



ISTITUTO NAZIONALE  
DI STUDI ROMANI



UNIVERSITÀ DEGLI STUDI  
DI MILANO  
DIPARTIMENTO DI STUDI STORICI

# Augusto e il fascismo

## Studi intorno al bimillenario del 1937-1938

*a cura di*

**Massimiliano Ghilardi e Laura Mecella**



**Luogh**Interiori



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# The British Reaction to the Mostra of 1937

Christopher Smith

The formal involvement of the British School at Rome (BSR) in the Mostra of 1937 was slight. The BSR was not a major player and were it not for one particular individual, we might have justifiably been omitted from this conference. However, Eugénie Sellers Strong, sometime Assistant Director of the BSR, did have a role, and one which is both interesting from the point of view of her own career, but also reflects a very particular set of British attitudes towards Italy in the period before the Second World War. So, this story becomes something different perhaps – an account of a complex love affair, between Italy and Strong, and those who thought as she did, interrupted by war.

Eugénie Strong lived in Rome for much of her life<sup>1</sup>. She was born in 1860, as Eugénie Sellers, to well-travelled parents, and she was an early attendee at Girton College Cambridge, recently opened to allow women access to university education, where she took classics, and went on briefly to teach in St Leonard's School in St Andrews. She was by all accounts stunningly beautiful (famously required to lecture from behind a screen because the students became distracted), and she had many admirers, including the British Ambassador to Italy, Sir Rennell Rodd, and Bernard Berenson. In the later 1880s and 1890s she moved back to London. She acted in classical theatricals, some of which raised money for the British School at Athens (BSA), and which took her into the world of the British

<sup>1</sup> For the life of Eugénie Strong, see S. Dyson, *Eugénie Sellers Strong, Portrait of an Archaeologist*, London 2004 and M. Beard, *The Invention of Jane Harrison*, Cambridge (Mass.) 2000.

Museum. There she met Jane Harrison and came to know some of the most distinguished British artists of the day, Frederic Leighton, Lawrence Alma-Tadema, Edward Burne-Jones and William Holman Hunt. In the late 1880s she travelled to Italy and to Greece. Dörpfeld took her around the Greek sites. She was the first woman to be accepted for study at the BSA, and then came back to Rome, and with her friend Mary Lowndes moved into the Palazzo Tittoni on the Quirinal Hill. They were rapidly part of an important social and intellectual set, including the salon of the Count and Countess Pasolini in the Palazzo Odescalchi<sup>2</sup>.

In 1897, Eugénie Sellers married Arthur Strong. The marriage was short lived; Strong died in 1904. He had been tremendously well-connected, and she succeeded him as librarian of the Duke of Devonshire at Chatsworth, resigning after a disagreement with the new Duke and Duchess in 1908. The following year she moved to Rome as Assistant Director of the BSR, to serve with Thomas Ashby.

There is no doubt that Mrs. Arthur Strong was an immensely forceful personality. This brief account has passed over her publications, her lecturing, her self-promotion, her socializing, and her immense circle of friends. She could correspond with British and Italian nobility, speak several languages, and was as at home in politics and religion as she was in art history and archaeology. She was no stranger to controversy. By contrast, Ashby was shy and awkward. She lectured, raised money, and played up to old friends like Rennell Rodd, who was instrumental in acquiring from Mayor Nathan the current site of the BSR after the Mostra of 1911<sup>3</sup>. Ashby and Strong produced the Romano-British section of the 1911 Mostra, located in the Baths of Diocletian, which Lanciani produced with a young Giulio Giglioli<sup>4</sup>.

<sup>2</sup> Sir R. Rodd, *Social and Diplomatic Memories, Third Series, 1902-1919*, London 1925. Chapter 1 (<http://www.gwpda.org/memoir/Rodd/RoddTC.htm> accessed 26 September 2022).

<sup>3</sup> For Rodd in this period, see R.J.B. Bosworth, *Sir Rennell Rodd e l'Italia*, in «Nuova Rivista Storica», 54 (1970), pp. 420-436.

<sup>4</sup> On the Mostra see P. Gilson, *Rituals of a Nation's Identity: Archaeology and Genealogy in Antiquities Museums of Rome* (unpub. Thesis, Univ. of Southern California), pp. 87-114; G. Pisani Sartorio, *Dalla mostra al Museo*, Venezia 1983, pp. 29-61; P. Guzzo, *Museo Nazionale romano: gli allestimenti*, in *Dagli scavi al museo: Come da ritrovamenti archeologici si costruisce il Museo*, Venezia 1984, pp. 126-134; general context, *Roma 1911*, ed. by G. Piantoni, Rome 1980; contemporary re-

Strong continued to work through the World War I years (Ashby was an ambulance driver on the northern front)<sup>5</sup>, but various upheavals, emotional as well as intellectual, led her to a reassessment of her life and under the influence of Cardinal Gasquet, Strong reaffirmed her commitment to the Catholic church into which she had been baptised. But Strong's relationship with the BSR was coming to a close. Complex arguments, which included a personal difference between Strong and Ashby's wife, academic jealousy, and the problems of a London based bureaucracy running a Rome based institution led to both Ashby and Strong being dismissed in 1925<sup>6</sup>. Ashby's scholarship is now praised where Strong's is largely ignored, but at the time, Ashby's career was effectively over (he died, possibly through suicide, in 1931) whereas Strong, aged 65, moved to Via Cesare Balbo 35 to take up her entertaining in a private capacity.

In 1925, Mussolini had just become dictator. Matteotti was dead; Calza had started work on Ostia. The uncovering of the Markets of Trajan would begin in 1926. In 1928, Strong published *Art in Ancient Rome from the Earliest Times to Justinian* in two volumes, and her chapters in the *Cambridge Ancient History* would come out in 1932 and 1934 (she was the only woman asked to contribute). In other words, despite her forced resignation from the BSR, Strong remained a distinguished and forceful figure.

British attitudes towards Italy remained highly positive. In the period up until 1934, as Richard Bosworth has shown, British newspapers were fairly consistent<sup>7</sup>. From the post-war negotiations until the early 1920s, we find British dissatisfaction with *giolittismo*. Sir Charles Hardinge, Permanent Under-Secretary at the Foreign Office, wrote to Rennell Rodd in

sponse by Eugénie [Mrs. S. Arthur] Strong, *The Exhibition, Illustrative of the Provinces of the Roman Empire, in the Baths of Diocletian, Rome*, in «Journal of Roman Studies», 1 (1911), pp. 1-49. On G.Q. Giglioli, see F. Scriba, *Augustus im Schwarzhemd? Die Mostra Augustea della Romanità in Rom 1937/38*, Frankfurt a.M. 1995, pp. 60-73.

<sup>5</sup> R. Hodges, *Visions of Rome: Thomas Ashby, Archaeologist*, London 2000, pp. 58-68.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibidem*, pp. 69-82.

<sup>7</sup> R.J.B. Bosworth, *The British press, the conservatives and Mussolini, 1920-34*, in «Journal of Contemporary History», 5 (1970), pp. 163-182; cf. also an important analysis of British dissatisfaction with *giolittismo* and comparable support or understanding for the early days of fascism in R.J.B. Bosworth, *The English, the historians and the età giolittiana*, in «Historical Journal», 21 (1969), pp. 353-367.



1919 that the Italians were «the beggars of Europe who were well known for their whining alternated by truculence». In August 1922, «The Times» saw Mussolini as the successor of Garibaldi. Whilst some concerns were expressed over the possible lurch to violence, there was no regret at the passing of the old regime, and King George V's visit in 1923 went well. The newspapers were briefly critical of the intervention in Corfu but in the 1920s were otherwise supportive or paid no attention to Italy's foreign policy; and in private, the Foreign Secretary, Sir Austen Chamberlain, wrote of Mussolini «I am confident that he [Mussolini] is a patriot and a sincere man; I trust his word when given and I think that we might easily go far before finding an Italian with whom it would be as easy for the British Government to work»<sup>8</sup>. In the early 1930s, Mussolini was sometimes regarded as the potential educator of the volatile Hitler. But by 1935, the tendency to appease Italy had run its course; the British foreign secretary resigned in December 1935<sup>9</sup>.

The mid 1930s were interesting in the BSR. Aubrey Waterfield had been considered as a potential director, and successor to Ian Richmond. But his wife Lina, a founder of the British Institute of Florence, was known to be vehemently opposed to fascism, so the job went to Colin Hardie, who was just 30 (Richmond was 28 when he was appointed)<sup>10</sup>. Hardie soon found himself in difficulties with the Italian authorities. Anti-British feeling about sanctions after the invasion of Abyssinia brought protests outside the BSR, carabinieri were stationed in what is now Piazza

<sup>8</sup> In domestic affairs, the papers noted tensions which could lead to undesirable violence, but even here criticism was muted. Bosworth («The British Press», p. 172) quotes the conservative historian G.M. Trevelyan who wrote «Let us not be impatient with Italy if she is for a moment swerving from the path of liberty in the course of a very earnest attempt to set her house in order and to cope with the evils which the friends of liberty have allowed to grow up ... Signor Mussolini is a great man and, according to his lights, a very sincere patriot. Let our prayer for him be, not that he victoriously destroy free institutions in Italy, but that he may be remembered as a man who gave his country order and discipline when she most needed them, and so enabled those free institutions to be restored in an era happier than that in which it is our present destiny to live». Even the Matteotti murder could be covered up – «The Times» noted «Murder is more common [in Italy] than in most of the civilized states» (*ibidem*, p. 173).

<sup>9</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 182.

<sup>10</sup> T.P. Wiseman, *A Short History of the British School at Rome*, London 1990, p. 17; A. Wallace-Hadrill, *The British School at Rome: One Hundred Years*, London 2001, pp. 87-91.

Winston Churchill, and the BSR was briefly closed<sup>11</sup>. This put the BSR in a difficult position when the Roman authorities, in the course of the work that brought about the Faculty of Architecture and the explosion of building to the north of the BSR, proposed a highly damaging road cutting across the BSR's tennis court. Hardie was himself looking at ways of changing the BSR and transforming the façade, whilst at the same time, Philip Hirst, Rome Scholar in 1936, who would go on to serve in Baghdad and in the late 40s design their first tall bank building, the al-Rafidain Bank, came up with an extraordinary proposed recasting of the BSR façade. And it was in Hardie's time that Anthony Blunt joined Bertha Tilley, Tom Dunbabin, Dale Trendall and John Ward-Perkins at the BSR<sup>12</sup>.

In 1936, the BSR appointed Raleigh Radford as its Director<sup>13</sup>. Radford had known the BSR from Ashby's time. He would become close to the regime and to Pope Pius XII, who was at the time Eugenio Pacelli, Cardinal Secretary of State and Camerlengo<sup>14</sup>. Radford's main task at the BSR was completing the building, and its completion was marked by two remarkable visits in 1939. The first was an informal visit by Prime Minister Neville Chamberlain and Foreign Secretary Lord Halifax in the immediate aftermath of the Munich crisis<sup>15</sup>; the second was by King Vi-

<sup>11</sup> *Ibidem*; details in BSR Archive Box 60. Of the foreign academies only the BSR closed, and whilst Hardie was supported, it may have been an over-reaction. He took advantage of the break to go to Athens and apply for a fellowship at Magdalen College Oxford. Strong was furious (Dyson, *Eugénie Sellers Strong*, p. 181); the British embassy suggested that the BSR reopen swiftly, because of the adverse comment, and Shaw was obliged to deny a charge of "cultural sanctions". (BSR Box 370, 9 March 1936).

<sup>12</sup> Wallace-Hadrill, *The British School at Rome*, pp. 87-91.

<sup>13</sup> R. Hodges, *An old European: Raleigh Radford at Ninety*, in «Current Archaeology», 127 (1991), pp. 337-340; R. Gilchrist, *Courtenay Arthur Raleigh Radford*, in «Biographical Memoirs of Fellows of the British Academy», XII (2013), pp. 341-358. Both Meiggs and Syme turned the position of Director down – Shaw reported that Meiggs claimed that changes at Keble College would detain him, and Syme said that he did not consider that his «taste for archaeology or administration will bear the test» (BSR Box 370, 9 March 1936).

<sup>14</sup> See R.A. Ventresca, *Soldier of Christ: The Life of Pope Pius XII*, Harvard 2013; F.J. Coppa, *The Life and Pontificate of Pope Pius XII. Between history and controversy*, Washington DC 2013.

<sup>15</sup> Organised apparently by Hermione Hammond (RS Painting 1938) who was a close friend of Neville Chamberlain's daughter Dorothy. On this trip, which was widely opposed, see D. Hucker, *Public Opinion and the End of Appeasement in Britain and France*, Farnham 2011, pp. 99-105.

ctor Emanuel III accompanied by the new Governor of Rome, Principe Colonna. Radford technically was Director throughout the war, although the BSR was closed in 1939, and reopened in 1944 only for wartime activities, probably as part of the Department of Psychological Warfare. In preparation for its closure, it is said that Radford destroyed some of the archive; his successor Ward-Perkins was to destroy more<sup>16</sup>. There is no record of what was lost. Radford resigned in 1945, beginning a life as an independent scholar. He never returned.

In an interview late in his life, Radford indicated that his reasons for resigning were that «It would have been inappropriate for him to remain in Rome, since he had been associated with Mussolini's Fascist government in the 1930s, and because he feared that the post-war government in Italy would be left-wing and anti-Papist»<sup>17</sup>. Radford was almost certainly not the only director who had made his accommodations with the regime, even though it had prohibited the foreign academies from undertaking excavations (Radford himself returned annually to dig at Tintagel and Castle Dore in Cornwall)<sup>18</sup>.

<sup>16</sup> These claims are made in an obituary for Radford, written by Eva Rhys, who worked at the Society of Antiquaries for many years, and which was kindly sent to me by the Assistant Librarian Adrian James, who notes that she probably got her information from John Hopkins, «with whom she worked closely at the Society of Antiquaries. John Hopkins, who died in 2008, was employed in the Society's library between 1933 and 1986 and knew Radford well for all those years».

<sup>17</sup> Gilchrist, *Courtenay Arthur Raleigh Radford*, p. 344.

<sup>18</sup> A PhD thesis by Frederick Whitling, *The Western Way. Academic Diplomacy: Foreign Academies and the Swedish Institute in Rome, 1935-1953* (2010) has brought out well some of the ways in which, partly through the offices of the Istituto di Studi Romani, the foreign academies were supported and integrated, and also how the academies sought to preserve academic freedom in difficult conditions. Jérôme Carcopino from the École Française, and a close friend of Strong, for instance reported to his ministers of foreign affairs and state education in May 1938 that it was «a matter of taking advantage of an inextricable situation; and if the results are not more satisfactory, the fault is to be found in the false position we have placed ourselves in and which, in an Italy eternally proud and tetchy which would necessarily [...] restrict our sphere of activities. [...] In a country which flatters itself that it attracts research from every foreign countries, and where the best penetration would always be that which progresses unnoticed, I consider that this [the absence of scholarly research at the French institutes] would be a fundamental error» (pp. 81-82). He went on: «With the passing of time, while the Italian and German governments unite through conventions of cultural exchange, while a press which is not free either wrapping us in impenetrable silence or covering us with criticism, but while there is not

It is in this context that we should return to the British involvement with and reaction to the exhibition of 1937<sup>19</sup>. There is no evidence that Hardie was much involved, or for that matter Radford, and whilst that might be because of his cleaning of the archive, the reason is surely more prosaic – he arrived too late. He arrived only a year before the opening, and the show had been long in the preparation<sup>20</sup>.

The records of the British Museum show that there were contacts at least by 1934<sup>21</sup>. It may be that the British Museum was involved in contacting other museums to produce the substantial list of loans, which included a cast of the Claudius cameo, offered by permission of King George V<sup>22</sup>. Giglioli corresponded with Strong too. From Dyson's account however it appears that Strong's major role seems to have been to reprise the work of 1911 and concentrate on the Romano-British element – which included for instance the lead pipe with Agricola's name from Chester, the tombstone of M. Favonius Facilis at Colchester, or of Anicius Ingenuus the *medicus* at Housesteads, or the radiate head of Sol from Corbridge. It was however more as a representative that she was valued, and

one of our compatriots who does not feel that, even in a dictatorship, the government is not always obeyed, that even in a totalitarian state there is room for several streams of idées, that even an opinion condemned to silence is able to take shape and react, we may not abandon to their fate those who have turned to us and on whom, thanks to our institutes, a little French light has been shed, as little as this may be». Gjerstad at the Swedish Institute was actually constructing their home in the run up to war. Indeed the “cultural neutrality” of the foreign institutes left them far removed from domestic politics – Radford declared that «the reports of the English press seem like news from another world» (p. 131).

<sup>19</sup> Gilson, *Rituals of A Nation's Identity*, pp. 117-177. For the broader aspects of fascist archaeology and the context of the show see: M. Stone, *A flexible Rome: Fascism and the cult of romanità*, in *Roman Presences. Receptions of Rome in European Culture, 1789-1945*, ed. by C. Edwards, Cambridge 1999, pp. 205-220; A. Kallis, *The Third Rome, 1922-1943: The Making of the Fascist Capital*, London 2014 and R.J.B. Bosworth, *Whispering City: Rome and its Histories*, New Haven-London 2011, pp. 161-212.

<sup>20</sup> There had been an *interim* step when the 1911 material was reinstalled in the Museo dell'Impero Romano, first in the convent of St. Ambrose and then in the former Pantanella pasta factory at the Piazza Bocca della Verità: Gilson, *Rituals of A Nation's Identity*, pp. 135-139; Pisani Sartorio, *Dalla mostra al Museo*, pp. 65-73; Scriba, *Augustus im Schwarzhemd?*, pp. 330-338. For the E42 version, in EUR, see Scriba, *Augustus im Schwarzhemd?*, pp. 338-371.

<sup>21</sup> BM CE4 / 252 1934 P3778.

<sup>22</sup> BM 4 / 254 1935 P143 refers to the welcome income to the cast department from the order placed for the exhibition.

by both sides, receiving in 1938 both the City of Rome's gold medal and the Serena Medal for Italian Studies from the British Academy.

For his part, Radford too performed a representative role. The Italian authorities were very late in sending out the invitations; Crolla from the Italian embassy wrote to Anthony Eden at the Foreign Office on 19 August<sup>23</sup>. The response was nervous; France, the United States and Germany were all consulted by Edward Ingram, the British *chargé d'affaires* in Rome. Their suggestion was to look for a well-known historian or archaeologist, and Ingram «had already come to the same conclusion as Baron von Plessen as regards the nature of the British representation and I feel that there might be some advantage in having a purely non-political representative, distinguished in the historical or archaeological field»<sup>24</sup>.

So, the BM was asked to organise something but the time was immensely short. Letters were sent to Universities all of whom pointed out that it was still the vacation and declined, except the University of London who delegated to Harold Goad, the Director of the British Institute in Florence. Raleigh Radford was chosen as the British representative; he was not in Rome but accepted by telegram and stopped off to meet Christopher Hawkes at the British Museum for advice. He was to be accompanied by Dr. Harold Idris Bell, the President of the Society for the Promotion of Roman Studies as well as Keeper of the Department of Manuscripts at the British Museum; he was also asked to represent the British Academy. The Society for the Promotion of Hellenic Studies and the Society of Antiquaries delegated to Eugénie Strong and the Classical Association to

<sup>23</sup> BM CE4 / 262 1937 P6384 «The exhibition will constitute an important display in which Fascist Italy, in honour of the memory of the first Emperor, will illustrate the successive phases of Roman civilization, presenting the various aspects and the most important manifestations of the political and civil life of Imperial Rome. The Augustan exhibition of Ancient Rome will be of interest not only to students of classical antiquity but also to other classes of visitors, because, by means of scientific, particularised documentation, it will afford the possibility of reconstructing the outline of the history of Roman civilization». The lateness of the invitation, which was matched by the lateness of invitations to the closing Convegno (see below), could be attributed to poor organisation, but it also effectively precluded the embarrassment of a political refusal to attend.

<sup>24</sup> BM CE4 / 262 1937 P6384.

Rennell Rodd<sup>25</sup>. In total then, five individuals represented Great Britain, its universities and its learned societies.

The University of Oxford were hastily contacted to produce an address which was presented to Giglioli; a copy survives in the British Museum archive. It reads:

TO THE PRESIDENT AND COUNCIL OF THE AUGUSTAN EXHIBITION OF ANCIENT ROMAN LIFE

The Trustees of the British Museum have the honour to offer to you their cordial good wishes and congratulations on the opening of the Exhibition, designed to celebrate the illustrious memory of a ruler whose career was fraught with vast consequences to the History of Mankind.

England, in common with all the countries of Western Europe, owes to the organizing genius of Augustus, and to the influence of the Empire which he consolidated, more than can easily be estimated. The chances and vicissitudes of the centuries have never wholly obliterated Roman London, relics of which are constantly coming to light beneath the existing city, and all over Southern Britain may still be seen monuments of Roman greatness.

Greater even and more enduring than these material reminders is the impress which Roman rule and Roman civilization have made upon the life of Britain. In the tradition of ordered progress, in the faculty of constitutional and legal adaptation, and in civic life, the influence of Rome, moulding and adapting constitutions derived from the Teutonic peoples, has left an indelible mark; and the great writers of the Augustan age, notably Virgil, Horace, and Livy, have profoundly affected English literature and English life.

Great Britain therefore has ample cause to cherish the memory of Augustus, and the Trustees of the British Museum desire to express the fervent hope that the Augustan Exhibition of Ancient Roman Life will be attended with every success<sup>26</sup>.

In fact, there had been no time to consult the Trustees, and the text seems to reveal both hasty platitude and an avoidance of saying anything significant. Bell reported that the Italian authorities were pleased to see someone not already in Italy, and the BSR's Executive Secretary Evelyn

<sup>25</sup> Bosworth, *Sir Rennell Rodd*, p. 436, notes that Rodd had intervened in the House of Lords in 1935 to defend the Italian stance on Abyssinia; he had remained a friend of Italy.

<sup>26</sup> BM CE4 / 262 1937 P6537.

Shaw reported to Sir Rennell Rodd that Radford had represented the British government at the opening and that it «was a great success and marvellous to relate we were about the only nation to carry official addresses suited to the occasion from the British Museum and universities. The authorities were gratified and evidently impressed»<sup>27</sup>. Given the notice they had given, they were in fact fortunate to have had any guests.

Both Radford and Strong also reflected in the scholarly press the rapid developments in archaeology in the late 1930s<sup>28</sup>. «The Journal of Roman Studies» in 1939 included Raleigh Radford's summary of *Some recent discoveries in Rome and Italy*, which covered work on the mausoleum of Augustus, the reconstruction of the *Ara Pacis*, and the excavations by Calza at Ostia and Josi under S. Giovanni in Laterano<sup>29</sup>. The other article was Eugénie Strong's thirty pages account of the exhibitions of 1911, 1937 and the predicted 1942 EUR exhibition.

From the outset, Strong stakes her claim for intimate knowledge; in the second footnote she writes:

It may interest readers of *JRS* to know that it was at a meeting held in 1910, if I remember rightly, in the British School at Rome that Professor Lanciani first unfolded his programme for the 1911 Exhibition – an enterprise in which Dr. T. Ashby, then Director of the School, took an active part, while an article on the Exhibition by myself appeared in the first number of *JRS* (1911, 1-49).

The article ends with warm praise of her friend Giglioli.

The article briefly refers to the emphasis in the exhibition on the fact that Jesus was born in the reign of Augustus, but this becomes central to Strong's reviews of the Mostra for the British Catholic weekly journal «The Tablet».

<sup>27</sup> BSR Box 371-2 (2<sup>nd</sup> October 1937).

<sup>28</sup> The Roman Society included among its vice-presidents at the time Sir George Hill and Idris Bell, of the British Museum (the latter had spoken at the opening of the Mostra in 1937); the great Roman-British expert R.G. Collingwood, Hugh Last and Ronald Syme, both very closely connected with the BSR and both holders of the Camden Chair of Roman History, Rennell Rodd and Eugénie Strong.

<sup>29</sup> The article appears to have been intended as the first of a series – which never eventuated.



One of the most significant sections of the Mostra was accordingly devoted to the rise and establishment of the Christian Church. Such a section was the logical sequel to what went before—the essential proof that Rome’s history admits of no solution of continuity. The relation of Christianity to the Empire is no longer seen as one of irreconcilable antagonism. Rather has the view gained ground that the growth of the Empire was a divine forecast of the Kingdom of Christ, visibly embodied in the Catholic Church of Rome<sup>30</sup>.

Interestingly, Strong found herself having to reply to a stern letter to «The Tablet» by the Irish Jesuit priest James Brodrick<sup>31</sup>, which drew attention to the defects of Roman culture, and made the simple equation of ancient Rome with totalitarianism. Brodrick concludes with significant irony on the problematic nature of any claim for specific connection to the immortal institution of the Church, such as for instance the one which he found in a pamphlet from the National Institute of Fascist Culture of Pavia<sup>32</sup>. Strong reverts to arguments about archaeology and classics; «of the rest I am quite incompetent to speak». This is on 10 December 1938; within eighteen months, war was declared by Italy on Britain, and Strong elected to stay in Rome, in increasingly difficult circumstances, until she passed away on 16 September 1943. A mass was celebrated in her honour both at Westminster Cathedral and in the San Filippo Neri chapel in the Chiesa Nuova, organised by Bartolomeo Nogara and Antonio Maria Colini.

<sup>30</sup> Strong’s interpretation, «The Tablet», 5<sup>th</sup> November 1937, pp. 537-539, was in line with the intentions of the curators; Scriba, *Augustus im Schwarzhemd?*, pp. 112-122.

<sup>31</sup> «The Tablet», 31<sup>st</sup> December 1938, p. 903, responding to Brodrick, «The Tablet», December 10<sup>th</sup>, 1938, pp. 785-787. Little is known about Brodrick; he wrote a biography of Belarmino and part of a work on S. Ignatius of Loyola.

<sup>32</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 787: «Such seems to be the aim of the recent book entitled Dawn, issued in English by the National Institute of Fascist Culture of Pavia. One chapter of this book is headed *Mussolini Fidei Defensor*, and another contains a document called *The Prayer of the European Fascist*, expressing the following sentiments: O Jesus, my Lord... give unto us the European Catholic unity. Join us all together in that which Thou Thyself hast called “Thy Church, the Church of Peter”... Let all men of good will close their ranks around the LEADER [*sic*] whom Thou hast given us, so as to form a shield of pure consciences radiant in the sacred flame of EUROPEAN FASCISM... Let FASCISM be Thy instrument, O Lord; we, the rising generation, long to hurl our darts on every side. We crave for all redemption, and no fear can touch us, for all Thy angels are with us. Amen».



It is too easy to write Strong off as a fascist fellow-traveller, and to marginalise her. When Mary Beard set out to write about Jane Harrison, she found herself reflecting on the strange eclipse of Eugénie Strong. Written out of Harrison's life after an unexplained argument in 1891, Strong never had a coterie of pupils to defend her<sup>33</sup>. It is not my intention to defend her either, but I do want to make a case for Strong as at least emblematic of the problem posed by Italian fascism for many British, and perhaps especially many British Catholics, and many British classicists. Politics was not paramount; as Wiseman says «the School was a very unpolitical place»<sup>34</sup>. The fascination of Italy lay elsewhere, but these choices were significant, and became political. Many of those closely associated with the BSR in the 20s and 30s were complex individuals with highly developed spirituality<sup>35</sup>. For artists who came to Rome, the classical was inevitably a point of reference; and for classicists, for instance for someone like the Camden Professor of Roman History Hugh Last, Augustus had long been the focus of study and a degree of admiration<sup>36</sup>; and for anyone interested in Rome, the rapid pace of discovery was intoxicating.

<sup>33</sup> Beard, *Invention of Jane Harrison*, p. 162.

<sup>34</sup> Wiseman, *Short History*, p. 18.

<sup>35</sup> Colin Hardie's correspondence in the BSR archives may have been bone-dry, as Wallace-Hadrill rightly describes it (*The British School at Rome*, p. 91), but in Oxford he was one of the lesser known "Inklings", a friend of Tolkien and C.S. Lewis. Ian Richmond was a devout Anglican, and a troubled man whilst in Rome. Raleigh Radford was a high Anglo-Catholic. Strong was a devout Catholic. For other, notably the artist scholars, Rome was about light and about the classical; the best account is the awkward and unpublished roman-à-clef *Barbarians in Rome*, written by Alan Sorrell (RS Painting 1928-1931, and recently subject of a splendid exhibition and catalogue: S. Llewellyn, R. Sorrell, *Alan Sorrell: The Life and Works of an English Neo-Romantic Artist*, Bristol 2013). Brian Dick Lauder Thomas (RS Painting 1934) became a notable expert in stained glass windows. Frank Archer (RS Engraving 1938), described as a deeply religious man, wrote «It has always given pleasure to have seen pre-war Italy and to have been into the houses of people of all kinds, a forester living in a primitive home with earth floors, the chickens and animals wandering in amongst the children or a cultivated Florentine in an exquisite flat furnished with lovely things. The variety of people or the urban environment they inhabited was stimulating material for the kind of painting I was doing» (from his obituary, «The Independent», 27 April 1995). Anne Newland (Abbey Scholar 1938) made a triptych, part of which represented Ceres in the best classical style. Karin Löwenadler Jonzen (RS Sculpture 1939), was the last award holder before the war, and her classicizing sculpture was praised by Herbert Read.

<sup>36</sup> On Last see C.J. Smith, *A Hundred Years of Roman History: Historiography and Intellectual Culture*, in «Papers of the British School at Rome», 80 (2012), pp. 295-323.

It is no surprise therefore that the highbrow British press reports of the Mostra, especially from the pro-appeasement «The Times», and indeed the opening of the *Ara Pacis*, are neutral to positive<sup>37</sup>. In 1935, «The Times» reported Eugénie Strong lecturing to the Roman Society on the forthcoming exhibition. She is reported as claiming that the current excavations showed the excavator and the town planner working in perfect harmony to meet what Mussolini called *I problemi della necessità ed i problemi della grandezza*, in which the modern city would develop on the periphery of the old, and the ancient city would be freed of sordid disfigurement (19 June 1935). On 22 April 1937, «The Times» correspondent claimed that «the improvements now in hand in the older quarters manage to combine the practical with the aesthetic in such a way as seldom to outrage the most conservative lovers of the Eternal City»<sup>38</sup>. The arch review of the show on 23 September 1937, by “a special correspondent” (Appendix 1) takes an unusual stance, with its sly reference to fascism: «should he [an imaginary young visitor who is using the Latin cribs] happen to speak of Fascism (though it will be healthier for him to skip this subject) he will use the periphrase: *Disciplina in Italorum republica a Mussolinio constituta*». It is interesting therefore that the identity of the correspondent can now be revealed as a staunch antifascist<sup>39</sup>.

«The Illustrated London News» on 2 October 1937 also carried pictures, but neither journal seems to have noted that on the same day the Mostra della Rivoluzione Fascista was reopened in the Galleria Nazio-

<sup>37</sup> Scriba, *Augustus im Schwarzhemd?*, pp. 234-239 for Italian press, and 239-249 for foreign press.

<sup>38</sup> J. Nelis, *Fascist Identity: Benito Mussolini and the Myth of «Romanità»*, in «The Classical World», 100/4 (2007), pp. 391-415, at p. 412; see further Kallis, *The Third Rome*; B. Painter, *Mussolini's Rome: Rebuilding the Eternal City*, New York 2005, p. 63; S. Kostof, *The Third Rome, 1870-1950: Traffic and Glory*, Berkeley 1973; A. Cederna, *Mussolini urbanista: lo sventramento di Roma negli anni del consenso*, Roma-Bari 1979.

<sup>39</sup> The lecture on the Romans and the sea may actually have been written with E. Pais; Nelis, *Fascist Identity*, p. 400. The author of the article was Dr Mario Borsa, «The Times» correspondent in Milan from 1 October 1918 until 10 June 1940; an ardent opponent of fascism he was incarcerated on the outbreak of war, and only released in 1943. I am grateful to Anne Jensen, Assistant Archivist at the Archive & Record Office for «The Times» (Group Publishing Services) for this very helpful identification. See L. Lotti, *Borsa, Mario*, in *Dizionario biografico degli italiani*, vol. 13, Roma 1971, pp. 108-110.

nale d'Arte Moderna, and also visited on the same day by Mussolini<sup>40</sup>. However, «The Illustrated London News» quoted Ernest Barker, Professor of Political Science at Cambridge no less, and a redoubtable foe of extremism, who wrote

Italy has been cultivating the memory of ancient Rome for many years. It is not mere antiquarianism which revives the symbol of the fasces and the figures of the she-wolf and the twins Romulus and Remus. It is also policy – the policy of antiquarian idealism, which cultivates the memory of a great historical past in order to inspire and nerve the spirit for a great and glowing future. The Duce turns back to the Roman Empire because he is looking forward into the future of Italy.

This is from Barker's longer article in «The Observer» on 26 September, which is by far the most thoughtful and eloquent piece on the show (Appendix 2). Barker's careful and nuanced insistence on the differences between Augustus and Mussolini, of the different challenges they faced, and of the importance in national ideology to be inclusive, not exclusive, feels like a draught of the clearest freshest water, and was far ahead of most of what was said about the Mostra<sup>41</sup>.

A year later the Illustrated London News duly reported on 2 October the unveiling of the Ara Pacis in the presence of a large gathering of Italian and foreign scholars and archaeologists. But the Times goes much further; reporting on 23 September 1938, their correspondent noted «The Duce closely inspected the altar, saluting the figure of Augustus with raised arm as he passed, and then listened to speeches of congratulation from Signor Galassi Paluzzi, president of the Society of the Studi Romani, which did much to propagate the idea of reconstruction, and from Mrs. Arthur Strong, representing the foreign delegates. These included distinguished archaeologists from practically every country in Europe, and it is to be regretted that, apart

<sup>40</sup> M. Stone, *The Patron State: Culture and Politics in Fascist Italy*, Princeton 1998, pp. 128-176. On the weaving together of the ancient and modern in fascist Italy, see Nelis, *Fascist Identity*; Stone, *A flexible Rome*; F. Marcello, *Mussolini and the idealisation of Empire: the Augustan Exhibition of Romanità*, in «Modern Italy», XVI/3 (2011), pp. 223-247.

<sup>41</sup> On Barker see J. Stapleton, *Barker, Sir Ernest (1874-1960)*, in *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, with references; online edn, Sept 2010 (<http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/30588>, accessed 26 September 2022).

from Mrs. Strong, who has been resident in Rome for 40 years, no representative of British universities or learned institutions were able to be present».

(Radford sent apologies on his return; he had been excavating in Cornwall until late in the summer). The occasion was followed by a major conference, which itself demonstrated the tensions and stresses between academic life, political reality and personal choices<sup>42</sup>.

Galassi Paluzzi had requested Strong's presence and she accepted, but wanted to indicate that she was representing Girton College (being already the representative of the University of Cambridge and the Society

<sup>42</sup> The list of participants at the Convegno which was printed by the Istituto di Studi Romani and the Museo dell'Impero included relatively few foreigners and mostly directors of academies such as Mason Hammond, Einar Gjerstad, Léon Homo, but it is interesting to find Prof. Leonard C. Wolley (*sic*), and Prof. Jan (*sic*) A. Richmond, as well as Rostovtzeff. From IR 223 70 SF Conv Elenco Studiosi invitati it appears that it was thought to invite Wheeler, Richmond, Wooley and Collingwood, who is described as «uno dei più profondi conoscitori della storia dell'Inghilterra sotto il dominio romano», and this list was connected with the intention to have an ambitious cycle of lectures connected with the Mostra, described in 210.12 *Propaganda Richieste dell'Estero*. It is not clear that everyone who was invited, or named, actually attended the Convegno, which may explain the discrepancy between the account in «The Times» and the printed list. With regard to this list of potential speakers, as Massimiliano Ghilardi shows (this volume), Galassi Paluzzi had already in 1937 consulted Momigliano, offering the names Strong, Collingwood, Richmond, Adcock, and Wheeler. Momigliano who was in holiday and away from his library, replied questioning the entire list, and noting that Collingwood knew about Roman Britain, that is from Claudius on; and suggesting a very different list – Last («ha scritto in particolare sulla politica sociale d'Augusto ed è poi riconosciuto come uno dei più autorevoli studiosi inglesi»); Tarn, Mattingly, Charlesworth and Syme. Galassi Paluzzi replied immediately saying that Momigliano had been sent an old list, and that they wanted experts on the empire – like Syme and Charlesworth. Momigliano then suggested Stuart Jones, Marsh, Kahrstedt, Besnier, Nilsson, Poulsen and Stähelin (IR SF Momigliano). In the end, only Wheeler seems to have got through the Italian vetting process, which was still going on a few days before the Convegno, and the whole matter was yet further complicated by the exclusion of Jewish scholars (including Momigliano himself) by the racial laws passed just a couple of weeks earlier (IR 223 69 Informazioni richieste al Ministero Affari Esteri. Elenco Studiosi stranieri da invitare, 1938). Some of the planned papers did in fact result in publications; see I.A. Richmond, *I limites romani della Britannia*, Roma 1938; E. Strong, *Viaggio attraverso le strade della Britannia romana*, Roma 1938; C.A. Raleigh Radford, *Roma e l'arte dei Celti e degli Anglosassoni dal V all'VIII secolo d.C.*, Roma 1938; H. Mattingly, *L'Impero di Roma nelle monete della Britannia e nelle raccolte e negli studi numismatici inglesi*, Roma 1939. E. Strong published an article *Testa d'Erma bifronte di epoca Flavia rinvenuta ad Albano*, in *Atti del V Congresso Nazionale di Studi Romani*, vol. II, Roma 1940, pp. 158-164.

of Antiquaries for another conference, the *Congresso di Archeologia Cristiana*), and insisted on the title of *Dottoressa* instead of *Professoressa*<sup>43</sup>. Strong's address is printed as a preface to an article she published with the Studi Romani in 1939:

Duce, penso che per il mio solo merito di anzianità gli eminenti studiosi stranieri adunati a questo Convegno augusteo, hanno voluto che io Vi saluti, in loro nome, con fervido e deferente augurio. Il vostro tempo, Duce, è prezioso e cosa potrei aggiungere alle nobili parole testé pronunciate dal Presidente dell'Istituto di Studi Romani? Basta ricordare che, grazie alle vostre energie – dire fulminee – decisioni, oggi possiamo ammirare, splendidamente ricostruito, l'insigne monumento che l'imperatore Augusto – quel grande pacificatore che preferì sempre celebrare la pace ristabilita più che la stessa vittoria – innalzò, come perenne ricordo di una saggia politica risvegliata, nei nostri giorni, sotto i vostri auspici. Il meraviglioso restauro dell'Ara Augustea sarà a noi tutti nuovo pegno di quello che può compiere un eletto che, come voi, o Duce, lavora sotto l'ispirazione di quella forza divina che il Vostro Plinio definiva: *IMMENSE ROMANAE PACIS MAJESTAS*<sup>44</sup>.

Where did the British and Italian political realities meet? Anthony Birley at a conference in the BSR drew attention to an interesting exchange between Strong and Ronald Syme. On 7.11.38, just weeks after the address quoted above, Eugénie Strong wrote:

35, Via Balbo, Your letter of Oct. 14 with your sane remarks on the Oxford City Contest was delightful – I was amused at your observing that they might “bother” me. For I was thinking of little else outside that election. No one rejoiced more than I did when the result came through to Rome a week ago last Saturday. Though it was “town” not “gown” so many of the voters belonged to the university that the Q. Hogg victory was a good rejoinder to

<sup>43</sup> IR 223 61 SF Conv Elenco Studiosi invitati da inserire 193 CA.

<sup>44</sup> In the series of «Quaderni di Studi Romani», 2, Roma 1939, p. 2 for speech, pp. 3-24 for the article *La legislazione sociale di Augusto ed i fregi del recinto dell'Ara Pacis*, a paper which was delivered at the conference following the inauguration and which is described by Scriba, *Augustus im Schwarzhemd?*, pp. 229-234. The speech is also printed in «Rassegna d'Informazioni dell'Istituto di Studi Romani», VI/22-23 (1938), pp. 3-4. Axel Boethius wrote subsequently with his thanks and congratulations: IR Convegno Mostre, b. 220 f. 61 *Convegno Augusteo cerimonie e festeggiamenti* 1007 CA.

those who believe that Oxford & Cambridge are both in the hands of “Non-Aryans” & Communists. I hope Gilbert Murray & his followers feel utterly discomfited. Forgive these belated comments. [...] Do come back to Rome soon yourself – to this peaceful and well-governed country. Yrs sincerely, Eugénie Strong.

The Oxford by-election was forced by the death of the incumbent MP, Captain R.C. Browne, and took place in the aftermath of the Munich agreement. The then Master of Balliol Sandy Lindsay stood as an independent with cross-party support against appeasement, and Quintin Hogg (later Lord Hailsham) stood as the Conservative pro-appeasement candidate, and won. Syme’s views are unknown. Collingwood, bitterly opposed to appeasement, criticised the apathy of his Oxford colleagues, but Strong clearly was heartened<sup>45</sup>. But that argument was about Germany, not Italy, and putting the two together was not yet a given, and war was not a certainty<sup>46</sup>.

My unsystematic survey shows how inappropriate it is to categorise the British reaction to Italy as simply pro or anti-fascist, and especially when refracted through the peculiar prism of the BSR, where politics was submerged, and Italy stood for a different intellectual and cultural set of values, and one relating to different intellectual arguments and justifications. Up until 1935, Mussolini could be regarded as somewhat irrelevant or in a largely positive way, and Eugénie Strong could occupy a role between academics and ride above the tensions that existed. Catholic, with a particularly developed circle of German friends and connected to all the most significant archaeological actors in Rome, Strong was formidable and respected. Her views were probably widely shared among the archaeological and historical community.

The close connections at personal and institutional levels meant that British institutions seem to have found collaboration with the Mostra re-

<sup>45</sup> On appeasement at Oxford, see *Appeasement and All Souls: A Portrait with Documents, 1937-1939*, ed. by S. Aster, Cambridge 2004.

<sup>46</sup> For a wonderful evocation of fluctuating hopes and fears in London especially in the months between the Munich agreement and the outbreak of war, see J. Gardiner, *The Thirties: An Intimate History*, London 2010, pp. 727-763.

latively uncomplicated ideologically. Clearly not everyone found fascist Italy wholly admirable, and Hardie seems to have been too inexperienced to play the game that was needed. But Raleigh Radford had the measure of working in fascist Italy, and was remarkably productive. In retrospect, Mussolini's archaeological interventions are lamented, and the images of the Palazzo delle Esposizioni are distasteful. Yet in trying to think through the thoughts and concerns of the figures we are looking at, who were socially distanced for instance from the displaced populations of the Borghi, the Mostra and the unveiling of the *Ara Pacis* were perhaps less controversial<sup>47</sup>. Even after Abyssinia, Mussolini might be seen to be part of the way towards a peaceful solution. When the backlash came, it was sharp, and the reputation of Augustus was in a sense damaged by association with fascism. The two interpretative paths, of Augustus as the moral leader of his people out of chaos, and of Augustus who exploited chaos to build totalitarianism, diverged in 1939<sup>48</sup>.

On the BSR's shelves, quite close together, sit two books, both from Eugénie Strong's library. One, heavily annotated, and underscored, is John Buchan's popular biography of Augustus, produced in 1937. Buchan, or Lord Tweedsmuir, Governor-General of Canada from 1935 until his death in 1940, was a prolific writer. Strong is not uncritical – there are some errors she picks out, and she ticks Buchan off for speculation – but she clearly read it with great attention. At one point (p. 129), Buchan wrote of Italy at the time of Actium, «It [the world] had lived for so long among catastrophes that it scarcely dared to hope. Rome longed dumbly for one thing above all others – not liberty but law» and Strong has underscored the last words and written in the margin “cf the present”. Even more striking is a passage surveying the leaders of the world about half way through Augustus' reign. Buchan writes (p. 196) «Looking around the world at this time one is struck by the absence of commanding figures. Augustus had a lonely pre-eminence. There was no man in any part of the empire likely to challenge his authority, though such an one was co-

<sup>47</sup> The BSR awarded an Honorary Fellowship to Corrado Ricci in 1931, who organised the construction of the Via dei Fori Imperiali (BSR Box 11).

<sup>48</sup> For a useful account of the trends of scholarship up to and beyond the Harvard School, see A. Powell, *Virgil the Partisan*, Cardiff 2008, pp. 3-30.



ming to maturity in the German forests». Against Augustus, Strong scribbled “Mussolini” and against the reference to Arminius she has written “Hitler”? Buchan’s biography was a point of reference in Strong’s weak late essay on the *Ara Pacis*.

The other book is Syme’s *The Roman Revolution*. A regular visitor to the BSR, and a correspondent, Syme drew out a very different position<sup>49</sup>. On 17 July Strong wrote to Syme

35 Via Balbo/... I see that you have written a new book about Rome to upset everyone else’s views. I saw it announced, but am not even sure if it is out. I shall not have time to read it before I come to England but shall try to get a glimpse of it either at the American Academy or the German Archaeological Institute where they are very much up to date as to new books. / Yours very sincerely, Eugénie Strong.

In the JRS article of 1939, Strong notes

Inevitably after the recent exaltation of Augustus a reaction has set in: severe criticism of the great emperor’s achievements seem to be the order of the day. The distinguished Oxford scholar, Mr. Ronald Syme, in his book *The Roman Revolution* – which owing to present postal difficulties is known to me only from reviews – appears to be a leader in the movement; but there are others.

In the BSR copy – Eugénie’s copy – she writes “yes” against Syme’s loaded phrase in the preface «in the end the Principate has to be accepted, for the Principate, while abolishing political freedom, averts civil war». Over the next 500 pages, Syme lays bare all the brutality, callousness and political calculation that stripped that freedom away. There is hardly a pencil mark to be found.

<sup>49</sup> Hints of it can already be found in his article in *Caesar, the senate and Italy*, in «Papers of the British School at Rome», 14 (1939), pp. 1-31.



*Appendix 1*

«The Times», September 23, 1937

AN EMPIRE ON EXHIBITION

From a Special Correspondent, Rome

All Italy today commemorates the great Emperor Augustus whose bimillenary will be celebrated from now onwards for a year. The numerous and scattered Augustan monuments will be restored and set up on fitting sites and there will be a multiplicity of lectures. The seal will be set on the rejoicings by the recomposing of the *Ara Pacis* with the fragments to be found in the various museums both in Italy and abroad, by the isolating and restoring, now almost finished, of the Augusteo, the monument venerated as the sepulchre of his wife, sister, nephew and immediate successors, and by the *Augustan Exhibition*.

This is being inaugurated today in the Palazzo delle Esposizioni in the Via Nazionale, Rome, and will undoubtedly be of the utmost interest. It has been organized at the express will of the *Duce* by the eminent scholar, Professor Giulio Quirino Giglioli, who will present a complete picture of Roman civilization in all its forms and aspects. The exhibition takes the name of *Augustus* not because it has been set up in his century but because it has been set up in his honour. Originals will not be found here (to collect them would be an impossibility) but there will be excellent reproductions of the monuments and of everything most remarkable that Rome has left in various parts of the world.

A YEAR TOO SOON

The preparation has taken five years of most painstaking and delicate work. Distributed in 50 sections, it contains upwards of 3000 prints and drawings of statues, reliefs and inscriptions: 200 plastic casts giving an adequate review of Roman architecture; 15 collections of medals and suitable enlargements of Roman coins. The several sections are intended to illustrate every side of Roman life and civilization: from the family through the *Municipium* to the State; from private to public life; from the army to the navy; from industry to commerce; from science to the arts, customs, uniforms and vestments. There will be a close reproduction of an Augustan house with furniture of the period. The military section is rich with models and reproductions of arms and equipment. That of religion will give an idea of the gods and priest-craft, not only of heathenism but of the different forms of Oriental

religions practised throughout the Empire, especially among the soldiers, who were greatly attached to their gods. Christianity will have a section to itself. There will be reproductions of monuments illustrating the most outstanding figures and events of the period beginning with the life and preaching of Jesus Christ on to the mission of the Apostles and the persecution of the martyrs, and winding up with the Edict of Constantine, which marked the triumph of Christianity.

«*Natus est Augustus M. Tullio Cicerone, G. Antonio con. XIII Kal. octob. paulo ante solis exortum, regione Palati*»: so Suetonius. Since Cicero and Antonius were Consuls in A.D. [sic] 63, corresponding to the year 691 of Rome it is in that year we must place the date of the birth of the first Roman Emperor. Born in 63 B.C. he was therefore 62 in the year 1 B.C. and will be 2,000 in 1938. Some erroneously hold that this year marks the bimillenary, reasoning that if Augustus was born in 63 then the 2,000th anniversary of his birth must be in 1937. This reasoning is quite false, the error lying in the well-known fact that there is no zero year between 1 B.C. and A.D. 1. Owing to this absence of a zero year the years before Christ are all one unit in excess of the number that they really represent. The astronomers at least tell us so, but Signor Mussolini, his eyes fixed on earth rather than on heaven has decreed it otherwise. The celebrations will be kept from today till September 23 next year which is the real bimillenary of the birth of the great inspirer of the *Duce* and Italian Fascism.

#### AN IMPERIAL CITY

But the play is the thing. Everything in Fascist Italy is being modelled on Rome, and more especially on Imperial Rome. The traveller who passes through the villages and hamlets of Italy, from those of the Alps peacefully secluded in their northern style, to those of almost Arab cast in Sicily, will see here and there on the walls and painted in huge black lettering some of the most striking phrases and sentences that have been uttered by Signor Mussolini. Among them the one «Noi sognamo un'Italia Romana» never fails to catch the eye. It may perhaps be questionable whether such is really the dream of the easy-going Italian peasant but willy-nilly he now lives and has his being in a Roman atmosphere.

When his baby boy has scarcely begun to toddle he becomes a "*Figlio della lupa*" (son of the she wolf) and when he is a little bigger and enrolled in the "*Balillas*" and the "*Avanguardisti*" he has a neckerchief bearing the "colours of Rome". Everything speaks to him of the Eternal City. On the front of the tiny communal hall of his village he sees the Fasces carved in the stone. He hears people speak of the lictors, of eagles, of legions, centurions, and consuls and on entering an office he is expected to give the Roman salute. One day – and why not – he will also be obliged to speak the language of Cicero. There is already prepared for him a handbook full of suggested Latin expressions even for the many things the Latins knew nothing whatever about. Thus, instead of saying he is going to the movies or talkies he will say that he

is going to the *theatrum umbrarum*, and to announce that he has telephoned he will say that he “*per filum nuntiavit*”. Should he happen to speak of Fascism (though it will be healthier for him to skip this subject) he will use this periphrase: “*disciplina in Italorum republica a Mussolinio constituta*”.

#### “A SACRED CHARACTER”

The periphrase is somewhat long but asserts the truth. Everything in present-day Italy – be it said to his honour – is “*a Mussolinio constitutum*”. This exaltation, even this deification, of Rome has been felt and willed by him. «What barbarian can deny the sacred character of Rome? All poets of all times and men of all nations have recognized the sacred character of Rome» he has said. No one more than he has felt the universality of Rome. Without the pages of Roman history the world's history would be terribly mutilated and a great part of the modern world would be incomprehensible. The Rome we dream of must not only be the living and pulsating centre of the renewal of Italian nation but also the wonderful capital or the whole or the Latin world

What Signor Mussolini has done for Rome is well known – the great works of restoration ordered by him and the buildings which beautify the modern quarters. During the last ten years the city has been wholly transformed and now it is just to speak of the Rome of Mussolini. Not only in Rome, but also in the provinces and in Libya, he has willed that the remembrance and veneration of the ancient metropolis of the Caesars should be revived; that the Roman works, bridges, arches, temples be restored; that monuments be erected; that the very cities themselves, as Agrigentum for Girgenti be called again by their former Latin names. All initiatives concerning Roman studies, research, publications and lectures are due to Mussolini. He himself, as part of his extraordinary and versatile activity, has delivered a learned lecture on the subject of Ancient Rome On Sea.

And among the more important cultural institutions he gave life to must be remembered the Istituto di Studi Romani which has its headquarters in the Palazzo dei Filippini in Rome.

It would take too long to dwell on all the labours of this institute during its 10 years of life. It will suffice to mention briefly the lectures on Roman subjects given during this period by scholars, both Italian and foreign, among them various Englishmen and Americans, and to recall the compilation of a catalogue of all the works on Rome to be found in the world's libraries. This immense work of making a list of all the books and pamphlets on Rome and Roman life and manners which have appeared in the course of the centuries in all languages and countries was begun six years ago and will continue for a long time to come. So far over half a

million index cards have been collected from 45 Italian libraries, six Vatican, and 66 foreign. All nations great and small alike are collaborating in this gigantic task, and henceforth scholars wishing to know what has been written on any given Roman subject in the different ages and in the different tongues will only need to apply to this *Schedario Centrale di Bibliografia Romana*.

Rome has ever appealed to the Italians throughout the ages, but not always in the same way. Upon the men of the Communes, upon the humanists, the historians, poets and the agitators of the *Risorgimento* it is Republican Rome that has exerted her wonderful spell. The Rome of the Caesars has never been popular; indeed, chiefly because of the bias displayed by the Catholic historians it has always been looked upon as a period of decadence, when freedom was fettered and public and private turpitude rampant. When Mazzini went to Rome in 1849, he called himself triumvir and proclaimed the Republic; when Mussolini went there in 1922, he began by calling himself *Dux* and ended by proclaiming the new Empire. "*Tempora mutantur*" and it is easy to understand why the hero of these times is no longer Brutus but Caesar. While waiting to celebrate the bimillenary of the birth of the conqueror of Gaul, Italy is now getting ready to celebrate that of his beloved nephew.

#### THE MYTH OF GODHEAD

Thus Augustus even after 2,000 years, is persecuted by the obsession of a myth. Because, if historians are not in agreement with regard to his intention – and actions – for Dion Cassius he was an absolute monarchist, for Montesquieu the first of the Emperors, for Ferrero the last of the Republicans – they agree in recognizing that Augustus himself was the first to be surprised and troubled about the myth which, while he was still alive, was taking shape around his person. A senator, says Dion, ran through the streets of Rome like one possessed exhorting everyone he came across to dedicate himself to Augustus and swear not to survive him. This was enough to upset any man and particularly one of the stamp of Augustus who had his fellow citizens' welfare so much at heart and had to think of his dignity and his political responsibility. He had other merits which now recommend him to the *Duce* and the Fascists for Augustus was, above all, greatly worried about the question of more babies (even in his day the poor bachelors were considered fair game); he gave great consideration to the problems of the family, customs, and religion. It is inscribed on the Ancyra Column that he restored 80 temples and created three new cults. He was likewise a great road maker; built theatres, porticoes, gymnasia and gave up a part of his immense wealth to the Public Treasury so that a great number of public works might be put in hand. Wishing to give the good folk of Rome a chance of amusing themselves, he revived the *ludi saeculares* and introduced other games. He wanted peace and, incidentally, also the iron mines of Spain.

With the splendour of feasts, the beauty of art, the higher schools, the protection of poets and men of letters Augustus made Rome the greatest cosmopolitan centre

of the ancient world. Here from the chilly wilds of Germany and from the Courts of the Parthian kings East met West and so vast did this movement become that Horace was led to say the sun had never seen anything to surpass it.

## *Appendix 2*

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### 2,000 YEARS OF ROME: FROM AUGUSTUS TO MUSSOLINI PAST TO INSPIRE THE FUTURE A POLICY OF IDEALISM

Barker, Ernest

#### THE BI-MILLENARY OF AUGUSTUS.

Only Italy (and Greece) can celebrate bi-millenaries – though Egypt, if it tried, might run into *quinque*, or even *sextmillenaries*. Italy has not only the right: she has also the will. A little while ago there was the bi-millenary of Horace, which produced some admirable commemorative stamps: to-day there is the bi-millenary of Augustus, born on September 23, 63 B.C., and therefore commemorated (apparently a year too soon, by a numerical miscalculation due to neglect of the fact that there never was a year 0, either B.C. or A.D.) on September 23, 1937, and for the year following.

But the bi-millenary now being celebrated not only commemorates Augustus the Princeps: it also commemorates the Principate generally (from which point of view, if one remembers that the foundation of the Principate is generally dated in 27 B.C., the commemoration might even have waited till 1973, or rather 1974), and along with the Principate it also celebrates the general name and fame, and the total achievement of Rome.

#### A YEAR OF CELEBRATIONS

Italy has been cultivating the memory of ancient Rome for many years. It is not mere antiquarianism which revives the symbol of the fasces and the figures of the she-wolf and the twins Romulus and Remus. It is also policy – the policy of antiquarian idealism, which cultivates the memory of a great historical past in order to inspire and nerve the spirit for a great and glowing future.

The *Duce* turns back to the Roman Empire because he is looking forward into the future of Italy. «Lo Stato fascista – he wrote a few years ago, in an essay on the doctrine of Fascism – è una volontà di potenza e d'impero: la tradizione romana è qui un'idea di forza».

That is why Italy will be celebrating for a whole year the Roman tradition incarnate in Augustus, who swept away the factious Republic and inaugurated the Empire. That is why the ancient and especially the imperial monuments of the city of Rome have been cleared, and the classical stamp imposed on its roads and its general appearance. The Italy of today overleaps the memory of *Risorgimento* and Renaissance; it overleaps the medieval civic splendours of Venice and Florence and the Lombard communes: *antiquam exquirite matrem*.

#### NATIONS' DEBT TO ROME

All the nations which have come under the spell and the shaping power of Rome (and our nation is among them, even if it lay on the circumference of the Roman Empire) will join in celebrating the debt which they owe to Rome – though they will not forget the debt which they owe through Rome (the transmitter) to the primal fountain itself, which was Ancient Greece. Rome adopted and transmitted the great Greek beginnings of a true European culture: she added her own contribution (in the arts of construction, the science of government, and the humane wisdom of her legal system): and so she became, and still is a great foundation of all our modern culture and Civilisation.

The Tiber has flowed into many of our Western rivers – the Thames, the Ebro, but above all, the Seine. All of us in the West are inheritors of Rome – and not least France which had already become, by the fifth century A.D., the great hearth of Latin civilisation. We can all join in the general celebration of *mater Roma*; and we must all recognize that the only possible place for that celebration is Rome itself, the physical city which has been, since 1870, the capital of the kingdom of Italy. But in that physical city we shall be celebrating a city of the spirit (a city of the past, which is nevertheless, still present in our present), and still a part of our being, and we shall be celebrating it, along with the people of Italy, as a city common to all who are heirs, in any measure, of its spirit.

#### WIDESPREAD INHERITANCE

There is no monopoly in these matters. Rome and the inheritance of Rome are part of the general European tradition. To claim an exclusive inheritance of Rome, in a Europe over which 2,000 years have passed since the birth of Augustus, would be an anachronism. The inheritance has spread too far and too wide in the course of the centuries; and a new European system of equal and cooperating States, based on the principle of the nation, has risen. In that new system the memory and tradition of Rome should be (what it already was, in its measure, during the Middle Ages in the days of the old Holy Roman Empire) a thing which is international rather than national.

We should all go to Rome in this year of celebrations: we should all say «We owe a debt and we are thankful; and we too remembering the debt – which is also

our common bond – will seek to cherish the idea of world-peace and a world order, which was the great idea and achievement of Rome».

### PRINCEPS AND DUCE

The tradition of Rome, in these celebrations, is gathered around the name and the memory of Augustus. The immediate reason is chronological; the year of his birth is the jumping-off ground for a span of 2,000 years. But it is natural that the *Duce* should commemorate the Princeps. In temper indeed he is different from the imperturbably self-controlled and calculating Augustus “cool and without ardour or enthusiasm”, but the achievements of the two men may naturally suggest an historical parallel.

Both of them might plead that they were “restorers of order to a vexed and confused Italy”. Both of them might say that they were “adorners of the city of Rome”. Both of them sought to encourage Italian agriculture: both of them were champions of *Latinitas*. One can read what Virgil says of Augustus in the Sixth Aeneid and feel that it might be said today by a devoted Italian about his leader – especially those last words, which follow on the recital of the labours of Augustus.

*Et dubitamus adhuc virtutem extendere factis?*

Yet all historical parallels have their limits and their qualifications. The founder of the totalitarian State is different from the founder of the Augustan system of diarchy where the Princeps and the Senate together ruled the State. The deification of Augustus, which had already begun, however irregularly, during his lifetime and which caused him to be described as “a savior ... through whom have come good things” has no modern equivalent.

### THE NEW ITALY

The glory of an Augustan age of literature has still to dawn in the new Italy of our days. There was no Vatican City in the days of Augustus: there was no modern problem of capital and labour, even if there were memories of slavewars: above all, there was no system of European State, and no axis running from Rome to any other capital. The world of Augustus and his contemporaries was a different world from ours; and it is all gone. “They cannot come to us and our imagination can but feebly penetrate to them”.

But they deserve our celebration – and not least the patient and steadily labouring Augustus – for what they were in themselves and what they did for their own world. Republican Rome had done magnificent things; and it will always shine in the memories of men with a vivid light which does not belong to the later and soberer afternoon of the Empire. But it had acquired great possessions: it could not govern them successfully: still less could it govern or control the armies and the army chieftains which the acquisition and preservation of the possessions had entailed. It fell: and a single army chieftain, at the head of a united army, took over (in



a partnership with the Senate which became more and more nominal in the course of generations) the task of giving to Rome and her great possessions a system of government and peace.

#### A GREAT ACHIEVEMENT

The task was steadily performed, and its performance gave to Europe a long breathing space, in which her different elements slowly required some common traditions of culture. This was a great achievement and it deserves lasting commemoration. But it was an achievement different from anything which awaits us two thousand years later. The modern nations, with their parliaments, their trade unions, and all their voluntary societies for the betterment of man's estate – these are the stuff of the worked in which the modern statesman acts. It is a very different, a far more complicated and a far subtler stuff. Augustus did well and truly in his generation; but no Augustus could deal with this stuff. It needs subtle and sinewy effort of collective and co-operative thinking. There is no short-cut which will bring us quickly through. There is no historical analogy which can help us.

#### PAST AND FUTURE

The cultivation of historical memory otherwise than for the sale of understanding the past as it actually was may lead backwards rather than forwards. Every nation is marching into the future – loyal indeed to the past but under the conditions of the present and in the present environment. It is impossible to select one element of the past and to say that that one element determines the future. Each of the nations has been made what it is by the whole of its past development and whole of its interactions with other nations: Italy has been made by modern and medieval as well as by ancient history, both in her own borders and outside. She is the whole of her past – Ostrogoths and Lombards as well as Romans, medieval city communes as well as the Principate, *Risorgimento* as well as *renovatio imperii Romani*.

Nations like individuals carry all that they have been forward into what they will be. That does not prevent them, provided they are loyal to the whole, from picking some special element of the past for special remembrance and cultivation in the future. Still less does it prevent them from seeking to shape the future in some new pattern which has no parallel in the past. And that, in a moving world of time is the great thing – the new pattern, not alien from the past, but still new, the new goal. It was an Irish poet who said (and the Irish are never forgetful of the past):

«We love the goal for which we start  
more than ties of what has been».