

## BOOK REVIEW

*Approaching the Roman Revolution. Papers on Republican History.* By SIR RONALD SYME. Edited by FEDERICO SANTANGELO. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016. Pp. xv + 428. Hardcover, \$140.00. ISBN 978-0-19-876706-0.

When I was young in graduate school, the professor of a course in Roman history told the class that he wanted us to read Ronald Syme's *The Roman Revolution* over the Christmas holiday.

That was a difficult task, a dense, terribly learned book of over 500 pages, on the changes in Rome between 60 BC and 14 AD. Syme was not a fan of the Emperor Augustus. The last sentence reads: "For power he had sacrificed everything; he had achieved the height of all mortal ambition and in his ambition he had saved and regenerated the Roman People." I was captivated by that final statement, and have been an enthusiast for Augustus ever since.

In 1958, there appeared surely the greatest book on Tacitus ever written, more than 850 pages long. I was already an admirer of Tacitus before I read this vast study, and I have been a Tacitean ever since. These were the first Syme volumes on my shelf. I now have 24, of which the volume under review is the latest.

For those who are not familiar with Sir Ronald Syme, who died in 1989, the memorial by Glen Bowersock in PBA 84 (1994) 539-63 and the entry by Sir Fergus Millar in the *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (2004) are very informative. I also recommend two German publications: Karl Christ, *Neue Profile der Alten Geschichte* (Darmstadt 1990), chapter 5, 'Ronald Syme,' 188-247, and Geza Alföldy, *Sir Ronald Syme, 'Die römische Revolution' und die deutsche Althistorie* (Heidelberg 1983). And now, twenty-eight years after his death, we have another volume, and I shall not be surprised if there will be more.

When Syme died, he had been a Fellow of Wolfson College, a new establishment which opened in 1966, for almost twenty years. He had been Camden Professor of Ancient History in the University of Oxford, a chair linked with Brasenose College from 1949 to 1970. And, for twenty years before that distinction, he had been a Fellow of Trinity College Oxford. In the sixty years of his service at Oxford, he wrote an enormous amount, much of which was preliminary preparation for various subjects. A great deal was, to be sure, never published; as a result, there are

two substantial collections of his *Nachlass*, at Wolfson and in the Bodleian Library Oxford; the latter is known as the Syme Archive.

The person singularly responsible for so much of the publication of Syme's unknown work is Professor Anthony Birley, who edited the last five volumes of the Roman Papers and brought forth Syme's *Anatolica. Studies in Strabo* (1995) and *The Provincial at Rome and Rome and the Balkans 80 BC – AD 14* (1999). It was Birley who persuaded the editor of the present volume to undertake the publication of the twenty-six papers herein printed, which were preliminary studies in the years before the publication of *The Roman Revolution*.

Federico Santangelo is Senior Lecturer in Ancient History at Newcastle University. He has done a magnificent job of presentation and commentary, for which all readers will feel gratitude and perhaps even jealousy.

The longest paper is the last in the order presented, sixty-seven pages on "Rome and Umbria." The majority are much briefer, with several covering only a few pages. Santangelo has added a very valuable section, "Bibliographical Addenda," which briefly discusses the current "state of the question," based upon more recent research. This enables the reader to have a sense of the present status of each question. The bibliography is very extensive, as is the General Index, but one must often seek before one can find. There is no listing for Augustus, whom one will ultimately find as Julius Caesar Octavianus, with forty-four page references. The listing for Caesar is considerably longer. There is also an index of "Primary Sources," with a long section devoted to "Inscriptions."

The reader will surely have concluded that Santangelo has produced a splendid volume, with enough material to enable the reader to follow discussion of all the papers up to the present day. The memory of Sir Ronald has been well served, while we, the readers, profit from having these papers made public.

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