

Alan Douglas Edward Cameron

13 March 1938–31 July 2017

elected Fellow of the British Academy 1975

by

ROGER S. BAGNALL

Fellow of the Academy



ALAN CAMERON

Alan D. E. Cameron died on 31 July 2017. He was one of the leading scholars of the literature and history of the later Roman world and at the same time a wide-ranging classical philologist whose work encompassed above all the Greek and Latin poetic tradition from Hellenistic to Byzantine times but also aspects of late antique art.

He was born at Windsor on 13 March 1938, the son of Douglas and Bertha Cameron. His father's family originated in the Scottish Highlands village of Culbokie, north of Inverness. Douglas Cameron was in the insurance business and Bertha a housewife. Alan grew up in Egham, Surrey, and in 1946, along with his lifelong friend John North, entered Colet Court, the preparatory school for St Paul's School, where his father had been a pupil (and where his younger brother Geoffrey also studied, as would Alan's son Daniel in his turn). Although his parents did not have intellectual interests, they were supportive of their son's precocious academic gifts and let him live in a 'shed' in their back garden, where he had room for his books and peaceful conditions for study; Geoffrey describes it as a 'semi-permanent chalet construction'. He learned classical languages, begun at Colet Court, very quickly, and his academic bent was already visible in these preparatory years, as can be seen from an episode that I owe to Michael Yudkin, another classmate at Colet Court: 'The stocky and powerful Mathematics master, Mr Robinson, was in charge of games pitches. When the pitches were soggy, Mr Robinson used to bellow a series of set phrases to warn boys off using them: "You don't walk across that field"; "May I remind you that you don't walk across that field"; "You seem to have forgotten: you don't walk across that field".' Alan and Martin West turned these phrases into a Greek jingle, set to a tune, which went like this:

οὐ διαβαίνεις τὸν ἀγρόν.

οὐ διαβαίνεις τὸν ἀγρόν.

δύναμαι μὴνῆσκαι σε, φαίνει γὰρ ἐπιλεησόμενός, σ' οὐ διαβαίνοντα τὸν ἀγρόν;'

But his more everyday concerns and engagement with the non-academic world are also already visible in a surviving diary he kept towards the end of his fifteenth year, from 1 January until 12 April 1953. In it, food, television, cinema, dental work, weather, shopping, card games, housework, rowing, trains and buses, astronomical observations (and even tea with Lady Herschel¹), chapel, confirmation classes, and much else figure prominently alongside homework and classes, which he describes

¹ The widow (née Catherine Margaret Browell) of the third Baronet Herschel, who was the great-grandson of the famous astronomer Sir William Herschel, after whom the astronomy society of which Alan was a founder was named, see below.

without much interest or emotion.² A day ill at home was occupied by Agatha Christie and plays on the radio. In later life he disliked organised religion (he records his first communion on 20 March) but remained addicted to television; he was renowned for writing scholarly articles on a yellow legal pad while lying on the couch watching programmes such as *Star Trek* or *Perry Mason* on the screen.

Alan was a student at St Paul's from 1951 to 1956, commuting to Hammersmith from home. In his final year he won five prizes in Classics. These years, marked both by the teaching of W. W. Cruickshank for Latin and E. P. C. Cotter for Greek, and the friendship of Alan's classmates Martin West and John North, were decisive in his formation.³ As he later remarked, 'Like all British classics students half a century ago,⁴ we spent what now seems an extraordinary, not to say disproportionate amount of our time on verse composition, in both Latin and Greek.' Alan acknowledged Martin West's superior gifts in this domain, but he himself taught verse composition informally at Columbia University for decades. Despite the very narrow curriculum of St Paul's, however, it was also there that Alan was introduced, in 1951, by another of the masters, M. S. McIntosh, to the Greek epigrams of the Greek Anthology, which was to play a critical role throughout his scholarly life.⁵

From St Paul's, after a very brief stint in the army,⁶ and the better part of a year enjoyably spent teaching Latin at Brunswick School near Brighton in Sussex, he gained a scholarship in 1957 at New College, Oxford, where his tutors were Eric Yorke and Geoffrey de Ste Croix. He obtained Firsts in Mods in 1959 and Greats in 1961; undergraduate prizes included the Craven Scholarship, the De Paravicini Scholarship and the Chancellor's Prize for Latin Prose. His contemporaries, several of whom were

²He did indeed later claim (to Charlotte Innes) that he was not much of a student at this age, although the academic record contradicts this recollection.

³See Cameron's remarks in 'Three tributes given by Jane Lightfoot, Alan Cameron and Robert Parker in memory of Martin Litchfield West', All Souls College, Oxford, 24 October 2015. The three classmates took part in producing the privately published *Apodosis: Essays Presented to Dr W. W. Cruickshank to Mark his Eightieth Birthday* (1992). Cruickshank was the more scholarly of the two Classics teachers, the sociable Cotter being best known for his books on bridge; see on him M. L. West in his Balzan Prize acceptance speech, printed in P. J. Finglass, C. Collard and N. J. Richardson (eds.), *Hesperos: Studies in Ancient Greek Poetry Presented to M. L. West on his Seventieth Birthday* (Oxford, 2007), p. xx. Although Cameron strongly emphasises Cruickshank's role in his references to St Paul's, John North has confirmed Cotter's importance as a teacher. It was Cruickshank, however, who formed a kind of external conscience for some of the students later on (a point I owe to Stephanie West).

⁴A statement true only of elite boys' schools, actually.

⁵See Cameron's *Wandering Poets* (Oxford, 2016), p. 10, on which a number of points in the next couple of paragraphs depend. McIntosh, according to John North, was the form master in their first year.

⁶Which he chose to do at this point, deferring university, and enjoyed, getting on well with the cross-section of men undergoing military training. But he was discharged after six weeks because of the hereditary knee ailment Osgood-Schlatter disease.

also members of Eduard Fraenkel's seminar,⁷ included Martin West, Christopher Jones, Stephanie West and Averil Sutton, who became his first wife. Alan has written, perhaps with hindsight, about his chafing against the classical Oxford of the 1950s, with its curricular rigidities and separation of literature from history, although he acknowledges the important role that Fraenkel's seminar played in his scholarly development.⁸ His relationship with Oxford, despite the easy brilliance of his undergraduate career, seems to have remained somewhat ambivalent. He neither pursued a further degree there, nor sought a fellowship there (there are various stories about that). As he later said, 'If I had done research in Oxford, I might never have turned to late antiquity.'⁹

But his turn towards the later empire was driven as well by more positive stimuli, most directly from reading (along with Averil) a copy of Gibbon he bought shortly after his Oxford finals and took on a Black Forest holiday; perhaps more indirectly from the burgeoning of interest in the period (and specifically in late paganism), with developments such as the appearance (in 1963) of *The Conflict between Paganism and Christianity in the Fourth Century*, edited by Arnaldo Momigliano, who became an important mentor.¹⁰ The late Roman focus and work on Claudian, however, were clearly taking shape already before the publication of that book.

Immediately after Greats, he took up a post already in hand, on Yorke's recommendation, before he took his finals (Assistant Lecturer, then Lecturer, in Humanity, i.e. Latin) at Glasgow, where he spent three years (1961–1964). The teaching must have been somewhat strange for someone with Alan's background. The Professor of Humanity, the influential and eccentric C. J. Fordyce, expected the junior members of staff to do all the correcting of papers in Latin composition, feeding him lists of howlers he could use in class.

Glasgow had, however, an excellent copyright library, and already during those years, in 1963 and 1964, he began the writing of the torrent of publications that marked the next half-century, first with some short notes and then with longer articles, on (among other things) Ammianus, the *Historia Augusta*, Palladas, and 'Christianity and tradition in the historiography of the late Empire',¹¹ this last jointly with Averil Cameron, whom he had married after his first year at Glasgow, when she graduated

⁷ See S. West, 'Eduard Fraenkel recalled', in C. Stray (ed.), *Oxford Classics: Teaching and Learning 1800–2000* (London, 2007), pp. 203–18. Fraenkel had retired from the Corpus Chair of Latin in 1953 but continued his seminars as well as his lectures.

⁸ A. Cameron, *Callimachus and His Critics* (Princeton, NJ, 2007), p. x.

⁹ Cameron, 'Claudian revisited', in his *Wandering Poets*, p. 134.

¹⁰ This is a suggestion of C. P. Jones in his remarks at the memorial service at Columbia. Momigliano figures in the acknowledgments in *Claudian* and *The Greek Anthology*.

¹¹ Averil Cameron and Alan Cameron, 'Christianity and tradition in the historiography of the Late Empire', *The Classical Quarterly*, New Series 14 (1964), 316–28.

from Oxford. She was given a graduate scholarship from Glasgow and began work there on the dissertation that was to become her book on Agathias, a topic suggested by Robert Browning. One can see in Alan's early articles the outlines of preoccupations that would remain with him to the end of his life; his last article on Palladas dates to 2016. And the characteristics of his scholarly writing seem fully formed almost from the start: the vast command of ancient literature and modern scholarship, the philological precision in reading texts, the taste for polemic, the self-assuredness, the crisp and fluent prose, the wide scholarly network.

He was already, since leaving Oxford, engaged with Claudian, the Greek Alexandrian poet known for his Latin panegyrics, and he gave his first public lecture (to the Roman Society, in 1963) on the poet. As he says, 'I was looking for a topic that combined Latin and Greek and was both literary and historical. All my interests seemed to come together in Claudian: a brilliant Latin poet; a Greek by birth and also a Greek poet; and a major but unexploited source for an important but otherwise ill-documented period of history.' He took on the subject 'with the self-confidence of which only twenty-two-year-olds are capable' in the face of contrary advice from 'Tom Brown' Stevens.¹² His landmark article 'Wandering Poets: a literary movement in Byzantine Egypt',¹³ which appeared in 1965, was part of this same move into the poetry of the late empire, both Greek and Latin.

In *Claudian: Poetry and Propaganda at the Court of Honorius* (Oxford, 1970), we find his distinctive qualities as a scholar and writer already on full display at length. Polemic, for one, in the preface: 'My acknowledgments to published works are fully recorded in the annotation—often, alas, by way of rebuttal. I could wish that this had not been necessary, but where my views differed widely from those generally held, it would have been misleading to state them without full justification.' The footnotes indeed cite the secondary literature widely, but not so as to overwhelm. Finding primary sources missed by previous scholars plays a larger role, as does sheer logical argument, albeit reinforced by forceful assertion. Taking a strongly chronological approach to the poems, he described Claudian as a propagandist for Stilicho. He also pointed to Claudian's ability to occupy an important role at a Christian court despite being a pagan. One sees here a foreshadowing of themes prominent in later work, particularly *The Last Pagans of Rome* (Oxford, 2011), rejecting views that saw Christians and pagans as separate, antagonistic groups.

In 1964 he was appointed as lecturer in Latin at Bedford College London. Like many (but far from all) of his contemporaries, he had never considered pursuing a

¹² Cameron, 'Claudian revisited', p. 134.

¹³ A. Cameron, 'Wandering poets: a literary movement in Byzantine Egypt', *Historia: Zeitschrift für Alte Geschichte*, 14 (1965), 470–509.

doctoral degree, and in later life he took pleasure in correcting anyone who addressed him as ‘Doctor’ Cameron.¹⁴ But in 1971, the year after the appearance of the book on Claudian, he was promoted to Reader at Bedford, and in 1972 appointed to the chair in Latin at King’s College London. It is impossible to imagine such a trajectory today. Already while at Bedford he and Averil spent a year visiting at Columbia University, both of them teaching in the graduate school, caring for their newborn son Daniel, despite Gilbert Highet’s best attempts to dissuade them from coming with an infant, and chancing to be there in the most tumultuous year in that university’s modern history, with the student uprising of spring 1968.¹⁵ Somehow, that experience did not put him off New York, a city he loved; indeed, he found the events exciting and stimulating. He returned to New York in 1977, when he received and accepted the offer of a permanent appointment at Columbia as Anthon Professor of Latin Language and Literature, a post he held until his retirement in 2008. He became very much at home in American culture and (Democratic) politics.¹⁶

Along with all his other projects, the London years were marked by a deep involvement in the large British Academy-funded project the *Prosopography of the Later Roman Empire*, for the first volume of which (Oxford, 1971) he wrote most of the literary entries; he was part of the editorial team for the second volume (Oxford, 1980) and chaired it in his last year in London. This involvement certainly contributed to his historical side and his involvement with material culture.

The five years at King’s College were anything but quiet; what was to become later *The Greek Anthology* (and give birth earlier to *Porphyrius* and *Circus Factions*) was under way, under ‘the provisional title *Early Byzantine Epigrams in the Greek Anthology*’.¹⁷ Here we see already the accidental (or opportunistic) character that Alan accurately ascribed to many of his books, for he goes on to say, ‘While writing it [a chapter of his planned book] I learned that Louis Robert had identified some of the epigrams in question on a statue base recently excavated in Istanbul. To my surprise and delight he replied to my inquiries by inviting me to publish the monument in his stead.’ Fearsome polemicist though Robert could be, he was also capable of great generosity and kindness towards young scholars, as I experienced myself.

This side road led to two books, one directly focused on the epigrams that were its genesis, *Porphyrius the Charioteer* (Oxford, 1973), and the second and more directly

¹⁴Averil Cameron, instead, moved her doctoral supervision to Arnaldo Momigliano in London, as Glasgow would not permit her to continue in absentia.

¹⁵See his ‘Student rebellion at Columbia’, *Oxford Magazine* (Trinity no. 8, 1968), 403–4.

¹⁶In hospital, coming out of anaesthesia after his last operation in summer 2017, on being asked the usual question (to test his mental condition) about who was president of the United States, he replied ‘I prefer not to say.’

¹⁷A. Cameron, *Porphyrius, the Charioteer* (Oxford, 1973), p. v.

historical *Circus Factions: Blues and Greens at Rome and Byzantium* (Oxford, 1976). *Porphyrius* begins with a publication of a statue base bearing epigrams already known from the Greek Anthology honouring a famous charioteer of this name, before the book goes on to ‘investigate a number of wider problems’, which Alan admits ‘may at first sight seem to have little to do with either Porphyrius or his monument’. Indeed, the book proceeds to try to reconstruct the entire set of monuments that would have borne the remainder of the many epigrams concerning Porphyrius and other charioteers, and to establish the critical text and chronology of all of these; the texts are carefully collated against the various manuscripts of Planudes’ collection of epigrams. Concerns and methods of analysis found in the later book on the Anthology are visible here; but so too is an early engagement with the archaeological history of Constantinople and with the artistic side of the monument, as the reliefs are investigated in considerable detail and with the usual seemingly exhaustive command of the bibliography in all languages. The interest in Constantinople is also reflected in a seminar jointly led with Averil Cameron at King’s College in 1974–76, which led eventually to a volume translating and commenting on an eighth-century text, the *Parastaseis Syntomoi Chronikai*, edited by Averil Cameron and Judith Herrin, with Alan listed as a contributor.¹⁸

For all this technical learning, however, the book is not limited to these detailed (and, as he described *The Greek Anthology*, ‘austere’) studies. It begins the discussion to be continued in *Circus Factions* of the world of the charioteers. He notes, ‘The Byzantines had two heroes, Norman Baynes once remarked: “the winner in the chariot race and the ascetic saint”. There is a whole literature on the ascetic saint, yet not so much as a single good article devoted to the fame of the charioteer.’ It must be said that forty-five years later there is a bit more bibliography on the circus, but the ascetics’ lead in scholarly literature has only widened to proportions unimaginable in 1973. Alan Cameron, a sports fan (baseball and tennis, to be sure, not chariot racing) and no friend to organised religion, did not contribute to that development.

The conclusion to *Porphyrius* begins the work of providing a larger context to the charioteer’s monuments: at least a temporary discontinuance around the year 500 of wild-beast shows and pantomimes, and a rise in factional violence during the reign of Anastasius. The statues of Porphyrius, unprecedented as far as we know, are to be explained ‘as part of Anastasius’ wider policy towards the factions’, of trying to keep the Blues and Greens fairly evenly balanced, with Porphyrius changing faction fairly frequently.

¹⁸ Averil Cameron and J. Herrin (eds.), *Constantinople in the Early Eighth Century: the Parastaseis Syntomoi Chronikai*, in conjunction with Alan Cameron, Robin Cormack and Charlotte Roueché (Leiden, 1984).

Circus Factions, the 'companion' volume to *Porphyrius*, opens with a declaration of war on the orthodox interpretation of the factions in 'social, religious and political rather than sporting terms' and the consequent focus of scholarly investigation on questions related to these domains: 'The most obvious and important aspects of the subject have never been studied at all.' The most recent synthetic work, published only in 1968, J. Jarry's *Hérésies et factions dans l'Empire Byzantin du IV^e au VII^e siècle*, is dismissed as a 'spectacular marriage of traditional falsehood with original fantasy' that has 'put it beyond the reach of ordinary criticism'. The first part of *Circus Factions*, we are told, is devoted to demolishing previous scholarship, despite which 'I have silently ignored most of the wilder flights of my predecessors'. The second part is then Alan's own construction of a 'realistic account' of the phenomenon. Along the way, he has found it necessary to investigate 'another underresearched topic, the history of popular entertainment in the Roman world'. The preface ends the acknowledgments with 'The argumentation and presentation of the whole book owes most of such lucidity as it possesses to the vigilant criticism and unflinching judgement of Averil Cameron, who also removed most of its adverbs.'

The challenges offered by the subject were in fact considerable, as Alan set out not merely to study the circus factions (an inaccurate description, he argues, but retained because of its wide usage) at their peak in the early Byzantine period, but over a period of about 1,200 years from the early Roman empire to the twelfth century; and, therefore, not merely at Byzantium but in the Roman world as a whole. This, he says, has never been attempted: classical scholars have stuck to the high empire, Byzantinists to later Constantinople, the two agreeing that there was a radical change between the earlier and later factions, a change representing more fundamental changes in the Empire, whereby the factions became in effect political parties representing the will of the people. Probably no one familiar with Alan's scholarly *modus operandi* even at this stage of his career will be surprised to learn that he discards all of this as so much rubbish. The supposed differences between early and late empire are distilled into six points, of which three are 'simply false', while the others reflect Byzantinists' ignorance of the early empire. Not that there was no change, but the real changes that occurred bear no resemblance to the traditional picture. 'The assumption which I wish particularly to combat is that these changes represent a growth of popular sovereignty.'

The argument is long and complex, and I shall not summarise it here, but it begins (characteristically) with an act of clarification. The *factio*, properly speaking, denoted the professional management and staff of the racing groups. It does not refer to the much larger group of partisans. And neither of these was responsible for financing the races. Constantinople had no 'demes' in the Athenian sense. Only with these (and other) distinctions clear can the rest of the discussion rest on a solid footing. Like

Porphyrius, Circus Factions displays Alan's usual vast command of both primary sources and secondary literature, in this case over a breathtaking span in time and space. Unlike many of his other books, it has hardly any literary side, that having been reserved for *Porphyrius*; the work is essentially historical and its method largely philological. Previous scholars have either not read the sources or have failed to read them accurately. No quarter is given.

Despite the philological detail, the book remains highly readable. Alan sent an inscribed copy to Charlton Heston, along with a printed lecture ('Bread and Circuses'), thinking the actor's experience in driving a chariot in *Ben-Hur* might make it of interest to him. Heston's charming thank-you letter (6 April 1977) says 'Both would have been useful to me when I was acquiring my limited competence as a charioteer.' He suggests having lunch with Alan on his next visit to London; Alan did eventually lunch with his agent but did not follow up beyond that.¹⁹

These first three books, along with his many articles, gave Alan an early reputation. There does not, indeed, seem to have been a time when his gifts went unrecognised; the invitation to Columbia for 1967/8 was an early sign of his international reputation. Although not quite as young at election as his (six months' senior) schoolmate Martin West (FBA 1973, at thirty-five years old, a near record), Alan was elected to the British Academy at thirty-seven (1975).

Given the rapid succession of books, it is perhaps not surprising that there were (at least by his standards) relatively few articles in the first half of the 1970s, and the early years after the move to Columbia were also not the most productive in that respect, as he adjusted to academic and domestic change and settled into a university still going through a profound financial crisis. He shortly found himself acting chairman of the Department of Greek and Latin, and then chairman. Administration was not his natural *métier*, to put it mildly, and Alan never changed in that respect any more than in others. But his scholarly stature gave him credibility with the administration, and he put his classically trained persuasive powers to good use.²⁰ He also put considerable effort into improving the quality of the department's faculty and graduate students, with considerable success. He did not, however, take much interest in his memberships in scholarly organisations, and his curriculum vitae is singularly bare of the kinds of professional service that most academics routinely undertake.

¹⁹ I am indebted to Carla Asher for a copy of the letter, and to Charlotte Innes for the information on the limited follow-up.

²⁰ He was proud of (and I grateful for) what he regarded as his greatest success in persuasion, getting the dean to allow me to be brought up for tenure at a time when that was nearly impossible. But his gifts as a persuader go back to childhood; his brother records being conned into lending his cashbox for a penny a year to serve as the treasury of the astronomy society (see below).

The later 1970s were also in reality more productive on the scholarly front than would appear from a list of publications, as it was then that he wrote the core of his book *The Greek Anthology: from Meleager to Planudes* (Oxford, 1993), already under way in the early 1970s, as we have seen. This was indeed submitted to Oxford University Press in 1980, but ‘languished in the limbo of copy-editing for a record decade, while I made fitful additions in the intervals of pursuing other projects’. The ‘limbo’ in question was actually Alan’s desk, as his passive resistance to dealing with the copy-editor’s queries made it easier for him to do almost anything else than come to terms with the minutiae of putting the book in final form. Only after prodding (from Debra Nails, he says in the preface) did he finally finish the job, dating the preface in April 1991. Whether eleven years in copy-editing is a record, I do not know, but it might be. Alan acknowledges McIntosh’s impact on the thirteen-year-old Cameron, with Greek epigrams ‘declaimed in a sonorous Irish brogue’. But he credits later work by Gow and Aubreton for leading him to try to ‘penetrate the deeper mysteries of structure and sources’, a good capsule description of Alan’s interests in most of his books. With characteristic disconnection between printed polemic and personal relationships, he rejects ‘Aubreton’s methods and conclusions in their entirety’ while thanking him for assistance.

The approach too is typical. After tracing the development of the epigram as a type of poetry, he looks at the collections of epigrams that formed the basis of the eventual (c. AD 900) work of Constantine Cephalas, and its later derivatives the *Palatine Anthology* (later in the tenth century) and the *Planudean Anthology* (1301), our two key manuscripts, along with some shorter extracts. The first of these earlier works, the *Garland of Meleager* (dated here c.100–90 BC), played a decisive role in creating (so Alan argues) the genre of anthology and its defining focus on short poems mainly in elegiac couplets. The second major anthology, that of Philip of Thessalonica, is argued to belong to the reign of Nero. In both cases, the book provides a detailed and incisive account of the poets and poems included, and how these are to be dated. The third major source in the eventual anthology was the *Cycle of Agathias* (c. 568). Cephalas’ work, which does not survive, is tied to the great migration of classical texts from ‘uncial’ to minuscule script, and a detailed analysis teases out the condition of the copies that he had to work from and the way in which each anthology was organised, along with Cephalas’ working methods and those of the creators of the surviving codex. Cephalas is the hero of the book, one might say, subsequently all but forgotten because of the fame of Planudes, whose anthology dominated until the Palatine Anthology was published in the nineteenth century.

We shared an interest in consuls, I from studying the chronological usages of the Egyptian papyrus documents and he from his knowledge of the social and political milieu of the late Roman elite. Consulates indeed already figure prominently in

Claudian. Out of a couple of small notes grew a joint project on the consuls, which eventually resulted in our *Consuls of the Later Roman Empire* (Atlanta, GA, 1987, with Klaas Worp and Seth Schwartz), to which Alan contributed much of the historical background on the consular elite and sections on the literary sources. But this work also led Alan in many other directions visible in his articles, among them late Roman aristocratic naming conventions and the consular diptychs. An interest in art as evidence for the aristocracy was not entirely new, and his detailed description of the reliefs on the Porphyrius monuments showed his engagement with the literature on late antique art, but it is really from 1981 on that he became deeply engaged with the ivories; at his death he left unfinished a planned work on the subject (jointly with Anthony Cutler). A collection of his articles on aspects of the art of Late Antiquity is currently in press.²¹

Another offspring from the 1980s, and a descendant again of *Claudian*, was the only other co-authored book in Alan's bibliography, *Barbarians and Politics at the Court of Arcadius* (Berkeley, CA, 1993). An interest in Synesius' *Egyptian Tale* announced in *Claudian*, but then laid aside, was brought back to life by reading a draft of an article by Tim Barnes in 1983: 'I was moved to strong disagreement and sent him a list of comments longer than his manuscript. But for that stimulus (and the lively exchange of views that followed, each of us convincing the other on some key points), this book would never have been written.' The joint authorship with Jacqueline Long and contributions from Lee Sherry were the result of a graduate seminar on Synesius that Alan conducted not long after.

The work of Synesius that had initially sparked Alan's interest, here referred to by its other title (*De providentia*), belongs to the limited body of evidence for the political situation in the court at Constantinople during the period after Theodosius' death (395) when Stilicho was regent in the West and Claudian writing his poetry. The book uses a detailed study of this work (of which a translation of the 'extraordinarily difficult Greek' is provided) and of Synesius' *De regno* to challenge most previous views of eastern politics in the period around 400, often seen as representing a contest between pro-barbarian and anti-barbarian parties, the barbarians in question being mainly the Goths. There have also been attempts to identify a pro-pagan 'party'. The set of views attacked here, however, 'rests entirely on a misinterpretation and misdating of Synesius's two works'.²² Cameron and Long redate these works, and Synesius' ambassadorship from Cyrene to the court of Constantinople, two years earlier than they had usually been put; this may seem like a small matter, but it requires the veiled

²¹ A. Cameron, *Historical Studies in Late Roman Art and Archaeology* (Leuven, in press), with an introduction by Jaś Elsner.

²² A. Cameron and J. Long, *Barbarians and Politics at the Court of Arcadius* (Berkeley, CA, 1993), p. 9.

language of his works to be taken as referring to entirely different people and events and thus giving a completely divergent view of the period: ‘since there was no *pro-barbarian* party, there was no antibarbarian *party*’. Synesius’ writing is analysed in detail, ‘revealing it to be a far more subtle, complex, and deceitful work than has been appreciated hitherto’. And Synesius himself ‘was in fact an orthodox, if unconventional, Christian’. Thus, ‘in short, there emerges an entirely new picture of the crisis of the year 400’.

Callimachus and his Critics (1995) is introduced with what by now is practically a topos, which is not to say it is untrue: ‘Books (mine anyhow) have a way of growing in unexpected directions. This one started life as a reinterpretation of the *Aetia* prologue, its limited purpose to show that Callimachus’s concern was elegy, not epic.’ But it grew and grew: ‘Much of the book is in fact more of a prolegomena to the study of Hellenistic (and so also Roman) poetry than a study of Callimachus alone. It is a social as much as a literary history of Greek poetry in the early third century.’ That may leave some territory unclaimed, but not much! And, of course, he cannot pass up the occasion to point out that Callimachus’ famous dictum (‘A big book is a big evil’ [or ‘big bore’ as Alan rendered it]) was tongue in cheek and can’t be used to criticise the 524 pages devoted to him here.²³

It will come as no surprise that the book opens with a bracing attack on much of what scholars have thought they could learn about the life, chronology, and character of the poet from his works and the scattered bits of ancient and Byzantine evidence. Callimachus emerges as a member of the Cyrenaean aristocracy, brought up at the Ptolemaic court, neither sycophant nor critic of Ptolemy Philadelphos. A highly realistic appreciation of the nature of early Hellenistic court life frames this discussion. The Cameron bulldozer proceeds through chapters’ worth of clichés about Hellenistic poetry, leaving rubble in its wake. Cultural isolation, discontinuity, excessive learning, artificiality, marginality, remoteness from public life, and on and on, all are consigned to the trash heap. It is a ‘widespread but unfounded modern notion that Hellenistic kings expected epics from their poets (Chs. X–XVI)’, and Callimachus did not have to fight ‘a life-long battle against epic poetry’.

As the remark quoted earlier suggests, the book is not only about Callimachus, although it does discuss all of his poetry in some detail. It is also about Theocritus, Posidippus, and so on. It is Callimachus in context. The book lacks a conclusion,

²³ Indeed, he argues that *biblion* cannot be taken to mean ‘book’ in our sense, referring as it does just to a papyrus roll: ‘perhaps what Callimachus had in mind was the *sight* of a large roll in the hands of a poet about to recite—that sinking feeling we all know when we observe the thickness of the manuscript a lecturer takes out of his briefcase at the podium’ (Cameron, *Callimachus*, p. 52). Alan was himself a superb lecturer, with a fine sense of audience and what it would listen to.

although one might quote a sentence from the last paragraph of Chapter 17: 'In effect, his polemic was a plea for originality and quality.'

'Like most of my books, this is not one I had planned to write.' Thus Alan found a slightly new phrasing of the usual disclaimer to describe the origins of his 2004 book on *Greek Mythography in the Roman World* (New York). It was in fact, he admits, a distraction from the long labour of writing *Last Pagans*, provoked by a paper sent him by Richard Tarrant on a mythographic work of the Roman period referred to as the *Narrationes*. Reading this, he noticed a similarity to passages in Callimachus' *Diegeseis*, which he had treated in his book on that poet, and he concluded that the *Narrationes* were 'a typical mythographic work of the early empire', designed to help make sure that the propertied classes were familiar with the 'stories every educated person was expected to know'. The emperor Tiberius was a devotee of mythographic trivia. As so often in Alan's work, it is the details of the process of transmission of information that are at the centre of the enquiry, certainly not mythology itself.

The retirement years, lived with characteristic vigour (he kept fit cycling and swimming), allowed Alan finally to finish *The Last Pagans of Rome* (New York, 2011), a massive volume of which the roots can be traced right to the beginning of his scholarly work and at which he worked for many years. At the same time, he produced a series of substantial and important articles sufficient to have earned anyone tenure, some of them side products of the great book but some in other familiar fields such as Palladas, consular diptychs, Ammianus, and the *Historia Augusta*: none of it irrelevant to *The Last Pagans*, of course, as indeed hardly anything he did truly was.

It would be a daunting task to summarise in any detail this capstone to a scholarly life. As Alan describes it, the project began to take shape three decades earlier but kept changing form and substance as it evolved. And yet its deep consistency with an entire career's work is obvious at every step. He sets out to dismantle the 'romantic myth' that the nobles of Rome were 'fearless champions of senatorial privilege, literature lovers, and aficionados of classical (especially Greek) culture as well as the traditional cults', when in fact they were 'arrogant philistine land-grabbers'. There was no pagan revival, there was no last stand of a pagan circle, the revolt of Eugenius was not about religion. The book sets out to demolish comprehensively almost everything usually claimed about the supposed conflict of Christianity and paganism, about the strength of paganism, about priesthoods. Christian rhetoric is (properly) treated as propaganda rather than fact. The list of supposed pagan authors is ruthlessly pruned. 'Many (too many) studies have been devoted to the religious beliefs of Rutilius' runs a characteristic sentence.²⁴

²⁴ Cameron, *Last Pagans*, p. 207.

The path pursued to these conclusions is leisurely. An extraordinary and utterly original chapter is devoted to the origins of the term ‘pagan’ meaning ‘non-Christian’, which Alan sees as having been from the outset a neutral rather than hostile descriptor. He argues that it remains a useful term, dismissing the rival claims of ‘polytheistic’ and other terms as neither more accurate nor more neutral. The name, chronology, and works of Macrobius are treated at length. The claims for pagan aristocrats as editors of classical texts are systematically dismantled. The love of classical culture was shared by pagans and Christians, and not even the revival of interest in Silver Latin was specific to one religion. Chapters follow on correctors and critics, the revival of interest in Livy. Subscriptions in manuscripts are collected and studied, to refute five common assumptions (p. 422): ‘that most of the subscribers were (1) pagans and (2) Roman aristocrats; (3) that the subscribers chose texts that both reflected and were intended to spread their pagan sympathies; (4) that they were consciously preserving precious pagan texts in danger of being lost; and finally (5) that they were performing some sort of serious editorial activity.’ The books actually produced were not scholarly editions but luxury copies for the rich.

The claims made for the importance of Nicomachus Flavianus’ *Annales* as a source for Zonaras, the *Historia Augusta*, Ammianus Marcellinus, and the *epitome de Caesaribus* is given a detailed refutation (64 pages). ‘For the method used to “recover” Flavian’s *Annales*, astrology would be a more appropriate analogy [than astronomy],’ he concludes after a particularly devastating polemic (p. 628). The view of the *Historia Augusta* as part of a ‘pagan reaction’ is dismissed, and a date to 375–380 rather than the usual (since Dessau) *c.*395 is proposed. As for the work as pagan propaganda, ‘The author of the *HA* was a frivolous, ignorant person with no agenda worthy of the name at all.’²⁵

None of this came as a surprise to those who had followed the long arc of Alan’s scholarly production. It is, in fact, striking how consistent was his set of interests and approaches from the start of his scholarly career to its end. He was always focused on solving problems, many of them straightforward matters like identification, dating, the sequence of events, the meaning of terms, and relationships between individuals and works. It is hard to see any development in his methods or style of argumentation, even though his knowledge of the sources and scholarly literature continued to deepen over the decades, hard though it might be for the reader of his early books to imagine any scope for such maturation. One book led to another, growing at an oblique angle, without formalised projects, and almost everything he wrote can to some degree be seen in embryo in *Claudian*. Even what for someone else would be a springboard to

²⁵Ibid., p. 781.

broad synthesis always for Alan resolved itself into a set of problems to be solved and arguments to be won.

It is not as if a synthetic view of his subjects was missing from his thought. And he had a keen sense of realities and actual people of antiquity; they were not just objects of philological enquiry. Many of his arguments, throughout his writing, arise from a sense that some view must be wrong because it is incompatible with a broader understanding of the political, literary, institutional, linguistic, social, or religious context.²⁶ His more encompassing thoughts about these subjects can be found sprinkled throughout all of his books and articles. But he never sought to produce a synthesis in any of the subjects in which he was expert that would be non-argumentative in style and readily accessible for an audience that did not know six or more languages and was not prepared to follow him into every detail of a topic. His lecturing and teaching show that it was not inability to express himself in a less argumentative and technical way that led to this gap (as many of us would see it) in his work. Such writing was simply not what he enjoyed doing as a scholar, and his devotion to unenjoyed service work was not great. He also saw little value in theory (or Theory) and engaged with it only rarely and grudgingly.

Alan Cameron's American career was marked by the honours that one might anticipate, given his scholarly distinction: fellowships from the National Endowment for the Humanities, the Guggenheim Foundation, and the Institute for Advanced Study; election to the American Academy of Arts and Sciences (1978) shortly after his arrival in the United States, and later the American Philosophical Society (1992). *The Greek Anthology* received the Charles J. Goodwin Award from the American Philological Association, and *Greek Mythography in the Roman World* was awarded Columbia College's Lionel Trilling Award. The British Academy's own Kenyon Medal in 2013 capped his list of honours.

Alan was, as could readily be seen by all, enormously and justifiably confident of himself and his abilities. But this self-confidence, so visible in scholarly polemic and (not surprisingly) sometimes resented, generally translated in personal life not into arrogance but into complete comfort with others, whether in a classroom, lecturing to alumni, in social situations or conversing with staff in his apartment building. His large apartment on Riverside Drive near campus was the Classics Department's main space for social functions for decades, and his hospitality to guests—professional or personal, previously known to him or not, even unanticipated—is legendary, as is his generosity to, and enjoyment of the company of, graduate students and younger

²⁶ To pick an instance at random: *Circus Factions* p. 19 n. 1: 'Dvornik mistranslates the Balsamon passage "drew revenues *from* the entertainments for their upkeep". There was (of course) no revenue from ancient spectacles of this nature.'

scholars. His dislike for hierarchy and pomposity was noteworthy, perhaps a factor in his decision to make his career and life in the more fluid American environment. He rather cultivated the classic image of the absent-minded professor, constantly losing (but often later finding or having returned to him) all manner of things, a characteristic visible already at eleven years old, and failing to deliver grades and recommendations, not to speak of proofs, on schedule. (As department chair, I once fined him for failing to turn in grades.) On the other hand, despite his disengagement with all things administrative he had a good repertory of household skills and became expert in the use of the word-processing program *Nota Bene* for producing his books; he proudly reports in the preface to *Callimachus* that he submitted it in camera-ready copy. He was an intrepid user of the *Thesaurus Linguae Graecae*.

His scholarly work was unmistakably the centre of his life, and at times one suspected that he did little preparation for class, at least for undergraduate language classes; he liked lecturing better and put more effort into it, even if sometimes at the last moment. But his erudition, memory, clarity, wit and charm of exposition were such that he could teach almost any class on the spur of the moment and leave the students with a sense that they had learned something from a great intellect and had fun doing it. These qualities, coupled with a certain irreverence, made him an outstandingly successful lecturer on alumni tours and cruises, an activity in which he engaged often and took much pleasure.

It should also be remarked that Alan's self-confidence (in scholarly matters, at any rate), self-direction and unwillingness to do anything but what he wanted to do coexisted with two other characteristics central to his work. The first is a strong sense of what he owed to his teachers and informal mentors, difficult though it was at times not to think of him as the product of a scholarly virgin birth, given the lack of any formal research supervision at any point. In *Callimachus* he singles out Cruickshank, 'who at St Paul's School first introduced me to the meaning of scholarship'; Eduard Fraenkel; and Arnaldo Momigliano.²⁷ One might add the influence of Louis Robert to that list. The second was a deep collegial connection to both his contemporaries and younger scholars who influenced his work, and great scrupulousness in acknowledging these debts. Those mentioned in the dedications of *Claudian* and *Last Pagans*, thus spanning his career, included Tim Barnes, Glen Bowersock, Peter Brown, William Harris, Peter Knox, John Matthews, Momigliano, John North, and Martin West, but there were many others thanked in other books and articles. This rich network, including some of those he disagreed with in print, is reflected in his extensive archive of scholarly correspondence.

²⁷Of these, only Cruickshank was still alive at the time *Callimachus* was published.

His ability to connect with all types of people owed much to the wide range of his interests, which can be traced from the Herschel Society, the astronomy club he, Martin West and Michael Yudkin founded at Colet Court,²⁸ with his brother Geoffrey joining at St Paul's (after Yudkin continued at another school), right down to his interests in rock and roll, film, opera, theatre, television, wrestling, baseball, and other aspects of popular culture; he loved to dance. His curiosity was vast, always tinged with a boyish enthusiasm, and he seemed unable to avoid becoming deeply knowledgeable and passionate about any subject that he went into at all. But his unpretentious and democratic manner kept all this from becoming as intimidating as it might have been.

Alan Cameron was married three times. Charlotte Innes, a writer, accompanied him on his move to New York in 1977 after she was accepted into the master's program in the Columbia School of Journalism, and became his second wife; that marriage ended in divorce. His third marriage, to a native New Yorker, the educator and university administrator Carla Asher, was happy and lasted nearly two decades until his death. He is survived by her and by his brother Geoffrey Cameron; his sister Sheila Hodge; his children Daniel and Sophie, from his marriage to Averil Cameron; and his grandson Silas, whom Alan was able to meet and enjoy towards the end of his life.

Acknowledgements: I first met Alan Cameron for lunch in London on 10 May 1977, when he had accepted the offer to move to Columbia University, and to a large degree can rely on my own observations for his forty years in New York. I have also drawn on reminiscences by the various speakers at the memorial services in New York and London. For supplementary information and insights, and above all guidance on his earlier years, I am indebted to Carla Asher, Averil Cameron, Geoffrey Cameron, Eleanor Dickey, Jaś Elsner, Alexander Garvie, Charlotte Innes, John North and Stephanie West.

Note on the author: Roger Bagnall is Professor of Ancient History and Leon Levy Director, Emeritus, Institute for the Study of the Ancient World, New York University, and Jay Professor of Greek and Latin and Professor of History, Emeritus, at Columbia University. He is a Corresponding Fellow of the British Academy.

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²⁸ Cameron in West memorial (above, n. 3); memoir by Geoffrey Cameron.