

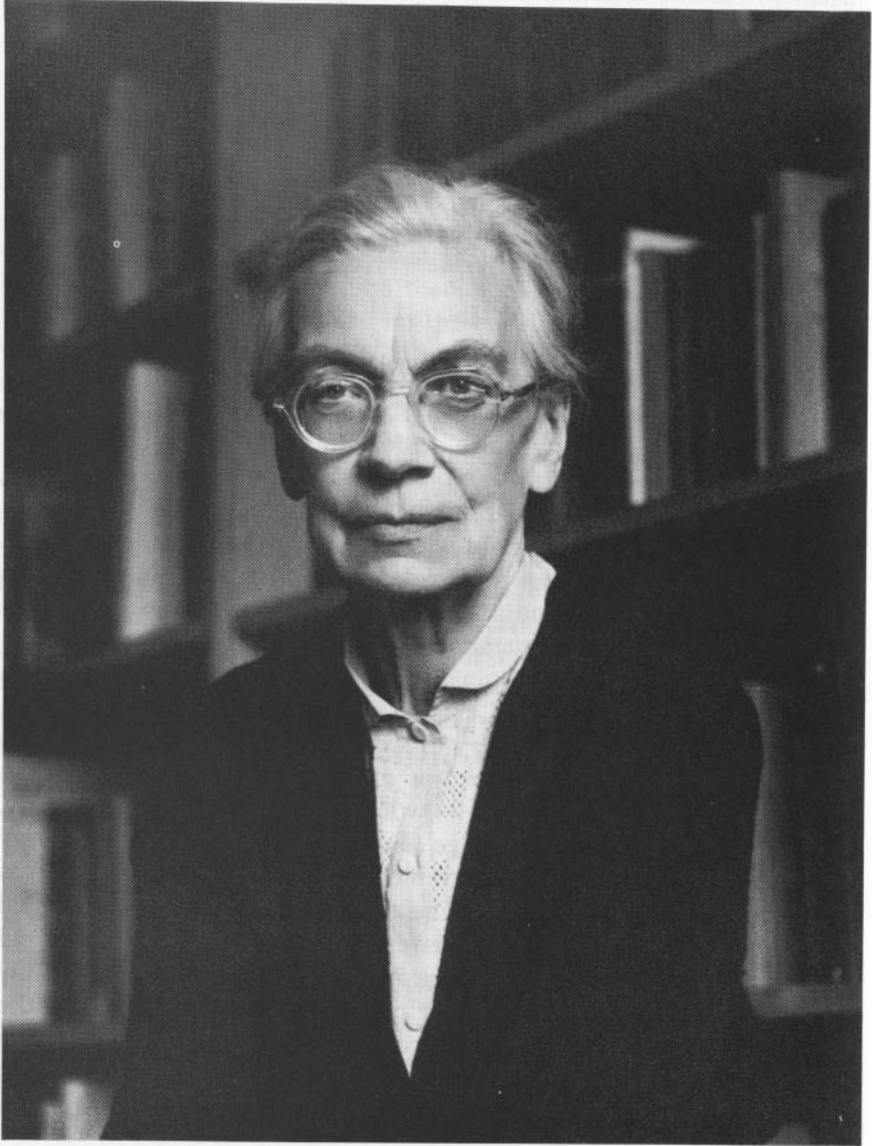
Jocelyn Mary Catherine Toynbee 1897–1985

JOCELYN TOYNBEE was, formally speaking, an art historian of the Roman imperial period. As such she played a significant role (in this country the leading role) in a movement which demonstrated the high quality that its artists could achieve. At the same time she firmly asserted, against some contemporaries in continental Europe, that continuity of Greek artistic traditions, increasingly integrated with those of Rome, was at its heart. Her fundamental interests, however, were the life and culture of the Roman Empire as an *oikoumene* and its evolution into the Christian world. The Empire was, for her, a *praeparatio evangelica*, although in practice she found it no less worthy of serious study in itself than for what it was to become. From its works of art she sought to read the conceptions of those who commissioned them as well as of those who made them; but came to recognise that there was much to be learnt also from the products of bungling craftsmen who would, in a mainly illiterate society, use much the same ‘picture-language’. In consequence she gave time, very productively, to quite indifferent, even bad artefacts, working on them, as she did on the best art, *con amore*. The loving detail in which she examined objects was regularly noted by reviewers, together with the succinct and sometimes lightly humorous language in which she brought them vividly before the reader’s mind. Equally helpful were the artistic parallels, the literary evidence, the context in political, social and cultural history which she sought to give them. But the detail was always disciplined and syntheses presented with marked lucidity were also characteristic features of her publications.

She cared for her subject in the conviction of its relevance to contemporary society, and was willing, therefore, to devote herself to teaching as well as to research; and she spoke and wrote frequently not only for academics

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training at Wesley House when men like Malvina Hughes and Newton Flow exerted powerful sway to mould the Christian values of many.



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but for a wider public too. She was ready to discuss with anyone interested, however young or untrained, giving generously of time and being entirely unprofessorial in her manner to them, drawing them into the search for understanding with her. Scholarship she believed to be an international undertaking and that was well illustrated by the correspondence in which she exchanged information with classical archaeologists throughout the world; but her links were especially close with Romano-British and with early Christian archaeologists. To both these groups her vigorous sympathy and her immense knowledge both of the monuments of the centre of the Empire and of those on other peripheries than the north west European—pagan and Christian alike – revealed a new dimension.

Much of her relevant family background was described in the obituary for her brother (Arnold Toynbee, *Proc. Brit. Acad.* 63 [1977] 441f.). She was the daughter of Harry Volpy Toynbee, a Secretary of the Charity Organisation Society, and of Sarah Edith Marshall Toynbee, a historian and teacher of history. Her childhood memories went back to a sight of Queen Victoria from a pram. What she said of her nursery days sounded typical for an Edwardian child; and she kept in touch with her school (Winchester High School, now St. Swithun's, Winchester) in a manner which certainly indicated that she had been happy there. Given that her father's health broke down when she was still very young, the influence of her mother was paramount at this stage. Edith Toynbee had been a student at Newnham College, and was placed (notionally) in the first class of the Cambridge Historical Tripos, along with a Newnham contemporary, on the first occasion when a woman achieved that distinction. She taught history before her marriage and for a time, but to a lesser extent, after it too, subsequently helped to organise the papers of Florence Nightingale and, later on, transcribed manuscripts in the Bodleian. Her patent love of historical study was communicated to her children, who, all three, Arnold, Jocelyn and Margaret, became professional historians. Her Newnham record adds that she had a great capacity for enjoyment, an appreciation of the amusing, a charm that won her many friends. In all this too Jocelyn Toynbee was recognisably Edith's daughter; for she took an evident delight in academic work, but also, at the proper time, in many other things, for instance in the company of friends, in young children, with whom she easily established a good rapport, in works of art of all periods, in beautiful country, in her animals (especially her cats), in light and colour (the purple jacket provided for her book *Death and Burial in the Roman World*, the elegant grey for Howard Scullard's book on elephants in the same series, gave her very real pleasure); she was a welcoming hostess, a good guest, a delightful travelling companion (although her indefatigability on a site could leave many in a state of exhaustion); and her sense of humour

surfaced in her conversation on social occasions as well as in her writing and her lectures (but she felt quite strongly that it was not the first business of a lecturer to amuse).

In 1916 she went, like her mother, to Newnham, but, like her brother, chose Classics for her subject. She obtained first classes in both parts of the Classical Tripos, having taken the archaeological papers in Part II in 1919. There followed one year with a research award from the college, one as an assistant mistress in Classics at Cheltenham Ladies' College, and then an appointment to be tutor in Classics at St. Hugh's College, Oxford. That post she resigned in 1924 on a point of principle connected with the government of the college, but soon afterwards became a lecturer in the Classics Department of the University of Reading. In 1927 she returned to Cambridge as lecturer and director of studies in Classics at Newnham. In 1930 she was awarded the D.Phil. degree at Oxford, with a dissertation which became her first book (*The Hadrianic School*, 1934). From 1931 she was a lecturer in the Cambridge Classical Faculty and combined the University and College posts until her election to the Laurence Chair of Classical Archaeology in 1951. She held the Chair, in combination with a Professorial Fellowship at Newnham, until 1962 when, on completion of 42 years of teaching, she retired in order to have more time for research. She then became an Honorary Fellow of Newnham, but moved to live with her sister in what had been their mother's house in Oxford. There she was vigorously engaged for more than twenty years longer in research, in writing, in lecturing, in discussion with colleagues, in the supervision of graduate students.

In the years from 1919 to 1951 she had also received a number of research awards from Newnham and, in 1938, the Susette Taylor Travelling Fellowship of Lady Margaret Hall, Oxford. These enabled her to travel abroad in many vacations and occasionally for longer periods, and so to collect much new material for her articles and books while laying the foundations for her many friendships with foreign scholars. Her visits to Rome were especially dear to her and especially fruitful. They brought her, for one thing, into contact with Eugénie Strong, that grande dame of the contemporary archaeological and social life of Rome, whose appreciation of Roman imperial art was an encouragement and a stimulus to her. Mrs Strong's impact may be gauged in some degree from the obituary that she wrote of her (*Antiquaries' Journal* 33 [1943] 188–9) and, much later, from the dedication of her book *The Art of the Romans* ([1965] 14); and it should be noted that what she said of Mrs Strong's generosity in sharing knowledge and in drawing the beginner into discussion on apparently equal terms is what her own students and friends have said of her. At the same time these visits were of considerable importance to her deeply-felt religious

life; and she became a convert to the Roman Catholic Church. That was a change that undoubtedly fostered her image of the Roman Empire as an *oikoumene* and, at the same time, quickened her interest in early Christian archaeology.

When she began her research the predominant sympathies of Classical art historians in this country were with Greek art. She chose a Roman subject, influenced in part, no doubt, by the more positive view of Roman art emerging in continental Europe (its most vigorous proponent for English-speakers being Mrs Strong) and by the work on Roman imperial coin-types undertaken by Harold Mattingly at the British Museum. It must have required courage to strike out into a field which her teachers regarded with something like contempt, to present it, in fact, as 'a chapter in the history of Greek art' (so the subtitle of *The Hadrianic School*). Unlike some contemporary protagonists for Roman art, she rejected for the imperial period any stress on Italic influences and any antithesis of Greek and Roman. She believed that the Greek tradition was an essential element in Roman art but one integrated into the Roman tradition and freely contributing to the visual expression of Roman concepts. Her choice of the Hadrianic period for her first work was made partly in reaction against those who saw in it no more than an artificial, barren and temporary attempt at revival of classical Greek art and partly because of her conviction that Hadrian himself brought to maturity an idea of the Roman empire as one world which was very notably expressed in the types of his 'province series' of coins. She focussed initially on the numismatic field, so that coin types were the subject of her earliest articles, and the main feature in *The Hadrianic School*; while the closely related medallion types formed the whole subject of her second book (*Roman Medallions*, 1944) as also of a projected third for which she began to collect material but which she never wrote. She had as a result a considerable reputation as a numismatist and was a Fellow and Medallist of the Royal Numismatic Society and a Medallist of the American Numismatic Society. Her concern was always essentially with coins as the media for visual messages and not as monetary units. She might nowadays be held to have been over confident that emperors played a leading part in the choice of types; but her powers of minute observation and her sense of the historical context of the issues that she studied gave her work a permanent value; and unlike many numismatists of her time she set the types in the context of similar or relevant representations in other artistic media. She was able to present them, therefore, as embodying not only the political and the cultural but also certain artistic principles of their period. The book became the standard treatment – and is still the major one available – of personifications in the art of the Roman imperial world.

But *The Hadrianic School* was not limited to a study of personifications

in coin types. As a foil or contrast to the official art which they embodied she took also a number of contemporary examples of private art, choosing mainly sarcophagi and altars, in which, she held, the same artistic principles were illustrated in the service of individuals. It is apparent that everything that she had to say rested on extensive study of very many monuments of all kinds, sculpture in the round as well as relief, painting, mosaic, metal work, coins, gem-cutting etc.; and apart from her overall conclusions she made significant additions to the criteria which could be used for dating individual pieces and to the detail of their interpretation. Notably she included a discussion, sympathetic and sensible, of the substitution of inhumation for cremation as the normal method of burial in the second century AD.

The themes treated in these two books remained of importance to her all her life and recur in other books and in many articles. For her major conclusions she offered a series of complementary studies. In *Some Notes on Artists in the Roman World* (1951) she collected literary and epigraphic as well as some archaeological evidence to show that the majority of known artists in the Roman world were Greeks or Greek-speakers; and despite the discovery of new evidence the collection remains useful (but see below). In *Roman Portrait Busts* (1953), an exhibition catalogue, she presented a brief but comprehensive account of Roman portrait sculpture in which again she argued for a marriage of Greek and Roman traditions. In her British Academy Lecture, *The Ara Pacis Reconsidered* (1953) she treated in vivid detail one of the earliest of the great surviving historical reliefs of Rome in which Greek artistic traditions and Roman concepts were successfully combined. In her Charlton Lecture for King's College, Newcastle upon Tyne, *The Flavian Reliefs of the Palazzo della Cancelleria in Rome* (1957) she threw light on another work of the same general type which falls in the gap between the Ara Pacis and the period which had occupied her in *The Hadrianic School*.

But with the continuity of interest went also variety. When she returned to Italy after the interruption of the Second World War she found new stimuli, very especially in the excavations under the basilica of St. Peter's at Rome, and new archaeological friends, among them John Ward Perkins, by that time Director of the British School at Rome, to turn her mind in new directions. She began almost at once the joint work with Ward Perkins which was to make an account of the Vatican excavations available to the educated public, *The Shrine of St. Peter and the Vatican Excavations* (1956), a book still illuminating, although not now wholly up to date following recent systematisation of the material excavated. This and her participation in the first expedition which Ward Perkins and Kathleen Kenyon mounted in Tripolitania in 1948 gave her much closer experience

of archaeological field work than hitherto and a sharper awareness of its potential importance in the interpretation of monuments. That awareness remained with her and informed the studies of Romano-British monuments which, with early Christian antiquities, became prominent themes in her subsequent work.

She had always taken an interest in Roman Britain (coins representing Britannia were the subject of her first articles) and lectured on it regularly in Cambridge. Her bibliography now shows an increasing number of articles on objects deriving from Romano-British contexts, and her programme included an increasing number of discussions, in person or by post, about newly excavated objects or puzzling ones already in museums. She began a book in which she planned to discuss the whole corpus of Roman works of art found in Britain and had completed a first draft when the Society for the Promotion of Roman Studies decided to celebrate its fiftieth anniversary in 1960 by an exhibition devoted to such objects. She put aside her draft, accepted heavy involvement in the undertaking and wrote the catalogue (*Art in Roman Britain*, 1962).

That book was, in itself, an important contribution to Romano-British studies, but also to those on the whole North-western group of provinces within which Britain was one element, and indeed to those of the whole Roman world. In it, taken with the resumed book *Art in Britain under the Romans* (1964), she made another step forward in the understanding of many individual pieces, but above all transformed our picture of Roman provincial society and culture in the west and of the complex interplay of central and local influences in art. She envisaged transmission of central concepts and traditions to the peripheries by a combination of the movement of actual works of art (in the equipment of Roman officials, for instance, in the cargoes of merchants, in the looting hands of marauding natives) and of travelling artists, probably supplied with pattern books, who might employ local men as apprentices, as well as the assistants whom they brought with them; she did not probe the psychology either of the transmitters or of the recipient peoples. She became at this period more conscious that locally born artists might play a part of their own in the artistic development of a province, and had she revised *Some Notes on Artists* . . . she would, surely, have given them a greater part in it; although, in the final resort, she would still—without doubt—have maintained that Greek artistic traditions and imperial Roman ideas were the fundamentals. Her current positions over a much wider area of Roman art were set out in a third book designed primarily for a less academic readership (*The Art of the Romans*, 1965). It is full of insights, comprises a remarkable combination of central Roman with provincial art, of public and official with private, and often modest, monuments; but rather much has

been packed into the limited format of the series in which it was published, so that it is less satisfying to its readers.

During this period too the excavation of the London Mithraeum led her to a very thorough study of Mithraic monuments throughout the Roman Empire as a basis for her publications of the objects found there and she became an acknowledged authority in this field too. Her definitive publication of the sculptures found there was not finally published (through delays which were not of her causing) until after her death (*The Roman Art Treasures from the Temple of Mithras*, 1986). She followed with interest the more theoretical studies of those who subsequently began to treat the cult in the light of non-classical parallels, but did not herself participate in them.

Still more of an impulse came from the Christian finds of such sites as Lullingstone and Hinton St. Mary, and from her reaction to a series of articles published mainly in the *Jahrbücher für Antike und Christentum* which rejected the widely accepted Christian interpretation of a number of motifs used in late antique art. Her article *Christianity in Roman Britain* (1953) was both a thorough and a well-balanced survey of the Christian or possibly Christian monuments in the province but is now, inevitably, out of date in the light of new discoveries. Her reviews of the sceptics (in a series of volumes of *The Journal of Theological Studies* published in the sixties) were vigorous assertions of the existence of arguments against them. It is hardly surprising that her own Christian convictions are particularly apparent in her work on Christian monuments, leading her sometimes into very sensitive interpretations although sometimes, perhaps, into larger claims than can be sustained; but normally she gave the evidence against her view as well as her own arguments for it, and she maintained her independence of judgment in the academic field (she was, for instance, sharply critical of the Vatican's acceptance of the bones found beneath the high altar in the necropolis under St. Peter's as those of Peter himself). As with her work on pagan monuments her great achievement was in the detailed discussion of the objects she treated and the learning with which she set them in a context—the whole relevant artistic corpus of the Roman empire, pagan as well as Christian. In 1984 the value of this achievement was recognised by the award of the Freund Medal for Christian Archaeology by the Society of Antiquaries of London. It was the latest and probably the most treasured of her honours.

In retirement she continued to work on all these themes and picked up again some aspects of the monuments which she had previously treated as subsidiary. Thus in *Death and Burial in the Roman World* (1973) she focussed fully on funerary monuments and practices which had made a minor appearance in many earlier books. The result is a very thorough account of what survives and an invaluable basis for further work which

would bring in the anthropological parallels on which she did not draw. *Animals in Roman Life and Art* (1973) was more of a paragon, the result of incidental although very sharp observations made over the years because of the pleasure which she herself took in animals; it is nicely dedicated to her cat Mithras, scourge of hapless visitors to her Oxford house. *Roman Historical Portraits* (1978) again picked up something treated earlier in a more summary way, but she had less to say in it that was new and it is perhaps the least effective of her books. She also devoted time and energy to the committee for the British volumes of the *Corpus Signorum Imperii Romani*, of which she was secretary from 1964 and chairman from 1967; those involved with her were very conscious that it was not for lack of effort on her part that the project moved slowly. Another 'cause' into which she threw herself wholeheartedly was the publication of the book *Roman Art* left in first draft by Professor Donald Strong at his sudden death in 1973; that entailed the laborious selection of the illustrations as well as the tidying up of the manuscript. She continued to write articles on specific items or groups of them, informatively and helpfully, well into the eighties (several appeared only after her death); and she never ceased to be interested in new finds and new ideas. In later years increasing deafness made it unprofitable for her to attend lectures, but she always maintained a capacity to communicate with one visitor or a few, and seized eagerly on journals brought to her by her sister and many friends in the nursing-home in which she spent her last years.

Many of her very considerable number of publications were produced against the background of a real commitment also to her College and to her Faculty as well as to a number of learned Societies, notably the Society of Antiquaries of London, the Society for the Promotion of Roman Studies (of which she was a Vice-President from 1946 and always a much valued advisor to the Editorial Committee), and the British School at Rome (for which she was Chairman of the Faculty of Archaeology, History and Letters from 1954 to 1958). She did not much care for administration, but saw that it was necessary (in moderation) and tackled what fell to her share very briskly, 'in order to save time for better things'; normally, indeed, she replied to letters by return of post. Not surprisingly she knew how to delegate. On committees she presented firm ideas succinctly and lucidly expressed, the more tellingly because she spoke without rancour and from a strong sense of humanity as well as of principle. With her colleagues she was co-operative and generous; it is hard to imagine a better predecessor to have, so determined not to look over her shoulder, so willing to support innovation (and even enjoy it), so sensitive with advice when it was needed. With students she had a rather special relationship. She taught with devotion. Indeed, although forbidden by the University regulations

of the time to supervise undergraduates after she became a professor, she provided them with opportunities for meeting her which it was not easy to distinguish from supervisions. In Newnham she was one of a select number of dons whose proximity at the dinner table was welcomed by all for she had the faculty of stimulating the sophisticated (despite the somewhat austere and unfashionable first impression she made) as well as of encouraging the shy to converse. Moreover for many years it was her custom to offer in her room simple entertainment and serious discussion (often on religious issues) and the occasions are still remembered with pleasure by sceptical scientists as well as others who attended them.

She received many appropriate honours, becoming FSA in 1943, FBA in 1952, Hon.D.Litt. at Newcastle upon Tyne in 1967 and at Liverpool in 1968; as well as receiving the medals already noted for her work as a numismatist and as a Christian archaeologist.

Very shortly before her death she told a friend that she thought that she had completed all the research projects that she had had on hand; and indeed her papers showed that to be true. She was, of course, a child of her generation, some of whose ideas are no longer much in vogue. But what she did rested on a very sound basis of perceptive as well as of thorough scholarship and provided springboards from which others were already moving in new directions well before she died. It continues to have its effect on current scholarship.

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Note. I have received information and help from many friends, notably Professors R. M. Crook, S. S. Frere, R. M. Harrison, G. B. Waywell, J. J. Wilkes, Drs D. N. Ager, J. M. Huskinson, M. W. Stanier, S. M. Walker, R. J. A. Wilson.