FERGUS MILLAR

Fergus Graham Burtholme Millar

5 July 1935 – 15 July 2019

elected Fellow of the British Academy 1976

by

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Professor Sir Fergus Millar was the outstanding Roman historian of his generation. He was a prolific author whose scholarship covered a wide range of periods, from the Republic to late antiquity, and a wide geographical range, with a particular emphasis on the Roman Near East.

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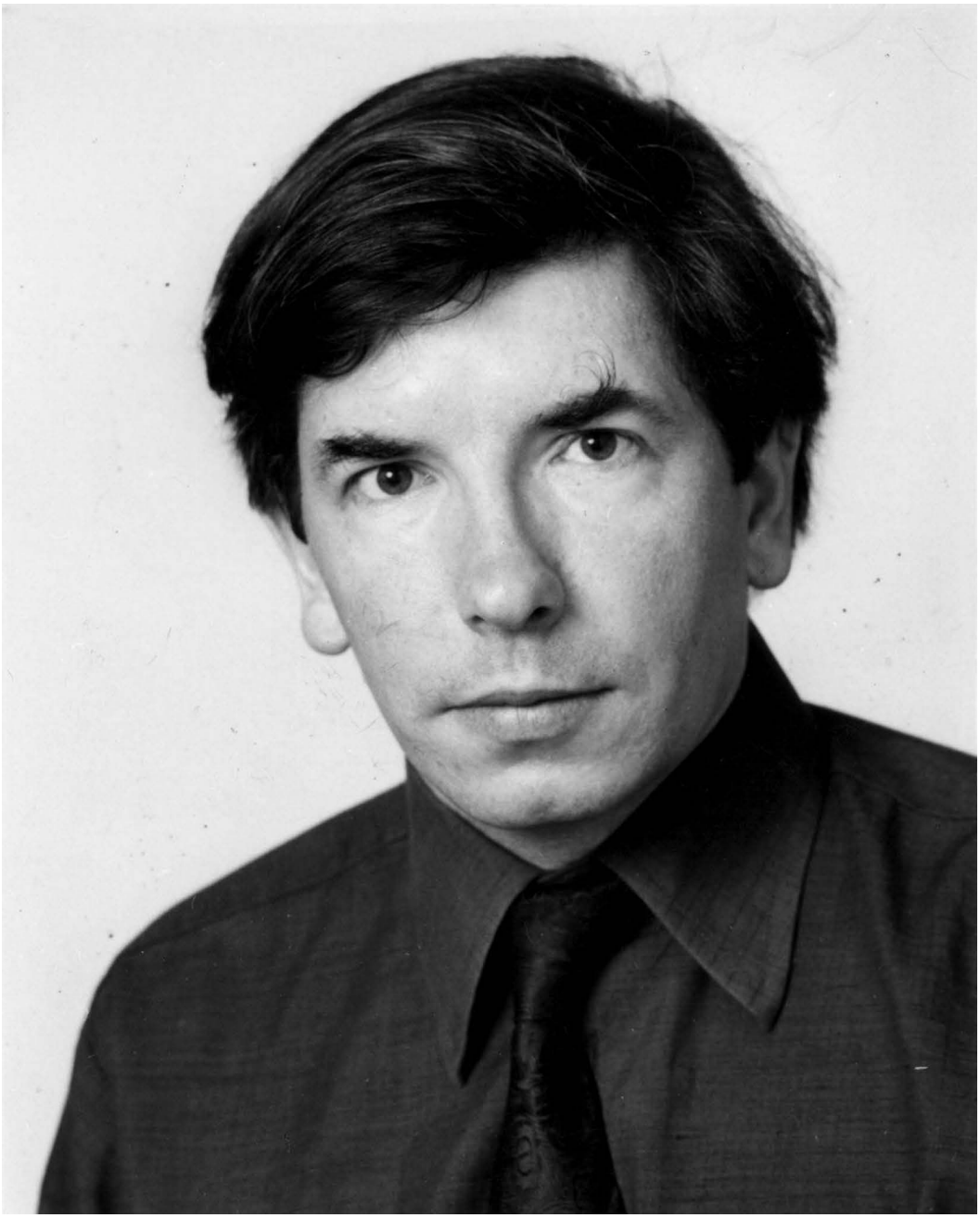

F.S.B. Millar

Fergus Millar spent most of his life in England, but he always considered himself a Scot and would occasionally remind his friends and colleagues of his national allegiance, particularly at Burns Night.[1] His father was a lawyer ('Writer to the Signet') in Edinburgh, and Fergus received an intensive education from the age of eight at the Edinburgh Academy until the age of 14, when, shortly before the death of his mother, he was sent to board in the less academic environment of Loretto School. The change of school, exacerbated by the trauma of his mother's death, left him socially isolated, and he spent much of his time at Loretto focussing on school work and golf (at which he excelled). In intellectual terms, Millar complained in retrospect that the move from the Edinburgh Academy, where Latin was taught in traditional fashion with knuckles rapped for grammatical errors, had prevented him from receiving the thorough education which would have made him what he considered a proper classicist, but he progressed well enough to be awarded in 1953 a Minor Scholarship to Trinity College, Oxford.

Studying at Trinity was postponed for two years of National Service in the Navy, where he was taught Russian, and in light of this hiatus in his education, Trinity permitted him to take an accelerated three-year degree in place of the standard Greats course. The shortened course allowed only two terms of Prelims to study classical languages and literature instead of the usual five terms of Classical Moderations, but he excelled in the Ancient History side of Greats under the tutelage of James Holladay, gaining a First in 1958, and he had the self-confidence to apply successfully for a Prize Fellowship at All Souls in the autumn of the same year.

As an undergraduate Millar had been much engaged in student journalism, and it was not inevitable that he would prefer academic life to Fleet Street, where he had been offered a position with the *Daily Mail* prior to his graduation. He had enjoyed studying Ancient History, however, and he embarked on a doctorate on Cassius Dio under the supervision of Ronald Syme. The obvious model for the topic selected was Syme's *Tacitus*, which had been published in 1958, and Syme must have played the most important role in the selection of the subject and its general treatment, but he seems to have had little interest in providing much more than general encouragement. Awarded the Conington Prize in 1962 for the doctoral dissertation, Millar was a prime

[1] We have made extensive use of biographical notes and a list of publications drawn up by Fergus Millar with characteristic thoroughness for the benefit of a future obituarist. No full bibliography of Millar's writings has been published, but most of his papers can be found either in the three volumes of *Rome, the Greek World and the East* , (2002–2006), edited by Hannah M. Cotton and Guy M. Rogers, or in *Empire, Church and Society in the Late Roman Near East: Greeks, Jews, Syrians and Saracens (Collected Papers 2004–14)* (2015). We are grateful to Averil Cameron, Peter Garnsey and Priscilla Lange for reading the memoir and offering valuable insights and information.

candidate for a tutorial fellowship, and in 1964 he moved to The Queen's College Oxford as Fellow and Tutor in Ancient History in succession to Guy Chilver.

Millar immersed himself in undergraduate teaching with enthusiasm, boasting in 1975 that he had never yet had to postpone or cancel a tutorial because of illness. Life was less enjoyable in Queen's than in All Souls because the common room was riven by deep-seated personal animosities (a motivating factor for Chilver's departure to the University of Kent at Canterbury). Initially, his university lectures and his undergraduate teaching as a college tutor were largely confined to the imperial period (then formally designated in the Oxford Greats syllabus as '43 BC to AD 117'). His lectures of the mid–60s on 'Documents of the Roman Empire' were characteristically unshowy and very substantive, giving a clear indication of the direction of travel of his studies on the administration of the empire.

As an Oxford college tutor he thrived in the current pattern of teaching mainly one-to-one or in pairs, although after a decade he might have felt that he needed something different. His tutorial practice was to listen without interrupting to the essay being read aloud from start to finish, taking notes in the course of the reading. He would then correct or comment on specific points, often shoving a copy of a relevant piece of ancient evidence (habitually Cassius Dio) under the student's nose, before broadening the discourse to the context and importance of the subject at hand. Sometimes he would share a draft of one of his soon-to-be-published articles. His style was not meretriciously 'inspiring'; for those with a real historian's instinct the inspiration came from seeing him in action and observing his hard work, attention to evidence, analytical thoroughness and intellectual integrity.

He felt stifled, however, by what he later described as the 'benevolent inertia' of Oxford and the lack of institutional attention to graduate students, which he tried independently to remedy without attracting much support from colleagues. Never shy of giving his views in committee, he muttered 'There you go again' when Peter Brunt, the Camden Professor, said 'No, I don't' in a sub-faculty meeting of ancient historians in 1975 in reply to a complaint that he [Brunt] always said 'no' when any innovation was proposed. Millar accepted an invitation in 1976 to succeed Arnaldo Momigliano as Professor of Ancient History in University College London, even though the new post condemned him to eight years of early morning departures to commute to London from the family home in Oxford.

He found congenial the departmental context of his life in UCL, enjoying being part of an academic community who would meet in corridors and chat over coffee in the common room in the Institute of Classical Studies, at that time still located in Gordon Square, just behind UCL, and he established links with the Department of Hebrew and Jewish Studies, studying Hebrew with Ada Rapaport-Albert. A major achievement in this context was the very inclusive ICS ancient history seminar, for

which he drew in all the ancient historians across the University of London, including the Near Eastern specialist Amélie Kuhrt.[2] This was an academic culture which he later promoted with outstanding effectiveness on his return to Oxford.

The syllabus in UCL covered a huge range of Graeco-Roman history from the Archaic period to Late Antiquity and Millar was plunged into teaching periods quite new to him, an expansion of his teaching range in three directions which also represented a significant change in the nature of his personal contact with undergraduates. He took on the lecture course from 404 to 31 BCE, previously given by Arnaldo Momigliano, and that on Archaic and mid-Republican Rome, for which he acknowledged a debt to his colleagues John North and Tim Cornell. His later publications on the Republic were a product of this teaching. Then there was the history of the Empire down to 400 which was the basis of his later publications on Late Antiquity.

If the number of his undergraduate pupils who followed him into academic positions in ancient history was relatively small (only Simon Price, Guy Rogers and the two authors of this memoir), it was a different story after his return to Oxford as Camden Professor in 1984 in succession to Peter Brunt. As was traditional for statutory professors, he gave lectures and seminars open to all and supervised postgraduates but did not tutor undergraduates. He supervised doctoral students (in the days before Masters' courses existed) over a huge timescale and range of topics in Roman imperial history and historiography (theses on ancient authors included Strabo, Josephus and Fronto). He had the knack of encouraging prospective supervisees towards promising and appropriate subjects without pushing or overpersuading them. This generally gave them a feeling of confidence and intellectual freedom (though there were a few cases in which their choices did not work out well and it seemed in retrospect as if he could have been a bit more *dirigiste*, though he never failed to offer generous support and advice). He was certainly meticulous and exhaustive in reading drafts and responding with detailed and substantive comments. Despite occasional references from scholars familiar with other academic cultures and some Oxford precedent (particularly Ronald Syme), this did not lead to the emergence of a 'school of Fergus Millar' – the supervisees and their subjects were far too diverse and heterogeneous. This was surely very much his style and his preference.

Millar's doctoral thesis on Cassius Dio, on whose work our knowledge of much Roman history in the Republic and early Principate depends, was submitted in 1962 and published by Oxford University Press in expanded form two years later.[3]

[2] See T.J. Cornell, 'Professor Sir Fergus Millar 1935–2019', *Journal of Roman Studies* [hereafter *JRS*] 110 (2020), 1–3.

[3] *A Study of Cassius Dio* (1964).

It constituted an original and detailed demonstration that Dio's depiction of the late Republic and the rule of Augustus reflected the state of the Roman political system and Dio's understanding, derived from his own political career, of the workings of government in the early 3rd century. Millar was impelled by the genre of a doctoral thesis to cover topics previously treated in the voluminous earlier literature on Dio, but he was more interested in placing Dio himself in the social and political setting of the Greek world under Roman rule during the Severan dynasty than in the traditional exercise of trying to disentangle the sources Dio had collected during the ten years he claimed to have spent gathering material for his history, and Millar's study was widely recognised as a major achievement by 'a historian of stature … with a deep insight into the rationale of Roman imperial politics'. This interest in the historian's political world was replicated in Millar's later studies of other Greek historians, notably Dexippus (who lived through the 3rd-century invasions of the Greek world), Polybius, and especially Josephus, whose writings Millar regarded as the most important surviving source for the functioning of Roman provincial government.[4]

Already in his decade as a tutorial fellow at Queen's Millar developed intellectually from two chance encounters which took him far beyond the syllabus of Oxford Greats and the concerns of his doctorate. The first was an invitation in 1964 to contribute to the Fischer Weltgeschichte a volume on the Roman Empire up to 284 CE: the series editor did not have any particular author in mind when he came to Oxford to seek a volunteer to fill this gap in the series, but Millar threw himself into the task with energy. The resulting book, *The Roman Empire and its Neighbours*, published in Germany in 1966 and then in England in 1967, was written with striking clarity and reached a wide readership, even if Millar's disarming note in the preface that this was a young man's book, composed at too great a speed, was a hostage to reviewers.[5] The second chance opportunity arose from the arrival in Oxford in 1968 of Geza Vermes as the new Reader in Jewish Studies and an invitation to work as joint editor on the revised English edition of Emil Schürer's *The History of the Jewish People in the Age of Jesus Christ*, a massive task which was to occupy him from 1969 to 1989.[6]

It was while teaching at Queen's and during a visit to the Institute for Advanced Study at Princeton in 1968 that Millar had begun collecting ideas and materials for *The Emperor in the Roman World*, the book for which he was to be best known for the

[4] 'P. Herennius Dexippus: the Greek World and the Third-Century Invasions', *JRS* 59 (1969), 12–29; 'Polybius between Greece and Rome' in J.A.T. Koumoulides (ed.), *Greek Connections: Essays on Culture and Diplomacy* (1987), 1–18; 'Last Year in Jerusalem: Monuments of the Jewish War in Rome', in J. Edmondson, S. Mason and J. Rives, eds., *Flavius Josephus and Flavian Rome* (2005), 101–28.

[5] *The Roman Empire and its Neighbours* (1967).

[6] E. Schürer, revised and edited G. Vermes, F. Millar, M. Black and M. Goodman, *The History of the Jewish People in the Age of Jesus Christ 175 BCE-AD 135*, 3 vols. (1973–87).

rest of his career.[7] The book was completed during a sabbatical in 1973–4, and by the time that it was published in 1977, he was already, at the age of 42, established as a major figure in Roman studies. In 1975 he became editor of the *Journal of Roman Studies* and in 1976 he was elected a Fellow of the British Academy.

His inaugural lecture as Camden Professor already prefigured the Carl Newell Jackson lectures given in Harvard in 1987 which appeared (in much expanded form) as *The Roman Near East* in 1993.[8] The Jerome Lectures, delivered in Ann Arbor, Michigan in 1993 and the American Academy in Rome in 1994 and published as *The Crowd in Rome in the Late Republic*, were much shaped by his discussions with Tim Cornell and John North during his time in UCL.[9]

Millar's retirement in 2002 enabled him to embark on a long period of further scholarly productivity, enhanced by a deliberate scaling back of his other commitments following an attack of angina in the late 1990s, presaging the problems that plagued him intermittently until the heart failure which ended in his death. Provided by the Oxford Centre for Hebrew and Jewish Studies, of which he had been a Senior Associate since 1990, with shared office space in the Oriental Institute where he found himself a new academic home which he much enjoyed, and with the benefit of two Leverhulme Emeritus Fellowships and two grants from the Academy for part-time secretarial help, he settled down to full-time research, retiring from all the committee work which he had found so frustrating. He gave the Sather Lectures in Berkeley in 2002–2003,[10] and, irritated by the lack of clear guidance by specialists on which rabbinic texts could validly be used for the history of late-Roman Palestine, he cajoled colleagues into organising a conference at the Academy on the subject and then instigated and produced, with Yehudah Cohn and Eyal Ben-Eliyahu, a *Handbook of Jewish Literature from Late Antiquity*, published by the British Academy for the assistance of historians such as himself.[11] As the number of his studies multiplied, the prospect of putting them all together into a new synthesis faded, but he brought many of his themes together in the Schweich Lectures, delivered at the Academy in 2010 and published in 2013, and the volume of his collected papers from 2004–14, published in 2015, preserves the insights which could have infused such a synthesis.[12] At an event held to celebrate the publication of the latter book, which comes to 807 pages, he

[7] *The Emperor in the Roman World* (1977) [hereafter *ERW*].
[8] *The Roman Near East* (1993).
[9] *The Crowd in Rome in the Late Republic* (1998).
[10] *A Greek Roman Empire: Power and Belief under Theodosius II, 408–450* (2006).
[11] E. Ben-Eliyahu, Y. Cohn and F. Millar, *Handbook of Jewish Literature from Late Antiquity, 135–700 CE* (2012).
[12] *Religion, Language and Community in the Roman Near East, Constantine to Muhammad* (2013); collected papers in *Empire, Church and Society* (see note 1). The volume of collected papers ends, characteristically, with an epilogue (pp. 779–801) entitled 'Open Questions'.

stated firmly that, at the age of eighty, he had said all he wanted to say. It was not quite true – he continued to present occasional seminar papers in his final years – but he was content to leave his contributions to scholarship to speak for themselves.

The epicentre of Millar's work in the 1960s and 1970s was meticulous study of the administrative and legal institutions of the Roman empire. This was grounded in exhaustive reading and annotation of documentary and legal sources (above all the *Digest*). It was presaged by his second published article,[13] on the Constitutio Antoniniana, the measure which extended Roman citizenship to virtually all free subjects of the empire in the early 3rd century; he once remarked that this had given him more pleasure than any of his other publications because it provoked fourteen separate refutations. Other early studies of the financial instruments of governance (the imperial *fiscus* and the public treasury [*aerarium*]) remain of fundamental value for their collation and detailed analysis of the sources of evidence and the lines of demarcation between the treasuries.[14] Much of their lasting value lies in his nuanced understanding of the precision of the legal and documentary evidence, alongside and in contrast to the looser and frequently opaque statements in the literary sources such as Tacitus, Suetonius and Cassius Dio.[15] Above all, there is a clear focus on how the complex mechanisms of government worked on the ground across the empire, rather than a Rome-based view of an imperial machine managing by diktat *ex cathedra*. This was a perspective which was conveyed to Oxford undergraduates in the mid–60s though his lectures on 'Documents of the Roman Empire' and it was early manifested in his important article on 'Emperors at Work'.[16]

That article leads in a direct trajectory to his *magnum opus* of 1977, *The Emperor in the Roman World* (with a second edition in 1992). He had originally hoped that Oxford University Press would publish it, but he refused to consider a request from the Press to shorten it and instead took it to Colin Haycraft at Duckworth, who required no cuts. In this book he overtly eschewed comparison with other imperial governmental systems, collecting and citing a huge amount of primary evidence: 'The Millar method is the collection, analysis and organisation of a body of evidence that is never explained *a priori* by a conceptual framework of interpretation.'[17] That in itself was, and remains, an immense resource for the study of the Roman empire and

[13] 'The date of the constitutio Antoniniana', *Journal of Egyptian Archaeology* 48 (1962), 124–131.

[14] 'The fiscus in the first two centuries', *JRS* 53 (1963), 29–42; 'The aerarium and its officials under the Empire', *JRS* 54 (1964), 33–40.

[15] See also 'Some evidence on the meaning of Tacitus, Annals XII.60', *Historia* 13 (1964), 180–187 and 'The development of jurisdiction by imperial Procurators: further evidence', *Historia* 14 (1965), 362–367 with the detailed critique by P.A.Brunt, 'Procuratorial jurisdiction', *Latomus* 25 (1966), 461–89.

[16] 'Emperors at Work', *JRS* 57 (1967), 9–19.

[17] S. Benoist, cited and translated by Peter Wiseman in a letter to the *Times Literary Supplement*, 31 July 2020.

its governance, but it provoked some sharp criticisms, the most notorious of which were presented in a characteristically robust review by Keith Hopkins[18] and subsequent debates (to which Millar did not respond defensively or in detail). Prime areas of vulnerability were identified in Millar's statement in the preface 'the emperor was what the emperor did', which he could have modified in the second edition but chose not to, and the assertion that the emperor governed not by being pro-active but only reactive, thus placing the 'petition and response' process at centre stage. That prefatory statement was in truth a hostage to fortune in the sense that it allowed critics to take it as implying that the emperor was *only* what he did, thus ignoring *inter alia* the symbolic, psychological and iconographic perspectives. Nevertheless, as a detailed study of the evidence for what emperors did it is an original and unparalleled piece of work, 'simply the empirical method, testing hypotheses against all the available evidence, the foundation of all scholarship'.[19] Millar himself was clear in his belief that for the historian true originality consisted not in striving to find brilliant new solutions for old problems but in having a point of view and being led by the evidence in developing it.

Some critics were inclined to see his approach as simply sandblasting or machine-gunning the subjects with huge amounts of factual evidence, but this fails to do justice to his appreciation of the multifarious levels and modes in which government and administration were made effective. His massive article on obligations and excuses in the cities of the empire shines an intense light on government by the elite at the local level.[20] This is the devolved administration, the successful operation of which depended on the imperial authority's ability to secure the co-operation and effective participation by those citizens who commanded the major proportion of the local economic and social resources. The undermining of this entente underpinned Rostovtseff's now unfashionable view of the 'decline of the bourgeoisie' and its replacement by elements of the 'lower orders' as a key factor in the evolution of the empire. Here Millar amasses detailed legal evidence to show how specific decisions of emperors could acquire the status of broadly applicable regulations; how and why the increasingly intolerable burdens placed on the local elites could be alleviated by a complex network of exemptions; in effect a divisive process which, along with the growth of a formalisation of status distinctions, ranks and functions in the imperial bureaucratic and military institutions, led to the greater isolation and self-reliance of the 'super-rich' while the burdens for those in the middle ground became largely unsustainable. The very ambitious timescale over which these phenomena are analysed

[18] 'Rules of evidence', *JRS* 68 (1978), 178–86.
[19] Wiseman (n.17, above).
[20] 'Empire and city, Augustus to Julian: obligations, excuses and status', *JRS* 73 (1983), 76–96.

has important implications for the ways in which Millar perceived changes in the mechanisms of imperial government over four centuries and the sharp focus on the legal sources inevitably bears on the 3rd and early 4th centuries for which, in comparison with the earlier part of the period, good literary-historical narrative sources are sadly lacking. This renders his use of the documentary and legal sources all the more original and compelling even if the article is to some extent a rebarbative read in the density of detail in its arguments.

'Yet legal writers so central both to the character of Roman culture and (obviously enough) to the "legacy of Rome" have attracted extraordinarily little attention from classicists, from students of Roman historiography, or even from ancient historians, for whom this gigantic body of material represents, or ought to represent, an almost inexhaustible treasure-house of economic and social history, and of ideologies, conceptions and attitudes.'[21] The use of legal evidence and the relationship between Roman and Greek parts of empire were constant and crucial preoccupations. This 1986 article and his return to the subject of Pliny and Trajan, putting correspondence between emperor and governor into context with parallel evidence from legal sources, perhaps represent, if not an explicit defence against the critics of *ERW*, an amplification of his conviction that the legal sources do give us a vivid and realistic picture of how the imperial government actually worked both in the central administration, as an agglomeration of acts of communication in various forms, and at the level of the local civic communities. They also provide prime examples of his ability to perceive and draw the broader significance from crucial nuggets of information in an apparently mundane document.

Analysis of how the principles and practices of administration and law played out in the Greek east, particularly through the spectrum of what we can call imperial bureaucracy or the 'governing class', is critical and this theme is worked out in specific detail in his study of the dossier of Licinius Rufinus, an individual from Thyatira in Lydia (western Turkey) who is commemorated for local benefactions to his city, held high imperial office and achieved prominence in the field of Roman Law and an authorial presence in the *Digest*. This is the 'complex … process by which the upper classes of the Greek East "became Roman" while staying Greek',[22] and it looks forward to a 'Greek-speaking Roman empire' ruled from Constantinople, a development later examined in great detail in another major book.

[21] 'A new approach to the Roman jurists', *JRS* 76 (1986), 272–80 at 272. In this review of the work of Tony Honoré (not without hesitation over his hypotheses) he reads Roman law and particularly the *Digest* as the writings of real people rather than lifeless excerpts from a dry codification.
[22] 'The Greek East and Roman law: the dossier of M. Cn.Licinius Rufus', *JRS* 89 (1999), 90–108.

The emphasis in *ERW* on the reactive mode of government led some critics to observe that he had failed to do justice to the military and imperialistic aspects of the emperor's role. The latter omission Millar himself attempted to repair in an important article on frontiers, wars and foreign relations in which he considered how foreign and frontier 'policies' were formulated, thus also addressing the issue of proactivity in imperial behaviour.[23] This was in part also his response to Edward Luttwak's persuasive and influential book,[24] though Millar was somewhat agnostic on the existence of such a grand strategy and insisted instead on the centrality of transmission of knowledge and communication (much of it concealed from us) in formulating approaches to frontiers and neighbours. No firm conclusions can emerge from the haphazard evidence, arguments from silence are fragile but at least they prevent 'the interpretation of archaeological evidence in the light of naïve assumptions as to information, communication and responsibility'.[25] That comes back in the end to the question of agency and puts the emperor under scrutiny. With very few exceptions (Marcus Aurelius in his *Meditations*, Trajan in his correspondence with Pliny), we can never know what an emperor was thinking.

At the same time as Millar was getting to grips with the workings of imperial government, he sought to understand the multifarious cultures of the Roman provinces in their own right. The process had begun with study of the elite Greek society which informed Cassius Dio's view of Roman history, but for twenty years from the late 1960s he was immersed specifically in the history of the Jews from the Maccabean revolt in the mid–2nd century BCE to the revolt of Bar Kokhba in the 2nd century CE as reviser of Schürer's *The History of the Jewish People in the Age of Jesus Christ*. It was quite remarkable that a Roman historian approaching the peak of his career and committed to a heavy teaching load in Queen's should have chosen to devote himself to the selfless task of updating this classic of 19th-century scholarship which was still much cited despite being hopelessly out-of-date. Millar never explained why he spent so much of his working life on the history of the Jews, and in retrospect he put down his involvement in the Schürer project to the persuasive charm of Geza Vermes, but it cannot have been irrelevant that in 1959 he had married Susanna Friedmann, daughter of a Berlin cantor, and that he had been immersed in reading Josephus in 1961.

The revisers of Schürer took the unusual route of updating the text of the 4th edition of Schürer's history, which had been published in German in 1909, excising redundant material and polemics and adding new evidence and more recent bibliography in order to 'remind students of the inter-Testamental era of the profound debt

[23] 'Emperors, Frontiers and Foreign Relations, 31 BC–AD 378', *Britannia* 13 (1982), 1–24.
[24] *The Grand Strategy of the Roman Empire* (1976).
[25] *Op.cit.* (n.23), 20.

owed to nineteenth-century learning, and by placing within the framework of the finest product of that scholarship the vast accretion of knowledge gained in the twentieth century'. The revisers chose not to mark which material was new, so that the immense effort required to bring some sections up to date is invisible except to alert readers who can see which elements of the final text rely on knowledge acquired since 1909. Millar and Vermes had distinct fields of expertise, but they worked closely together on the first volume (which covered political history), with tasks more clearly divided for the second volume, for which Millar produced an extended survey of the evidence for the Hellenistic cities of Palestine. In the third volume, on which he was working in the early 1980s while at UCL, he took responsibility for the long survey of the evidence for diaspora Judaism. The detailed and painstaking work of revision was constrained by the need to interpret the new material in as neutral a fashion as possible, but the close acquaintance Millar acquired with a vast range of evidence sparked a series of influential articles on Jewish history, starting with an influential re-reading of the background to the Maccabean revolution published in 1978 and a study of the Jews of the Graeco-Roman diaspora between paganism and Christianity in the 4th and early 5th century which originated in a seminar in UCL convened by John North, Judith Lieu and Tessa Rajak. Millar was consistent in his insistence that the Greek and Latin evidence about Jews in inscriptions, Roman law codes and patristic texts deserved to be given equal weight alongside the dominant narrative of Jewish history in late antiquity derived from the rabbinic tradition.[26]

At the same time as Millar delved in detail into Jewish history, he was seeking to make wider claims for the significance of local cultures in the Roman world. A substantial study of language use in Roman Africa, examining the relationship of Libyan and Punic to Latin on inscriptions, was published in 1968, an article on the hellenisation of the cities of Phoenicia in 1983, and in 1997 he wrote an analysis of the ethnicity and language of Porphyry.[27] From the 1980s his main focus was on the Near East, with a series of studies, including his Carl Newell Jackson Lectures, based primarily on inscriptions and papyri. One result of this focus on documents was to emphasise the importance of the spread of use of Greek alongside a family of Semitic languages and scripts in the public self-representation of members of distinct

[26] 'The background to the Maccabean revolution: reflections on Martin Hengel's "Judaism and Hellenism"', *Journal of Jewish Studies* 29 (1978), 1–29; 'The Jews of the Graeco-Roman diaspora between paganism and Christianity, AD 312–438', in J. Lieu, J. North and T. Rajak (eds.), *The Jews among Pagans and Christians in the Roman Empire* (1992), 97–123.

[27] 'Local cultures in the Roman Empire: Libyan, Punic and Latin in Roman Africa', *JRS* 58 (1968), 126–51; 'The Phoenician cities: a case-study of hellenisation', *Proceedings of the Cambridge Philological Society* 209 (1983), 55–71; 'Porphyry: ethnicity, language and alien wisdom', in J. Barnes and M.T. Griffin (eds.), *Philosophia Togata II: Plato and Aristotle at Rome* (1997), 241–62.

communities whose cultural affiliations could be quite precisely correlated to specific sub-regions and local areas in specific periods, and *The Roman Near East* contains a series of maps on which the inclusion of geographical features is designed to help considerably with comprehension of the somewhat dense text of the book. Millar himself considered it important to visit the places about which he wrote and felt a sense of contact with the ancient inhabitants of the regions as a result. Whether the spread of the epigraphic habit in the early centuries CE reflected a deeper hellenisation of local cultures is disputable, and (as archaeologists of Roman Syria were quite quick to point out) Millar paid little attention to the cultural significance of non-written artefacts which might be thought to reveal greater continuity than he suggested, but indisputable was his demonstration of the extent of the continuing expansion of direct Roman rule over the Near East down to the 4th century. The 'mental map' he created of the Roman Near East is destined to endure, as is his insistence that study of the Roman empire, even by scholars in northern Europe, should shift eastwards.

Literary evidence for the Roman Near East before Constantine was not plentiful, although Millar made extensive use of Josephus and already in 1993 wrote an intriguing study linking Josephus's depiction of Hagar and Ishmael to the origins of Islam.[28] In 1993 he described the study of the Near East from the death of Constantine to the first Islamic conquests as 'a major challenge for someone else' not least because of the plethora of surviving Christian and Jewish texts in Syriac and Aramaic as well as Greek, but tackling these sources was precisely the challenge he himself took on after retirement, along with a series of novel forays into interpretation of the iconography of mosaics.[29] Characteristic of all this work was an insistence on studying pagan, Jewish and Christian material together, and he took great pleasure in showing how the different academic disciplines which concerned themselves with the late-Roman Near East could learn from each other. For years he fulminated as he struggled to puzzle out the relationship of inscriptions from the same places in different languages when they were included in separate corpora, publishing already in 1983 a call for editors of corpora of inscriptions to publish all the material from one locality in one place – a call which, to his delight, began to bear fruit in his last years.[30] This focus on bringing together sources from very different worlds and perspectives laid him open to criticism for not always fully grasping the complexities of the material studied by specialists in Syriac Christianity, rabbinic Judaism, Arabic epigraphy and the emergence of Islam,

[28] 'Hagar, Ismael, Josephus and the origins of Islam', *Journal of Jewish Studies* 44 (1993), 23–45.
[29] *The Roman Near East,* xii; 'Narrative and identity in Near Eastern mosaics, pagan, Jewish and Christian', in Y.Z. Eliav, E.A. Freedland and S. Herbert (eds.), *The Sculptural Environment of the Roman Near East: reflections on culture, ideology and power,* (2008), 225–56.
[30] 'Epigraphy', in M. Crawford (ed.), *Sources for Ancient History* (1983), 80–136.

but he was so fascinated by the discovery of new evidence of all kinds that he was unconcerned if those specialists sometimes claimed that his approach was a bit naïve.

Shortly after he had begun to work on Jewish history, Millar turned his attention also to work on the politics of the Roman Republic which occupied him for about 25 years, with publications spanning the period from 1974 to 2002. At the heart of this work is an attempt to describe and analyse the political character of the Republic as it developed from the later 4th century BCE down to 50 CE (at which point, it can be argued, it ceased to exist in its traditional form). This was hardly an untouched area of scholarship, enriched as it had been by the work of many major 20th-century scholars including Matthias Gelzer, Ronald Syme and Peter Brunt (Millar's Camden predecessor). But Millar wanted to counteract the excessive (in his view) emphasis that had earlier been placed, albeit to some extent modified by others, on the centrality of patron-client relations in political activity and on the character of the political elite as grounded in *nobilitas*, the quasi-hereditary monopolisation of high political office by members of a small and elite group of senatorial families who allowed the admission of 'new men' (like Cicero) into the charmed circle only sparingly.

Millar's approach was to put the *populus Romanus*, the citizen body, at centre stage, arguing that laws, elections and other major political decisions depended on the will and the votes of the citizen body as expressed through their voting assemblies, the class-based *comitia centuriata* which met on the Campus Martius to elect senior magistrates and the *comitia tributa* which met in the forum to attend rhetorical *contiones* and to pass legislation. As far as the character, composition and functioning of the assemblies was concerned this was certainly the most important work since that of Lily Ross Taylor in the 1960s.[31] Millar's method was characteristic. Proceeding on a chronological platform (although the publications were not quite in that order of appearance) with relentless attention to the key items of evidence, he agglomerated a formidable battering-ram of sources and analysis which left no doubt that the role of the *comitia tributa* in particular, and thus the citizen body, was central and effective in political debate and decision-making. This turns out to be true at all periods under scrutiny, though there are differences in the major sources and their understanding and perspectives, for example as between the Greek Polybius (mid–2nd century), Cicero (the major player in 70–50 BCE), and Cassius Dio (a 3rd-century CE derivative account, dependent on earlier sources).[32]

[31] L.R.Taylor, *The voting districts of the Roman Republic: the thirty-five urban and rural tribes* (1960) and *Roman voting assemblies from the Hannibalic War to the dictatorship of Caesar* (1966).

[32] See 'The political character of the Classical Roman Republic, 200–151 BC' *JRS* 74 (1984), 1–19; 'Politics, persuasion and the people, before the Social War' *JRS* 76 (1986), 1–11; 'Popular politics at Rome in the Late Republic', in I.Malkin and Z.W.Rubinsohn (eds). *Leaders and masses in the Roman world : Studies in honor of Zvi Yavetz* (1995), 91–182.

The culmination of this strand of Millar's work, which he termed 'a deliberately one-sided contribution', is *The Crowd in the Late Republic* (1998), dedicated to Peter Brunt. Here he deals in systematic chronological order with events of the 70s through to 50 BCE and concludes by asking what sort of 'democracy' might be under the microscope. Naturally, Cicero's activities (mainly the forensic ones because of the subject under discussion) are at the core. Millar, again characteristically and as in much of his whole *oeuvre*, lets the primary evidence speak for itself and rarely dismisses a statement as false or misleading. The evocation of 'popular' politics is vivid and compelling and like others before him Millar sees the unshackling of the powers of the *tribuni plebis* in 70 BCE as the watershed after which radical legislation was put to the legislative assembly frequently and with dramatic effect. For the next 20 years recurrent episodes of legislation, violence and political mayhem presaged the fall of the Roman Republic. For Millar it is the role of the people that is crucial,[33] not the failure of the senate, despite the role of its minority in eventually precipitating civil war, nor the strife between 'military dynasts' (as the so-called 'First Triumvirate' of Pompey, Caesar and Crassus is often described). A particularly robust challenge to traditional views was posed in his statement that 'the widespread notion that the senate was the governing organ of the Roman Republic is not merely misleading, it is straightforwardly false',[34] which does not quite square with an earlier assertion that 'the senate thus exercised a real governmental, even, one might say, parliamentary function in debating the replies to foreign embassies.'[35]

That point aside, none of this was exactly virgin territory for scholars of the late Republic, nor the last word on the subject: Millar himself hoped it would be a stimulus to 'a future political analysis by someone else'. That hope has been fulfilled, for analysis continues and several reviewers have vigorously taken issue with Millar. Why? Moving the spotlight away from senatorial influence and conflict is one factor. Most would accept that 'however hesitant we may be to allow the name of democracy to a system whose structural weaknesses and contradictions were so profound, … any valid assessment of the Roman Republic must take account of the power of the crowd'.[36] That seems persuasive and grounded in the many items of evidence that Millar cites and quotes. But for him 'the *res publica* was a direct democracy not a representative one'[37] and despite the welter of evidence we still know too little about who turned up to vote and how. Does it come down to what we mean by democracy and

[33] *The Crowd in Rome*, 123: 'in the 50s major decisions would depend on the votes of the people assembled in the forum.'
[34] *The Crowd in Rome*, 209.
[35] 'The political character of the Classical Roman Republic' (cited in n. 32), 4.
[36] *The Crowd in Rome*, 225.
[37] *The Crowd in Rome*, 209.

does Millar take too little account of the (unseen) effect of other powerful elements in influencing and managing the 'democratic bodies'? What do we make of the fact that democratic laws and decisions had to be implemented by powerful individuals who, as it turned out, could be held to account for their actions only with great difficulty and open conflict. Cicero was not powerful enough to resist exile but the dynasts got away with murder (literally) and one cannot ignore the ways in which the powerful elite (from among whom the most important magistrates and generals emerged, almost without exception) both cared about and influenced the outcome of the reality of popular participation.

This is all very stimulating scholarship and argued with characteristic clarity and cogency. It has not radically changed the landscape of the subject. Millar's final substantive publication on the subject was for him an unusual departure, in the form of a book derived from lectures in memory of an Israeli scholar and friend Menahem Stern, who was tragically murdered in Jerusalem in 1989 during the First Intifada.[38] Here Millar ventured into the (for him, unfamiliar) field of European political thought with a broader readership in mind, analysing the afterlife of perspectives on the character of the Republic through the writings of major thinkers including Machiavelli and Rousseau. Thus it does not bear directly on changing views of the fall of the Republic but it does, in passing, give an important clue to one of the driving forces behind Millar's thinking. As noted briefly in a review by Zetzel,[39] he was really angry about what he regarded as the erosion or failure of 'direct democracy' in later periods and contexts. The relevance of this to his deep and frustrated preoccupation with contemporary academic politics in universities (see below) was sharply analysed by John North in his brilliant introduction to (one of) Millar's *Festschriften*.[40] Thus, the detailed analysis of democratic power in political systems was not ivory-tower stuff but of fundamental importance for the way modern institutions behave.

By the time he stepped down from the Camden Chair in 2002, Millar had authored six books and edited a further two, and he had published 75 articles as well as a series of major review articles and a large number of reviews, but instead of taking the opportunity to slow down in retirement, he threw his energy into a major re-evaluation of the 'Greek Roman Empire' of Theodosius II in the 5th century CE for the Sather Lectures of 2003. The topic required deep immersion not just in the Roman law codes (on which he had long worked) but in patristic texts and the acts of Church councils, all read in the original languages, which for him constituted a whole new field of

[38] *The Roman Republic in Political Thought* (2002).

[39] Online in *Bryn Mawr Classical Review* (https://bmcr.brynmawr.edu/2002/2002.05.31/).

[40] 'Introduction: Pursuing democracy', in A. K. Bowman, H. M. Cotton, M. D. Goodman and S. Price (eds), *Representations of Empire: Rome and the Mediterranean World* (*Proceedings of the British Academy*, 114; 2002),1–12.

research that continued to fascinate him for the following decade. His technique was to work his way steadily through page after page of dry argument over abstruse theological questions (which interested him little), extracting with delight the glimpses of human interaction, such as the evidence for linguistic coexistence of Greek, Latin and Syriac in 6th century Constantinople, and he pressed enthusiastically for Roman historians to pay more attention to such material by presenting and analysing long extracts in articles in the *Journal of Roman Studies*, and insisting, perhaps too vehemently, on the predominance of Syriac over Greek in many of these documents.[41] The Sather Lectures themselves demonstrated the continuing strength of imperial government in Constantinople as the empire in the West collapsed, the extent to which administration continued to privilege Latin as the language of the central bureaucracy even as it used Greek for communication with the emperor's subjects, and the application by emperors and their entourage of the same methods of control by personal contact and correspondence to issues of ecclesiastical politics and theological dispute through which military strategy and financial administration continued to be mediated as in the early Empire. [42]

It is impossible for scholars to work on any topic from late Republican politics to the cultures of the late-Roman Near East without taking into account Millar's contributions. In terms of method, his influence has essentially been conservative, though his conclusions were not. At a time when many historians sought new insights through sociological, anthropological or political theories, Millar championed the collection and analysis of data from the ancient world as the only honest route to understanding societies so far removed from the preoccupations of the modern historian. He was impatient of pretension, remarking, for instance, in the 1970s that, so far as he could see, the theories of Moses Finley about the ancient economy lacked any substantial base – as he put it, 'the emperor has no clothes'. For Millar, the true task of the historian is to continue digging for what he considered 'real' evidence, by which he meant material produced in antiquity, and he was assiduous in encouraging students and colleagues to engage themselves in the ancient evidence – he never lost the sense of awe that it is possible to make direct contact with the ancient world through an inscription or papyrus or (in late antiquity) literary works in manuscripts written in antiquity and not mediated through medieval copyists like the works of Cassius Dio on which he had first worked. Millar was well aware that this reverence for the evidence could strike some colleagues as naïve, but, after their robust exchanges over *The Emperor in*

[41] 'Rome, Constantinople and the Near Eastern Church under Justinian: two synods of 536', *JRS* 98 (2008), 62–82; 'Linguistic coexistence in Constantinople: Greek and Latin (and Syriac) in the Acts of the Synod of 536', *JRS* 99 (2009), 92–103.

[42] The title of the lectures (*A Greek Roman Empire*) reflected Millar's insistence on the Greekness of the imperial administration despite the importance of Syriac in the ecclesiastical documents.

the Roman World, he found distasteful the playful exploration of the difficulties in interpreting evidence by Keith Hopkins in his last book, *A World Full of Gods* – when asked, soon after its publication, whether he had read it, he replied that he had indeed, and that he was trying hard to forget it. Millar felt that such scepticism undermined the academic profession. He had a strong sense of the value of the hard empirical work on which he felt proper ancient historians should engage, and he dedicated himself to inculcating the same values among his colleagues and students, discouraging cant, promoting the notion of historical research as intrinsically valuable in a civilised society and encouraging a sense of self-esteem within the profession.

Millar's championing of ancient history did not in his case extend to writing for a general audience beyond the readers of the *TLS* or the *London Review of Books*. This was not because he thought such popular history without value – on the contrary, he was himself an avid reader of such histories for other periods – but his interest lay in influencing less the general public than colleagues and students in what he saw as a collective endeavour by historians to get at the truth about the past: his willingness to help and advise younger colleagues, whatever their approach, was legendary, and authors of a great variety of historical studies inserted into the preface of their books their thanks to Millar for his guidance. He made no attempt to woo a general audience by simplifying his presentation of the past, his literary style was too dry to appeal to a wide readership, he never took part in televised history or even radio programmes, and his contributions to understanding the Roman world did not make him a publicly recognised figure as much as his ventures into the public arena in defence of academic freedom. All the more remarkable was the unanimity on his death that he had been one of the greatest Roman historians of the 20th century, a judgement based on his relentless focus on uncovering the past by trying to find out what people in the past said about themselves.

The foundation of all his research was obsessive and chalcenteric reading and note-taking. His reading covered the widest range of types of sources and the preoccupation with government in action at the highest and lowest levels led him to draw on literary works for reflections of the realities of life in the imperial court[43] and the small towns in the Greek east and north Africa,[44] with little attention to genre or authorial intention, whether parody, satire or romance. The severely empirical approach offers a very literal interpretation of the 'facts' with little regard for theory or modelling, and sometimes risks the accusation of being over-literal.[45]

[43] 'Epictetus and the Imperial Court', *JRS* 55 (1965), 141–148.
[44] 'The world of the Golden Ass', *JRS* 71 (1981), 63–75, reprinted in: S.J. Harrison (ed.), *Oxford Readings in the Roman Novel* (1998), 247–268.
[45] Particularly evident in his article cited in n.44, above.

This focus on evidence shaped Millar's distinctive working methods. The foundation of his scholarship for Millar was always the discovery and analysis of ancient evidence. His preferred mode of exposition was to present and discuss ancient sources, allowing voices from the past to speak directly to the reader and he took particular pleasure in presenting data which he thought had been ignored by others. For many years he preferred to do all his research in the Ashmolean Library, arriving early in the morning and establishing himself in one of the seats in the main room near the library catalogue, both gathering material and writing the entire text of books and articles, apparently undisturbed by the presence of other readers. Exercise consisted in frequent excursions to the shelves to extract a new book, taking systematic notes of primary sources from which he compiled extensive card indexes. General books on history, and books for review, he read at home, managing to absorb new books soon after publication with extraordinary speed and in a variety of European languages (he referred to Russian publications in his own writings only on occasion, despite his pride in his competence in the language, perhaps because he felt strongly that references to secondary works should always be in a form which made it easy for readers to chase up, and he was aware that few of his readers would be able to check a source in Russian).

Millar's notable linguistic expertise extended to his ability to converse with European colleagues, and he quite naturally dropped into French, German, Italian or Spanish as required. The same was not true of Hebrew, despite his efforts to learn the language, particularly during his time at UCL, and although he felt he understood the structure of the grammar and, with some help, could puzzle out written texts from antiquity, he made no attempt to speak the language and he employed in his writings a distinctive form of transliteration of the consonantal letters in Semitic languages which had the advantages of representing accurately the original text while requiring no judgement on its vocalisation and demonstrating the similarities between texts in Hebrew and other kindred languages.

Millar wrote with extraordinary facility. He never seems himself to have suffered from writer's block and found it quite hard to understand or sympathise when others did: he advised his graduate students, if they were stuck on a particular problem, simply to write down on the page a note about the issue they could not resolve and to move on to writing the next passage in the expectation that they would be able to go back to fill in the gaps at a later stage. Millar himself never seems to have needed to employ this technique since if he did not know what he thought about an issue he was happy just to put down the evidence he had collected and summarise what in his view it might demonstrate. The result could sometimes be a somewhat clumsy literary style, with a paragraph presenting a cluster of cases which pointed in one direction followed by presentation of a cluster of counter-instances ending with a cautious statement

that the precise significance of the evidence is unclear, but Millar saw any lack of certainty as an honest admission of our state of knowledge about the ancient world, about many aspects of which we remain inevitably in the dark.

Everything Millar published was handwritten by him to be typed up by a secretary. Deciphering his crabbed handwriting was by no means straightforward and even Priscilla Lange, who worked with him from 1989 to 2015, sometimes struggled to make any sense of it. For his earlier books and articles the first draft was very close to the final draft, although he allowed himself to rewrite drafts more often as he got older. His reluctance to engage directly with any form of electronic communication, apparently engendered by a traumatic experience with radar equipment during his national service, became increasingly idiosyncratic as the rest of the world changed around him in his later years, and he would write his responses to emails by hand for Priscilla to send on his behalf. He did, however, manage to master email in his final years. He was adamant, with some justification, that his refusal to be drawn into the world of the internet allowed more time for serious reading and for the conversation and discussion from which he was convinced that the best ideas generally arise, but he sometimes expressed bewilderment that he did not know what was going on because information was no longer available on paper and, although he was supportive in principle of the employment of IT in Humanities scholarship, he himself found it hard to adapt to the transfer online of library catalogues and other crucial aids to research.

Millar seems to have felt a compulsion to keep writing. He worked to self-imposed deadlines for completion of projects and did his best to use the same method in joint projects undertaken with others, such as the revision of Schürer, the volume he edited with Erich Segal in 1984 in honour of Ronald Syme, and the *Handbook of Jewish Literature*, although with mixed success since not all his collaborators were as self-disciplined as him. He generally preferred working alone and complained periodically that he was never going to work on a joint project again. He found the tardiness of some colleagues hard to comprehend; he was so appalled by the slow progress in publication of a memorial volume to which he had sent his contribution in good time that he withdrew his article and published it elsewhere, with an outraged footnote to explain what he had done and why.

One related aspect of his academic leadership which has a broader significance than his influence on his personal supervisees was his creation of a culture of seminars and intellectual debate among postgraduates and senior academics. This (in the shape of the Thursday seminar at ICS) was an innovative and distinctive feature of his tenure at UCL and he brought it back to Oxford with him (though on Tuesdays, so as to avoid a clash with the continuing ICS seminar). Predecessors, notably Ronald Syme, had held regular seminars or classes but he (along with others such as Eduard

Fraenkel) was much more magisterial and the classes did not generally feature invited speakers from home and abroad. The Millar style was crucial to the creation of a postgraduate community (a real innovation for Oxford) which was much more inclusive, giving doctoral students the opportunity to rub shoulders with senior established scholars and bounce ideas off them. He had a particular way of introducing a student to an established scholar and making the student feel that the introduction was just as important for the scholar as it was for the student. His initiative on this front on his return to Oxford in 1984 is best described in his own words: 'it emerged that they [*sc*. the graduates] had no information as to who the other graduates were, or what they were studying and most had never seen each other before. They also had no information as to who the members of the Sub-Faculty of Ancient History were, or where they could be contacted. So lists of both were regularly provided, a "work-in-progress" seminar, run by the graduates themselves, was started and still continues; and an extensive (perhaps even too extensive) range of other research seminars grew up.'

There was another, more informal side to this: his relentless insistence on the importance of gathering groups for morning coffee, whether in the Oxford Playhouse, the Oriental Institute or the Centre for Hebrew and Jewish Studies (but not in the Ioannou Centre where he did not find the Common Room congenial enough and in any case sensitively decided to stay at arm's length from the Faculty of Classics in his retirement). Students, staff and especially academic visitors from abroad were encouraged to join in for wide-ranging conversation and exchange of ideas. Along with post-seminar drinks and other faculty social events these were symptoms of serious sociability which were welcoming, inclusive and stimulating and certainly made the Oxford Faculty a magnet for established and aspiring Roman historians. He also encouraged and supported communal activities elsewhere, whether in the annual national Norman Baynes meeting of ancient historians or the Ancient World Cluster at Wolfson College.

He had an extraordinarily wide range of contacts with ancient historians in the UK, many of whom had been his doctoral supervisees, whom he unfailingly supported. Among senior academics, he was close (as far as was possible) to Ronald Syme who had been his doctoral supervisor, but given Syme's personality and the prevalence of laissez-faire supervision in the 1950s there was no sign of personal intimacy. In fact, Millar himself said that the major intellectual and scholarly influence on him came from Peter Fraser[46] after Millar's election to the All Souls Fellowship. 'It was Peter Fraser's deep immersion in, and commitment to all aspects of the wider Greek world … which most profoundly determined my approach.' His general reluctance to engage

[46] See Simon Hornblower's memoir in *Biographical Memoirs of Fellows of the British Academy* XII (2013), 137–85.

in formal collaboration with other scholars in research or publication was closely connected to his impatience with what he perceived as dilatory or remiss behaviour on the part of others in getting publications finished. Not a few of us who fell short in this regard received a letter written in that notoriously indecipherable handwriting which appeared to be almost libellous or actionable. Despite this, personal relations were always friendly, civil and humane even when robust disagreement was involved (as with Keith Hopkins). He did have very serious reservations about a few senior ancient historians but he never committed them to print unless in the form of polite debate, disagreement or criticism. The sad exception, which he surely regretted, was the offence unintentionally given to Arnaldo Momigliano by Millar's review of his *Quinto Contributo* in the TLS.[47] Millar thought this was in his own words 'fair, sympathetic and appreciative' but it was not taken as such. Millar was incapable of rancour or deliberate hostility but this marred the end of his period at UCL and was instrumental in his decision to return to Oxford as Camden Professor (where there was no serious rival for the appointment).

Beyond national borders, he fostered and encouraged a very wide range of personal international friendships (far too many to list individually), most particularly but far from exclusively in Spain, Israel, the USA, but also Italy, Germany, France and Russia. The formal testimony to his international standing lies partly in the distinguished named lectures which he was invited to undertake, culminating in the prestigious Sather Professorship at UC Berkeley.[48]

Far from confining himself to the ivory towers of research, Millar engaged vigorously, often passionately with the wider academic world in the UK with, it must be said, mixed results. He was passionate about academic freedom from bureaucratic control and democracy in universities, expressed in a stream of grumpy letters to Vice-Chancellors and other powers-that-be, in articles in the *Oxford Magazine* about the unchecked growth of the 'administration' and other matters. He believed that Oxford and Cambridge could and should have scuppered the introduction of the Research Assessment Exercise in 1986 by simply refusing to participate, a proposition that was never put to the test. He was an elected member of Oxford's Hebdomadal Council (1996–2000) but 'it is best to say only that the role was wholly futile since the Council did not, and had no wish to take counsel for the future of the university.' His effort was also directed towards supporting the Council for Academic Autonomy, a response to

[47] 'The Path of the Polymath', *TLS* 28 January, 1977, 99–100, see G.W.Bowersock, 'Momigliano e I suoi critici', *Studi storici* 53.1, 7–24 (we are grateful to Glen Bowersock for alerting us to this).

[48] Carl Newell Jackson Lectures (Harvard, 1987); Jerome Lectures (Ann Arbor, Michigan, 1993); Jerusalem Lectures in History in Memory of Menahem Stern (Jerusalem, 1997); Sather Lectures (Berkeley,2003). In the mid–80s he was invited to consider accepting an appointment as Fellow of the Institute for Advanced Studies, Princeton in succession to J.F.Gilliam but decided against it.

the 1988 Education Act 'which in all essentials nationalised the universities'. He published various arguments in defence of autonomy but neither governments nor Vice-Chancellors paid any attention and the Council was dissolved around 2000. This indicates that, lacking the patience or diplomatic will to negotiate with opposing views, engagement with committee work in this broader academic landscape was not his forte. This may be the one of the reasons why his interest in the Wardenship of All Souls College in 1994 did not bear fruit. But he was for many years an effective and respected voice on the board of Delegates of the Oxford University Press.

He was more effective in relatively routine Faculty and College administration, particularly in roles and on committees relating to postgraduates. Unusually for a Professorial Fellow he took on the post of Tutor for Graduates at Brasenose College with great success and cultivated good relationships and pastoral responsibilities across the whole range of subjects and backgrounds. His most significant contribution to the status and future of the Faculty was his determination to establish the physical presence of the Faculty of Classics (which had by then been reduced from its previous identity as 'Literae Humaniores' by the secession of Philosophy) in the area between St Giles' and the rear of the Ashmolean Museum. This was a really major step. The initial idea was pursued through the so-called three-site strategy adopted by Vice-Chancellor Richard Southwood and the eventual manifestation, as a consequence of two large benefactions (of Greek and Cypriot origin) as well as major input from the national Science Research Infrastructure Fund, came in the form of the Sackler Library (replacing the old Ashmolean Reading Room) and the Ioannou Centre for Research in Classical and Byzantine Studies. It was the latter which he tirelessly campaigned for, with eventual success.

Also on the positive side must be reckoned his contributions to national academic bodies. He was an excellent President and figurehead of the Society for the Promotion of Roman Studies, as well as sometime editor of its prestigious journal and founder of its monograph series. He served on the Academy's Council and various committees. He was an invaluable presence at the executive level of the Academy as its Publications Secretary (1997–2002) and often emphasised the financial success of its operations. The publishing programme flourished under his watch. The series of monographs by British Academy Postdoctoral Fellows – initiated under his predecessor – bore its first fruit and established itself. The British Academy *Review* magazine first appeared (in 1999), providing information about the Academy for a more general readership. And at a time when the Academy Research Projects were the subject of quite hostile internal scrutiny Millar persuaded the Publications Committee to conduct its own review of all the ARP series it published. The Committee produced a clear statement of principle that 'the publication of projects of the character and duration of the existing Academy Research Projects was something that national

academies *should* undertake.' Millar also saw through the delicate negotiations with the Fellowship that enabled the Memoirs (originally within the *Proceedings of the British Academy*) to be separated from the Lectures and published in a volume of their own. As the Academy celebrated its centenary in summer 2002, he ensured that its publishing programme played a prominent part – both with its series of Centenary Monographs (see below), and with a display of all the books ever published by the Academy during the Centenary event itself.

Millar also served for several years on the Committee on Academy Research Projects but there was a negative side to this in his often expressed frustration at the Academy's failure to provide financial support for long-term major research programmes, as a counterbalance to the short-term constraints embedded in the Arts and Humanities Board's (later Council) funding priorities. He regarded this as an inglorious and shameful abnegation of responsibility on the part of the BA and an abandonment of one of the key aspects of what an Academy should be.

In his own estimation, the most rewarding role of this kind was in relation to the British School at Rome, as member of the council, vice-chairman and then chairman in which capacities he initiated fundamental changes in effective governance and in 1997 helped to secure, with the support of Robert Jackson MP, a large one-off capital grant from the government, a crucial step in enabling the renovation of the fabric of its iconic building next to the Borghese Gardens.

Millar was accorded exceptional public esteem, which he undoubtedly enjoyed, treating, with justification, the honours bestowed on him as a reflection not of his public roles, in which he had frequently opposed the establishment, but of his outstanding scholarly contributions. He received honorary doctorates from Helsinki, St Andrews, Edinburgh, and the Hebrew University. He was elected a member of the Academia Europaea, a Corresponding Member of the German Archaeological Institute and the Bavarian Academy, and a Foreign Member of the Finnish Academy of Science and Letters, the Russian Academy of Sciences, the American Academy of Arts and Sciences, and the Australian Academy of Sciences. In 2005 he received the Kenyon Medal for Classical Studies from the British Academy, and in 2010 he was knighted.

Such recognition was testimony to the quantity as well as the outstanding quality of Millar's scholarly output. He took for granted that he would continue working and writing until his very last days, still setting off early for work and devotedly attending and participating in research seminars. Work provided an excuse also for sociability, which he took seriously not just for the sake of the education of graduate students but as intrinsic to civilised life. Conversations could frequently veer far beyond the ancient world and remained always congenial even when serious: Millar had strong views on many aspects of politics and society and a strong sense of moral probity, and he could

indulge in obsessional correspondence with local and national press on topics which raised his ire (such as damage to the Oxford skyline caused by the University's erection of badly sited high-rise buildings near Port Meadow). But he was not prone to foisting these ideas on others face-to-face except in formal situations when the topic arose, when he was fearless in stating his views with such clarity and passion that he was known to some disconcerted bureaucrats as 'the grumpy professor'.

At work, Millar dressed formally, often wearing a dark blue suit with a blue shirt and red tie, and he was slow to drop the formal habit of addressing students and colleagues by surname, although he was universally known in his later years as 'Fergus'. The formality reflected in part his insistence on the value of the work in which historians are engaged, but it also reflected an instinct to be in control of his surroundings – he was uninhibited in taking action if the lighting in a committee room seemed to him inadequate or if a restaurant was too noisy for conversation. He enjoyed parties and dinners, but the conversations were always the point, ranging over novels, films and sport as well as politics (about which he was uninhibited in expressing his liberal views with great certainty) as well as ancient history and especially family – his remarkable ability to recall the detailed family circumstances of his wide acquaintance was a product as much of his care for those around him as of his outstanding memory.

Millar contrived somehow to combine this essential seriousness with a huge enjoyment of domestic life in which he immersed himself so fully that he managed to give his three children the impression while they were growing up that he was always a presence despite all the pressures of Oxford college life with evening meetings and the long commute during his UCL days. It was an academic household, with Susanna immersed in her own work on child psychology. In later years Millar was immensely proud of the scientific and medical careers of his children, delighted that they had the freedom to follow their own interests, unperturbed that none of them shared their father's fascination with ancient history.

In retirement Millar continued to follow golf and rugby with enthusiasm and he engineered with Susanna a regular regime of films, seminars and concerts to ensure that they kept as active and sociable as possible. The large crowd of friends who came to celebrate his 84th birthday over coffee when he knew he was already very ill was a testimony to this sociability and his success in reaching out to so many people, and Millar would probably have been pleased that it was these personal qualities of tolerance, generosity, humanity, integrity and courage which were emphasised in the many obituaries published in the months after his death as much as his contributions to historical knowledge.

Note on the authors: Alan Bowman was formerly Principal and Camden Professor Emeritus of Ancient History, Brasenose College, Oxford; he was elected a Fellow of the British Academy in 1994. Martin Goodman is Professor of Jewish Studies, University of Oxford; Fellow, Wolfson College, Oxford; he was elected a Fellow of the British Academy in 1996.