini—was published in a volume of tribute essays to Cecilia Ady, in 1960.<sup>21</sup>

The shift of interests to Florence had two causes: first, it was obviously more convenient, while first courting and then married to a Florentine; second, he had clearly had enough of lonely experiences in the towns of the Romagna. At first in Florence, his interest in agrarian history, inspired by R. V. Lennard, drew him to the ecclesiastical archives, which he used to produce three separate pieces of pioneering research.<sup>22</sup> The first looked at continuities and changes on the estate of the abbey of Camaldoli, 1250–1500; the second used published documents to study the transition to non-manorial land management by the cathedral chapter of twelfth-century Lucca; and the third examined the structure and management of the landed estate of the Cistercian Badia in Florence. The influence of the historiography of English monastic estates—derived from Lennard and from Jones's teaching in Leeds—is evident in these pieces, in both their vocabulary and their references. Equally apparent is Jones's love of paradox and his exception from traditions of scholarship: the article on Camaldoli ends with a series of 'singularities' (the abbey retained some demesne and labour services long after they were supposed to have disappeared, while also making extensive use of share-cropping, thought to be the preserve of urban capitalists); and that on Lucca resists the simple equation of indebtedness with decay ('it would be wrong to deduce destitution from debt . . . Monasteries did not cease buying land

<sup>20</sup> Cf. 'not writ but shit' (for Lucas de Penna's dismissal of feudal custom), and 'wetting themselves from fear' (Boncompagno's comment on inept plebeian councillors): *The Italian City-State* (Oxford, 1997), pp. 373, 524.

<sup>21</sup> 'The end of Malatesta rule in Rimini', in E. F. Jacob (ed.), *Italian Renaissance Studies* (London, 1960), 217–55.

<sup>22</sup> 'A Tuscan monastic lordship in the later Middle Ages: Camaldoli', *Journal of Ecclesiastical History*, 5 (1954), 168–83; 'An Italian estate, 900–1200', *Economic History Review*, NS 7/1 (1954), 18–32; 'Le finanze della badia cistercense di Settimo nel XIV secolo', *Rivista di storia della chiesa in Italia*, 10 (1956), 90–122.

because they owed money')—a theme he returned to insistently in later works. Above all, though, these works signalled a new phase in Italian historiography: Jones invented medieval Italian agricultural history, and redirected research and scholarship from city to countryside.

These years also saw Jones starting work, again in advance of other scholars, on a different source: the published and unpublished diaries (*ricordanze*) of Florentine families.<sup>23</sup> Though the essay is wide-ranging, Jones uses this source mainly to examine the motives for investment in land and the balance between families' trading and landed interests. He perceives no clear pattern here (some businessmen had little land; some families engaged in no trade), and concludes that a landowning merchant class was no novelty in the fourteenth century. The essay also includes an incisive sketch of Lapo da Castiglionchio, 'one of the best known and best hated men in Florence'.

It was only in the mid 1950s, at the suggestion of John Cooper and Bruce McFarlane, that Jones made up his mind to 'have a bash at a book, come what may . . . An article now is anyway out of the question because I've doubled my bibliography and am really getting down to it.' This was evidently his planned book on the agrarian history of Italy, from the Roman Empire to the sixteenth century, on which he was working during his sabbatical year in 1956–7. In July 1957 he wrote to Le Patourel from Florence about how much he had enjoyed the year: 'the only seasons are the opening hours of archives and libraries. . . . I don't really distinguish one week from the next . . . I've never enjoyed a year so well . . . This archive fever lasts for life, I can see. There's quite a company of the afflicted out here.'<sup>24</sup> However, progress on the book was excruciatingly slow. Summers were the main periods for writing, but obstacles kept arising. In 1958 it was the heat: 'I'm trying to work but the heat is crushing.'<sup>25</sup> In 1960 it was Carla's illness: 'my own book has been stationary for nearly five weeks . . . until the doctors are out of the house I shan't be [able] to do any writing'.<sup>26</sup> He was always a slow writer, and would quote Joyce's comment that he felt he had done a good day's work if he had successfully completed one sentence. Then came other invitations, to present papers to the Second International Congress of Economic Historians and

<sup>23</sup> 'Florentine families and Florentine diaries in the Fourteenth Century', *Papers of the British School at Rome*, 24 (1956), 183–205.

<sup>24</sup> Leeds University Archive, School of History, Departmental Files, Professor J. Le Patourel, Box 2, Jones to Le Patourel, 1 July 1957.

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid.*, 14 July 1958.

<sup>26</sup> *Ibid.*, 19 July 1960.

to the Royal Historical Society, to write an article for the *Rivista storica italiana*. Eventually, the obstacles won. The book was never completed; what was published instead were essays in Italian and in English, and sections on agrarian history in his later works.

The essay in English, at Postan's invitation for the *Cambridge Economic History* and published, with a delay of several years, in 1966, must count as one of Jones's most successful pieces.<sup>27</sup> By contrast, his later essay for the Einaudi *Storia d'Italia* Jones himself regarded as having been 'badly mangled' by the publisher, and it contained only half of his argument; and his even later book on the Italian city-state likewise takes the story no further than the early fourteenth century. But his essay of 1966 on Italian agrarian history was complete, covering the period from the late antique to the sixteenth century. It also suffers less from some of Jones's usual textual characteristics: the paragraphs are shorter, the sections are manageable with their numbered subheadings, there is more sense of chronological development, more exposition and less pro- and contra-argument. Even so, Jones was aware of defects in the piece, 'defects caused by the sustained effort of compression'. 'I find, after years of writing condensed articles . . . that I cannot any longer write spaci-ously or easily', he wrote to Lennard.<sup>28</sup> Two of the key themes of his later work are already formulated in this essay: that the 'true' Renaissance was an economic one, much earlier than the cultural one; and that the nobility created the communes and were far from eclipsed by a rising merchant class. The essay is divided into three sections. First, he examines regional variations in agrarian structure, both between and within the broad territorial units of north and south, and concludes that it was not climatic differences that explained regional ones, but rather 'mismanagement of land in defiance of climatic conditions'. He then traces the transformation of the agrarian landscape in the period from the tenth to the fourteenth centuries, through reclamation, irrigation and colonisation, through use of new crops and advances in processing. But the failure to improve productivity is traced to inadequate fertilisation from manuring, the limited practice of grazing animals on stubble or fallow, and the deficiency of meadow and forage, created by the climate. Finally, he charts the presence and disappearance of the manor in medieval Italy: unevenly

<sup>27</sup> 'Medieval agrarian society in its prime: Italy', in M. M. Postan (ed.), *Cambridge Economic History*, vol. 1, 2nd edn. (Cambridge, 1965), 340–431.

<sup>28</sup> Wadham College Oxford, Archive, Jones to R. V. Lennard, 20 Feb. 1959. I thank Mr Cliff Davies for locating this letter. Giuliano Pinto suggests that it was Postan who taught Jones to write in such a compressed style.

distributed and imperfectly formed in the early Middle Ages, it broke down already in the tenth century, as both lords and tenants found a common interest (profit and improvement) in abandoning it. Here Jones takes aim at three common and influential generalisations. First, he denies the effects of towns and of 'town-dwelling capitalists' on the process of commercialisation of agriculture. 'It is usual', he says, 'to stress the effect of the commercial revolution—financial distress of lay and ecclesiastical lords, the rise of merchant landlords' (p. 409). But the land market was much more complex, great landowners and some feudal families retained or expanded their holdings, and 'debt was not the sign of destitution'. Second, he punctures the libertarian rhetoric of urban policy as regards the serfs: when towns such as Bologna or Florence issued high-sounding decrees emancipating the serfs en masse, the aim, says Jones, was always political, to extend urban power, not to relieve peasant oppression; at other times, towns—sometimes the same towns—refused emancipation or prohibited peasant immigration. Third, he argues that, for the peasantry, the dissolution of the manor, far from adding economic advantage to legal freedom, worked to their disadvantage, through the oppressions of sharecropping, urban laws and taxes, and material inequalities. Much of this is opinion now generally held. With these three arguments, Jones signalled his future assault on commonplaces of Italian historiography: the rise of the merchant class at the expense of the landed elite, and the identification of towns with 'liberty' and economic progression.

This essay is also littered with typically Jonesian analysis and phrasing. Foremost among these is the porosity of distinctions and boundaries: 'past and present are found incongruously mixed' (p. 340); and 'in Italy no line divides urban from rural history' (p. 349). A key passage—repeated in subsequent essays—stresses the 'indeterminate' or 'imperfect' urbanity of medieval Italian towns: towns were communities of landowners; citizens left town for the harvest season; much council business was concerned with agriculture; guilds included rural artisans; most trade was in agricultural products; the merchant class combined trade and landholding. There is also a characteristically Jonesian search for striking word: 'Yankees', 'gaol birds' and 'Vergilian poetasters' (pp. 347, 371, 419) sit alongside all the correct vocabulary for agricultural tools and practices. This was Italian urban history seen from the countryside as never before.

In 1963 Brasenose College advertised for a 'fellow and lecturer in Modern History with special qualifications in medieval or Renaissance history'. The formality of Jones's letter of application ('Gentlemen, I beg to offer myself as a candidate . . .'), was countered by the informality of

the invitation to interview ('would it be possible for you to pay us a visit . . .?'). The 'visit' went well and Jones was elected in June 1963. The break with Leeds was not a clean one, however. Because of the relative shortness of notice, Le Patourel 'made strong representations that I should give some help with the medieval teaching' there in the autumn term, and Jones continued to teach at Leeds for two days per fortnight for a term. In addition, finding accommodation in Oxford did not prove easy ('I foresee that I may be the first Oxford fellow to live in St Ebbe's [a hostel for the homeless]!', he melodramatically complained to his new colleague, Eric Collieu),<sup>29</sup> and Carla and the children remained in Leeds until this problem was solved. At Brasenose, an early priority was inspecting the college library, especially as Robert Shackleton soon alerted him to a bequest of books from Stanley Cohn (brother of Norman), who had had Italian interests.

It was also in 1963 that Jones had a major intestinal operation that went accidentally wrong, and left him able to digest only small amounts of food. The effect on his appearance was drastic: in the 1950s, his face had almost film-star attractiveness, while his body had a certain bulk; from 1963, his face became gaunt and his weight plummeted.

Jones settled into what became a fixed pattern of academic life at Brasenose. Inevitably, he became the college Librarian (from 1965). The Bodleian was on his doorstep, and he submitted a constant stream of new book requests, making its collection of Italian medieval material the best in the country. He taught college students Bede's *Ecclesiastical History*, for the History Prelims, and English and European medieval history and political thought for Finals; he also participated in teaching the Special Subject on the Italian Renaissance. It was a few years before he lighted on a regular lecturing theme, but from 1970 he annually lectured on 'Economic trends in early Renaissance Italy and Europe' (the typed text survives, liberally covered in handwritten additions: it is rigidly organised into numbered main points and indented material, but it makes few concessions to orality, and the clear outline is undermined by what would have seemed insertions or digressions).

As a tutor and supervisor at Brasenose, Jones was formidable, rigorous, intimidating, but these qualities were mixed with compassion, tolerance and humour. He occupied a suite of rooms on the first floor of the New Quad, an outer room looking out on the quadrangle, an inner room on the High Street. For the nervous student or first-time visitor, this

<sup>29</sup> Jones to Collieu, 30 June 1963.

arrangement could be disconcerting, especially as knocking on either door often failed to rouse a response. Entering Jones's rooms felt like an inconvenient intrusion. One former student describes the outer room as 'sepulchrally silent', another as an 'airlock anteroom': 'you never knew if he was there or not'. Tentatively stepping into the inner room, one had to search for the man. Though the room was 'cosy and clubby', one never knew where to sit, and it could feel more like 'a lair, in which Jones was the pacing animal, ready to pounce'. But if Jones created a sense of discomfort in his student visitors, this was mainly an effect of his own shyness. He could also listen to and take seriously what students said, and, as familiarity grew, more humour could enter the relationship (though, as the same student recalls, 'when he laughed it was scarier than when he didn't'). As an undergraduate tutor, he was both stimulating and unsatisfying. 'He tantalised. You wanted to impress him. You wanted to get to grips with what impassioned him. The intensity of his passion was such that you wanted to possess some of it yourself.' Yet reading lists were often too long and indiscriminating, and feedback, oral and written, minimal. Stimulus was not matched by reward. Students might dread tutorials, but could come away with a sense of having got off lightly.

In contrast to his time at Leeds, Jones now attracted research students. A succession of these between the mid-1960s and the mid-1980s tackled topics of political, social and religious history in towns of central and northern Italy: Florence (John Stephens, Humfrey Butters), Siena (Peter Denley, Bernadette Paton), Perugia (Hazel Thomas), Rome (Christine Shaw, briefly), Verona (John Law), Padua (Lesley Steer, Michael Knapton), Ferrara (myself), sumptuary law (Catherine Kovesi). Just as in undergraduate tuition, so in doctoral supervision Jones could be inspiring and unhelpful in equal measure. His bibliographical information could be exhaustive, and to this day one former student recalls as invaluable the advice to work systematically through the local history periodicals, from the beginning. Another perceives Jones's influence on him to have been 'the commitment to doing a complete job of work, reading everything worth reading, . . . not being afraid to take a different line from others'. But Jones assumed high levels of self-motivation, learning and *savoir faire*. He was best with students who took a 'DIY' approach to the thesis: he made helpful bibliographical suggestions but demanded no alterations to their submitted work.<sup>30</sup> He was less able to provide support

<sup>30</sup> 'DIY thesis' is Michael Knapton's phrase.

when some students encountered difficulties or suffered from isolation in Italy.

Students would probably have been surprised to learn that it was for his mordant wit, on high table and in SCR, that Jones was best known among his colleagues. ‘Philippics’ they have been called.<sup>31</sup> The best relate to interviews and elections (‘The man’s a fraud!’; ‘Voodoo’) or to food and college dining: ‘Mine’s still working’ (when served undercooked liver); ‘Suet mixed with hair oil’ (of a medieval menu); ‘As inedible as unpronounceable’ (of a Basque menu). After a few months at Brasenose, under its crustacean-loving Principal, Jones commented to Carla: ‘I’m tired of lobster thermidor!’ When he took guests to college high table, he did not acknowledge any of his colleagues, let alone introduce them; yet in the right company he could talk on all manner of subjects and spark off constant laughter.

By the mid 1960s, his international reputation as a scholar of prodigious abilities and intelligence started to generate unsolicited offers of chairs in the USA. These were always courteously declined. In 1965 Johns Hopkins offered him a three-week visit, because they wanted to consider him for a chair in Renaissance history: ‘I have only just returned to Oxford after many years in English provincial universities’, Jones replied; ‘Oxford is where I’ve always wanted to be.’ In 1966 it was Michigan State University that invited him to apply: also declined.

Though in 1957 Jones could talk of ‘archive fever’, he would later talk of ‘archive maniacs’. At a point roughly coinciding with his move to Oxford, Jones gave up producing history from archival documents (though he continued to visit archives, to sample material and to use their libraries). When in Florence, according to Richard Goldthwaite, he ‘buried himself in the library of the German Institute . . . in the most remote room on the first floor, where all the local histories from all over Italy are located on open shelf . . . And he went through them all.’ Perhaps frustrations in the archive were responsible for this shift: he openly admitted at one point that failure to gain access to the cathedral chapter library in Florence ‘compromises badly a long study I’ve been doing on ecclesiastical estates. These . . . priests!’<sup>32</sup> Equally likely is the possibility that, with the resources of the Bodleian now readily at hand, his ambitions grew and took a new direction: to write a comprehensive

<sup>31</sup> B. Richards, *The Brazen Nose*, 40 (2005–6), 184–5.

<sup>32</sup> Leeds University Archive, School of History, Departmental Files, Professor J. Le Patourel, Box 2, Jones to Le Patourel, 22 July 1957.

history of the medieval Italian city-state, from its origins to its failure, and covering all of political, economic, social and cultural history. And he started with the political, in what must be his most famous piece, 'Communes and despots: the city state in late medieval Italy'.<sup>33</sup>

He starts this essay, in Machiavellian fashion (*Prince*, chapter 15), by dismissing political theory in favour of examining the real effects of different regimes, communal and despotic. He points to the limits of political participation in the communes ('oligarchy . . . was the predominant form of government'), and to the small contribution of the organised popolo, and balances the communes' achievements in state-formation against their deficiencies, especially as regards the power of family groups. Then he makes a similar assessment of the communes' successor-states, the despotisms: though charting their redistribution of authority and their assertion of monarchical power, he places emphasis rather on 'the obstinate survival of diversity and privilege', and on the revival of feudalism. He concludes by quoting Ronald Syme's *Roman Revolution*: 'In all ages, whatever the form and name of government . . . an oligarchy lurks behind the facade' (p. 94). Needless to say, this conclusion, blurring the differences between republics and principalities, did not win the assent of many historians of medieval Italy, whose interest led them to defend the achievements and differences of republican regimes.

Meanwhile, Jones had also been invited to contribute an essay on economic history to the multivolume Einaudi *Storia d'Italia*.<sup>34</sup> Despite Jones's complaint of 'mangling' by the publisher, this and its companion-piece in the *Annali* of the same series were to be the strongest, most developed statements of Jones's interpretation of a millennium of economic, social and cultural history. The first essay opens with a long piece of macro-history, asking big questions of long-term Western European history. (Why did capitalism emerge in Christian rather than pagan society? What was the role of the church in that process?) His answer starts with a broad sketch of the decline of *romanitas* in the West, and with the revival in population, economy and state from the eleventh century. Jones locates the real novelty in the emergence of the business class, with ideas and mentality distinct from those of court or university, exalting profit and with new techniques for measuring space, time and value (pp. 1516–19). Key to this development for Jones is the collapse of the city state, which in the

<sup>33</sup> *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society*, 5th ser., 15 (1965).

<sup>34</sup> 'La storia economica. Dalla caduta dell'impero romano al secolo XIV', in *Storia d'Italia*, vol. 2, pt 1 (Turin, 1974), 1469–1810. The summaries that follow inevitably borrow liberally from Jones's phrasing.



ancient world had retarded economic development, and the consequently different forms and functions of towns in the medieval revival, identified with trade, bourgeoisie and mercantile culture. Having defined the broad European development, he then moves to the particularities of Italy (pp. 1547 ff.). Here, instead, he finds that the city-state did not dissolve, and that reviving Italian cities reabsorbed functions, reunified classes, recomposed the territory and reconquered the state. Though noting devastation and regression in the post-Roman world (pp. 1591–1613) Jones stresses the points of continuity with the Roman past, in agriculture and agrarian society, in towns and urban society, the incomplete transition in Italy to the feudal and manorial regime and the presence of commerce, guilds, markets and money. ‘Dark Age Italy thus acquired a new vocation, that of trade’ (p. 1629). The rest of the essay charts the advance of this mercantile identity: an unprecedented level of population, wealth and resources were concentrated in cities and in commercial activity; Italian towns and merchants dominated the Mediterranean and its exchanges with northern Europe; this position in turn gave stimulus to the innovative development of Italian banking and industry; technical innovations proliferated (in shipping and cartography, colonies and consulates, commercial law, public debt, contracts and accounting). Italian merchants accumulated fortunes unequalled by mercantile classes elsewhere, and this brought them power in international relations, positions and privileges in all western states, and intense hostility and resentment. A mercantile subculture developed embodying the basic features of capitalism (economic rationalism and the search for profit): commercial education and record-keeping, practical skills and new techniques, the use of profit/loss as a measure for everything, pride and confidence in the virtue of trade and the legitimacy of profit. The influence of trade and traders dominated urban society, influencing politics between and within cities, leading to new social classifications and urban identities, drawing even clergy and nobility into participation. ‘La febbre dell’oro aveva invaso tutte le classe’ (p. 1767).

And yet, the limits to and constraints on these developments (as Jones saw them) are clearly hinted at already in this essay: it was not an unalloyed hymn to the bourgeoisie. The new mercantile vocation of Italy, he points out, existed within the frame of the non-mercantile tradition of the ancient *civitas*, a territorial society that included nobles who resided in town and were part of the urban patriciate (pp. 1630–3). Moreover, merchants were landowners, not businessmen (p. 1661), and there was no distinction between the bourgeois city and the feudal countryside (p. 1673).

And earlier in the essay, Jones had already pointed to the incomplete nature of urban achievements at a general European level—still subordinate politically to territorial rulers; still tied economically to agriculture; still using nobility as a normative reference-point; still dependent culturally on court and castle—and argued that the evidence for social mobility and new men did not amount to a crisis of the nobility. This was a warning of how the argument was to continue in his companion piece, provocatively called ‘the myth of the bourgeoisie’.

This subsequent essay in the *Annali*<sup>35</sup> opens with a treble challenge to historiographic conventions, stressing the ‘double identity’ of Italian cities (political and economic, civic and mercantile, aristocratic and bourgeois), claiming that ‘bourgeois Italy’ was just an assemblage of selected elements from places considered characteristic or dominant, and arguing that ‘only Italy revived the city-state because only there did the feudal and landed class take possession of it for its own interests’: a challenge to those who saw the political dynamic resting with the commercial classes or who privileged developments in the leading commercial centres of Florence, Genoa or Venice. He distinguishes at the outset between what appears more significant about the city-states (the theme of the previous essay) and what had more effect on people at the time (the theme of this one). Where the earlier essay had frequently cited Marx in support, now Marxist historiography is subjected to assault. The 180-page argument that then unfolds has four main sections, all designed to expose the limits of any ‘bourgeois’ elements, and the strength of ‘feudal’ ones. First, the transformative elements of commerce—export industry, long-distance trade, powerful guilds and popular government—are said to be rarely found together, and many cities are classed as communities of landowners (‘the typical citizen was a landowner, and the typical landowner was a citizen’), regulated by rural environment and calendar (pp. 17–47). Second, Jones sees knights and nobles as present in every city, living off their landed revenue and rather drawing merchants to invest in land than themselves investing in trade. Here Jones restates a familiar argument that economic development and social mobility did not cause a crisis of the nobility (pp. 48–67). Third, Jones sees no revolution in cultural values: there was no special connection between merchants and heresy or lay piety or secularity; chivalry pervaded civic life and the bourgeoisie imitated noble life-styles; the most prominent buildings after the cathedral

<sup>35</sup> ‘Economia e società nell’Italia medievale: la leggenda della borghesia’, in *Storia d’Italia Einaudi, Annali, I, Dal feudalesimo al capitalismo* (Turin, 1978), 185–372. The page references cited here are to the 1980 reprint.

were aristocratic towers, not guildhalls. Law, schooling, the arts and political thought were dictated by civic, republican and classical influences, not mercantile ones, and it was from the former not the latter that the Renaissance arose: 'merchants and humanists had nothing in common' (pp. 68–108). Finally, there was no bourgeois revolution in politics, either. A parallel feudal order persisted and evolved alongside the communes; government remained substantially aristocratic, dominated by knights and magnates; a city's political history was that of its main families and their conflicts; the popular movement in most cities was an episode, and provoked a noble reaction which spelled the end of the communes.

The contrast between this pair of essays drew strong critique from Italian historians. Galasso, reviewing 'The myth of the bourgeoisie', declared it contradictory, ambiguous and attempting the impossible.<sup>36</sup> Mozzarelli complained of the same essay that it flattened and assimilated everything to feudalism, and that Jones had pessimistically depicted the bourgeoisie as always growing, but always falling back into feudalism.<sup>37</sup> Cammarosano likewise objected to the way that Jones's avowed aim to 'give the nobility its proper place' had led him to stress only its unitary features, a single class lasting for centuries in his 'chronological and spatial flattening', which failed to grasp the real weight and character assumed by nobilities at different times.<sup>38</sup> Malanima argued that there was no novelty in the idea of continuity of the feudal and urban in Italy, tracing it to Sombart.<sup>39</sup> Polica voiced some common criticisms in pointing to the undifferentiated footnotes (compiled, he thought, by 'suggestive association'), the lack of chronological and geographical differentiation, the lack of attention to Florence and Tuscany, and the under-evaluation of the *popolo* (Jones's position being seen as forced and polemical).<sup>40</sup>

Some of these criticisms fell wide of their mark. Read attentively, the first essay makes clear that it is the first part in a two-part structure. The lack of attention to Florence and Tuscany in the second essay is balanced by their extensive treatment in the first. Critics failed to appreciate that

<sup>36</sup> *L'Espresso*, 6 July 1980.

<sup>37</sup> C. Mozzarelli, 'La questione della transizione e del potere: soluzioni e rimozioni', *Società e storia*, 7 (1980), 131–3.

<sup>38</sup> P. Cammarosano, 'Tradizione documentaria e storia cittadina', in *Il Caleffo vecchio del comune di Siena*, vol. 5 (Siena, 1991), p. 78.

<sup>39</sup> P. Malanima, 'L'economia italiana tra feudalesimo e capitalismo', *Società e storia*, 7 (1980), 144–5.

<sup>40</sup> S. Polica, 'Basso Medioevo e Rinascimento: "rifeudalizzazione" e "transizione"', *Bollettino dell'Istituto storico italiano per il medioevo*, 88 (1979), 291–305.

the two pieces were intended to be complementary, and that the second, if read on its own, could appear, as Jones himself admitted, ‘a little emphatic’. In explaining this to an Italian correspondent, Jones wrote ‘For me the two parts simply constitute two aspects of the same reality, one of which seemed to me had been too neglected. My aim was balance.’<sup>41</sup> Nobili was one of few reviewers to grasp this, and he moreover interpreted sympathetically what he saw as Jones’s combination of Weber’s ideas on the classical city with Brunner’s ideas on the continuity of noble values and culture.<sup>42</sup> Critics of Jones’s vision of the nobility have to explain how nobilities shared so many features; and critics of his vision of the popolo have to explain its weakness and failure outside a handful of major cities.

‘The myth of the bourgeoisie’ was more generously received in the Anglo-Saxon academy. One reviewer wrote: ‘Here great learning is allied to an extraordinary capacity and is expressed in a style which . . . has a wiry force and lucidity . . . not simply a “contribution” to knowledge but rather one of those studies within which or against which all future directions of the subject will proceed.’<sup>43</sup>

All Jones’s previous works then flowed into the seven hundred pages of his mammoth *Italian City-State: from Commune to Signoria* (Oxford, 1997), as suggested in the proposal for this book to OUP: ‘the study of medieval and Renaissance Italy, its society and economy, has been a life’s work, and this synthesis of Italian life has been from the start the ultimate objective’. Already in the mid-1980s, when he turned down an invitation from UCLA to apply for a chair in Italian Renaissance Studies, he wrote: ‘After countless years devoted or lost to other things, I am at last deep into a long-planned general book, a life’s work or ambition, on the Italian city-states . . . This dominates completely my time and thoughts.’ After his retirement in 1989, that life’s work moved closer to completion, though he was forced, by the sheer scale of his task, to split the projected single volume into two, one (published) dealing with the period up to 1300 and a second (unpublished) dealing with the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries. Whatever one’s final opinion of this work—and there have been critics, as we shall see—the scale of Jones’s achievement is unquestionable: ‘no book in any language compares with *The Italian*

<sup>41</sup> Jones to Mario Sanfilippo, 7 Dec. 1987.

<sup>42</sup> M. Nobili, ‘L’equazione città antica—città comunale ed il “mancato sviluppo italiano” nel saggio di Philip Jones’, *Società e storia*, 10 (1980), 895–6, 901–4.

<sup>43</sup> J. Larner in *English Historical Review*, 96 (1981), 135.

*City-State's* interpretative breadth and evidentiary completeness'.<sup>44</sup> Nicolai Rubinstein is reported as saying that he could not put it down.

For the origin of the city-state, Jones looks far back into the early medieval past, to the centuries of decay of the Roman political order. He sees the general European features of disintegration in Italy—towns reduced in size, function and population, and public office retained only by bishops when not dissipated among feudal magnates—mitigated in Italy where towns did retain urban functions, as centres of production and exchange, as political actors with some sense of urban patriotism, as seats of secular government, as vehicles for the transmission of classical culture, and, above all, as bases for the landed nobility. In the Jonesian long-view, these preconditions determined the character of Italian towns, and their difference from their northern European counterparts, in the economic revival of the tenth century, as population grew, agricultural production and marketing intensified and international trade developed. Trade, money and merchants had an increasing influence on urban society and topography (new market-places, for example); but, Jones insists, merchants were immigrant landowners. In this early period, as in later periods, Jones emphasises the composite nature of the urban aristocracy: merchants rose into the nobility, nobles engaged in trade. Even more, he argues that in this combination of land and commerce, noble and merchant, the dominant elements were land and nobility. If the early medieval transformation had dispersed political and social power into the hands of rural nobles and their feudal dependents, the rise of the communes drew them back into towns: for them the communes were not so much a challenge as an opportunity. In the city, nobles shaped the topography (aristocratic quarters, fortified houses), and imported their warring habits. Though the communes were socially composite—unions of nobles and commoners—and though mercantile interests were present, Jones sees the main influence in the creation of the communes as coming from the upper classes of knights and vassals. In a quotation he relishes, the communes were 'born seigneurial' (p. 143). The communes, for Jones, were born as a revolt not of the bourgeoisie against feudatories, but of feudatories against imperial monarchy (p. 145).

The whole course of communal history—consular, podestarial, popular—is read in this light, of urban reconstruction and state-building constrained by aristocratic interests, attitudes and behaviour. Jones certainly

<sup>44</sup> R. G. Witt, review in *Speculum*, 74 (1999), p. 195; see also D. Abulafia in *English Historical Review*, 113 (1998), 1251–4.

sees communal state-building as original, rapid and radical (pp. 370–1). Law was ‘revolutionized’ through legislation, greater policing, new methods of prosecution, and the substitution of penalties for composition and private revenge. Defence resources were reorganised, with the building of castles and the revival of the civic militia. New taxes were created, ‘far outdoing contemporary Europe in ingenuity and intensity’. The communes increasingly intervened to regulate the physical and social environment: town planning, provision of essential services, social welfare. They widened political participation, using ‘democratic’ mechanisms that took no account of status or hierarchy: election, short-term appointments, pay for public office. Following the principle of equality of all citizens, the special rights and exemptions of knights and nobles in the law-courts and the fisc were removed, and the privileges and properties of the clergy were challenged. The church was also displaced in its roles in poor relief and education. The communes mobilised creative forces to regenerate and reshape the urban fabric through increasingly ambitious phases of new building (walls, palaces, cathedrals). And finally, there was growing commercialisation of public policy, as regards both the contado, important for food supply, migrant labour and communications, and relations with other cities, whether by trade treaty or trade war. And these achievements were widened and deepened under the popolo, as the political class was expanded into thousands, and as campaigns were waged, through anti-magnate legislation, against the unruly behaviour of ‘the entrenched landed aristocracy’.

Yet none of this was enough to prevent the advance of feudal and magnate power in the form of ‘despotism’, which advanced during the second half of the thirteenth century. So what went wrong? For Jones there are four orders of explanation. First, the resources of the communal state were always and everywhere inadequate: insufficient numbers of officials, insufficient professionalisation, insufficient remuneration, which meant that private attitudes to office persisted and corruption was fomented. Secondly, the popolo was too weak. It prevailed in few communes, and failed in many. Mostly, its impact and duration were limited. It was, besides, divided internally between merchants and artisans/traders. Despite the widening of participation, Jones sees power as in practice narrowly distributed: the expansion of eligibility for office being offset by the increasing use of small executive committees. Thirdly, there was the continuing influence of class, clientage and clan. Nobles still enjoyed privileges. Competition for office generated clientelistic practices. Family clans retained their hold on loyalties and functions. Moreover,

communal policy had the effect of strengthening noble presence in the city. Expansion into the contado drew magnates in, 'to join and use the commune'. Lastly, there was competition from the 'parallel order' of feudal lords and seigneurs. They survived, not just around the edges of communal Italy, but all over urban territory. Intercity warfare served as a resource for them to exploit, and not just by selling their military expertise: 'war, expansionism and war-weariness were opportunity and salvation' for the feudal class (p. 556). Once in the city, these barons took high office and took command.

Critical voices have been rather stronger as regards this volume.<sup>45</sup> Part of the problem is the rather reader-repellent construction of paragraph, page and section: even a friend deplores the 'paragraphs that go on for several . . . densely printed pages, and sections that go on uninterrupted by subheadings, for almost 100 pages'. Jones doubtless resisted copy-editing. His apparent lack of interest in chronology disturbed other readers, and there is a tendency at times to read back from later medieval evidence to thirteenth-century history. Jones's footnotes have disappointed Italian scholars expecting critical evaluation of other interpretations and a response to critics, rather than exhaustive exempla to support Jones's own theses.<sup>46</sup> The architecture of the volume—vast dialectical blocks of pro- and contra-argument—is also prone to lose readers among contradictory, paradoxical features of communal Italy. Like the works of Jones's favourite novelist, Henry James, *The Italian City State* is best read in small doses. ('Read five pages a day', James recommended for *The Ambassadors*.)

But these are mainly responses to form rather than content. And the content remains extraordinary. No other historian has written of eight hundred years of Italian history with Jones's depth of engagement with both primary sources and scholarship: it is difficult to know which to admire more, the breadth or the detail. The vocabulary includes unusual choices ('gangsterism', 'popular front', 'stepmotherly', 'inbred regimes'). The quotations are rare and striking. The translations have a precise equivalence that is often lacking in Anglo-Saxon scholarship. Incidental information is effortlessly conveyed: Milan provides the earliest named Italian businessman (p. 100), *parlamentum* is a word of papal origin (p. 344), etc. The book brings together in one place, for an English-reading audience, the

<sup>45</sup> R. G. Witt, review in *Speculum*, 74 (1999), p. 195; see also D. Abulafia in *English Historical Review*, 113 (1998), 1251–4 and A. Gamberini in *Nuova rivista storica*, 84 (2000), 165–8.

<sup>46</sup> *Ibid.*

arguments of his Einaudi essays, supplemented by extended treatment of political history, first adumbrated in his 1966 essay, ‘Communes and despots’.

In fact, Jones could be very dismissive of his own work. ‘An anthology of platitudes’, he called *The Italian City-State*, a remark reminiscent of Rorty (‘just a talent for bricolage’) or Ted Hughes (‘a harvest of dregs’). But to see the self-deprecating Jones as uncaring about reputation would be misleading: his correspondence is full of letters from friends answering or assuaging his anxiety about reviews or about the influence of his work in Italy. He noticed and resented omission from bibliographies and footnotes. On the front of the typescript of a paper on anti-peasant polemic and satire he wrote ‘Jones ignored’. He was dismayed at the response of Italian publishers to the suggestion of a translation of his *Italian City State*; even Einaudi rejecting it as too costly. He wrote bitterly to one correspondent of how the idea of a translation had been ‘hastily discounted’: ‘reviews are blocked by the limitations of readers or editors, unanimous in condemning my work as “too demanding”’.<sup>47</sup>

Demanding his style certainly is: complex sentences, with subclauses, lists or parenthetical material; a strong preference for comparative, superlative and negative constructions, often in combination; and a relentless grading of phenomena by volume, number, pace, impact, frequency or proximity.<sup>48</sup> His composite footnotes—he hated writing them—make it difficult for readers to track statements in the text to their specific sources, but they do contain a stupendous range of material. The first two footnotes of his D.Phil. Thesis, for example, refer in sequence to the *De recuperatione terre sancte*, a sixteenth-century chronicle of Savignano, Dante’s *Inferno*, Petrarch’s sonnet 138, a work in German on the Donation of Constantine, and Ockham’s *Breviloquium de potestate papae*. Opening one of his later works at random, we find on the same page Gramsci, Sitwell, Alberti, Landucci, Guicciardini, Fynes Moryson, Castiglione and Richard Vaughan. His breadth of reading and his ability to marshal evidence were unequalled and unrepeatable. Which other economic historian can quote from Marx on one page and from the *Roman de la Rose* on the next?<sup>49</sup> And the footnotes also contain some of his most trenchant engagement with other scholars: for example, the brief polemic

<sup>47</sup> Jones to Giorgio Chittolini, 26 July 2000.

<sup>48</sup> See my study of Jones’s style: T. Dean, ‘“Communes and Despots”: the opening paragraph’, in J. E. Law and B. Paton (eds.), *Communes and Despots in Renaissance Italy* (Farnham, 2009).

<sup>49</sup> ‘La storia economica. Dalla caduta dell’impero romano al secolo XIV’, pp. 1529–30.



with Herlihy and Kotel'nikova in the first footnote of the Italian translation of his essay on Lucca cathedral lands.<sup>50</sup>

Jones's place in the field of medieval Italian studies remains ambiguous. The density of his writing prevents easy access and hampers wider dissemination of his ideas, arguments and insights. He provoked a strong response, verging at times on the unreasonable, from Italian critics. His work is not for beginners, or for those interested in chronological exposition or narrative. However, he had a great talent for crossing periods and boundaries, and, as Michael Knapton puts it, 'not just for acquiring knowledge over many centuries and in different fields usually considered specialist, but for linking them into a meaningful, carefully argued general interpretation'. He was a pioneer in his creation of a new type of agrarian history and in his use of *ricordanze* for social and economic history. He argued relentlessly against simple (but very influential) interpretations: that debt implied crisis or destitution, that Renaissance culture had anything 'bourgeois' about it, that Protestantism first raised the moral value of work, and so on. Many of these arguments have yet to be fully appreciated by later historians. Above all, at a time when the trends in historiography ran towards the micro-level or revitalised narrative, he conducted his own assault on Grand Narratives, while remaining faithful to analytical, problem-focused history at the macro-level.

One figure should not be overlooked for her support and inspiration in Jones's life and work: his wife Carla. 'I never realised how much I depended on her', Jones observed after her death in 2004. At one level, she played the supportive wife: waiting patiently outside the British Museum, for example, while he concentrated on reading his way through Davidsohn's multi-volume history of Florence. But she was also the active collaborator: translating his works into Italian, sustaining and deepening his passion for Italy. Though she complained publicly about him ('I had to buy my own engagement ring!' one friend was told), together they gave the appearance of having much in common, and Jones adored her *italianità*: the jewellery, the exuberance; she even drove 'with style', says Gordon Forster. Her excellent translations of his work made a great difference to their reception in Italy, as one colleague observes: 'for much of his career many Italian scholars were hardly systematically attentive to

<sup>50</sup> 'i quali sono in errore nel ritenere che l'indagine "non segue metodi quantitativi" . . . e si basa su "pochi e isolati documenti" . . . Per ragioni di spazio la relativa, implicita (e inevitabile) investigazione quantitativa non è stata esibita con la pletora di rigore nel neopitagoreggiare ora di moda. Saper contare (e leggere) non è una scienza nuova': in *Economia e società nell'Italia medievale* (Turin, 1980), p. 275.

foreigners' research on Italy'. After Carla's death, Jones spent almost as much effort on an attempt to get her poetry published as on his own writing.

Jones died of a stroke in the John Radcliffe Hospital, Oxford, on 26 March 2006. He was working until almost the end. He left unpublished one and a half chapters of volume 2 of *The Italian City-State*, in which he tackled head-on some commonplace ideas about the Italian Renaissance: that it was Italian, that it was a Renaissance, above all that it was Florentine (the Florentines were 'latecomers not pioneers').<sup>51</sup> Half a page of footnotes in his typewriter ended with the word 'infra'.

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<sup>51</sup> An almost complete bibliography of his publications is available in T. Dean and C. Wickham (eds.), *City and Countryside in Late Medieval and Renaissance Italy: Essays Presented to Philip Jones* (London 1990), xiii–xv. Jones published only three items after this.