

ARCTOS

ACTA PHILOLOGICA FENNICA

VOL. XLII

HELSINKI 2008

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**GAETANO DE SANCTIS AND
THE MISSING *STORIA DEI ROMANI***

RONALD T. RIDLEY

For Leandro Polverini

One of the greatest historians of Rome¹ was Gaetano de Sanctis (born at Rome 15 October 1870; died there, 9 April 1957). The first two volumes of his *Storia dei Romani* were published in 1907. The next two volumes were the third, published in 1916, and the first part of the fourth, in 1923, which took the story to 167 BC. The narrative eventually reached 134 in volume four, part three, published posthumously in 1964.

It is well known that de Sanctis had plans for the continuation of the work. From the early 1920s in Torino (where he had been appointed in 1900) he was lecturing to students on the later Republic, and had reached the 70s BC by 1926/7. It was in March 1934, in fact, that he proposed to his publisher to write another two volumes (5 and 6), but by 1937 he was content with a fifth volume

¹ Emilio Gabba, in fact, considered de Sanctis the greatest Italian historian of antiquity since Carlo Sigonio: "Riconsiderando l'opera storica di Gaetano de Sanctis", *RFIC* 99 (1971) 5–25, at 5. On Sigonio (1524–1584), see William McCuaig, *Carlo Sigonio*, Princeton 1989. On de Sanctis, we now at last have a monograph: Antonella Amico, *Gaetano de Sanctis. Profilo biografico e attività parlamentare*, Tivoli 2007.

My own relationship to de Sanctis may be defined as follows: I was only sixteen years of age when he died. As a young postgraduate I learned Italian primarily to read his *Storia dei Romani*, and it has remained a formative influence on me ever since. Then in Florence in 1975 I discovered his *Ricordi* and was overwhelmed. I henceforth told every class of my students in Roman history of the events of 1931. And in 1982 I met one of his most famous students, Piero Treves, and we instantly became fast friends; he visited Australia in 1984 and lectured on de Sanctis. I wrote the entry on de Sanctis in the *Encyclopedia of historians and historical writing*, 2 vols, London 1999: 2,1049–50.

in three parts. This last plan was reaffirmed in April 1950. The *Storia* was to reach to the foundations of the Principate.²

In this anniversary year and the fiftieth since his death, therefore, two questions are proposed:

1. why were de Sanctis' plans not carried out?
2. how would that history have portrayed the later Republic?

To demonstrate that these questions are of vital importance, de Sanctis himself defined his *Storia dei Romani* as his "Lebenswerk".³

It is Leandro Polverini who has devoted most attention to both problems. He is able to list a number of things which diverted de Sanctis from the *Storia*: his editorship of the famous Italian classical journal *Rivista di filologia classica* (founded in 1873) 1923–9; his editorship of the classical section of the *Enciclopedia italiana* 1929–39; his turn to his *Storia dei Greci*, published in 1939; worries about the need to revise the first two volumes: mentioned in 1937, but renounced in 1950; and difficulties with publishers: Laterza withdrew in 1932, Giuseppe Principato (Milan) was involved in 1934, then Fratelli Bocca (now also in Milan) in 1937. The continuation, when it finally began appearing in 1953, was by Nuova Italia (Florence).⁴

Such things are listed, but what they meant in his scholarly life is not explained. An obvious example is the editorship of the classical section of the *Enciclopedia*. The evidence is before us, but unexploited. We can only imagine what it meant to commission and edit all the thousands of classical entries over thirty-five volumes. What we know is that de Sanctis himself was author of no fewer than 124 articles 1929–1948.⁵ Some are a page or so in the folio-sized, densely printed pages of the encyclopedia, but he wrote the five to six pages on each of the great historians (Herodotus, Thucydides, Polybios and Livy), as well as the five pages on Carthage and the more than twenty pages on Greece.

Everyone knows of two other personal matters which had the gravest effect on de Sanctis' life, both personal and public. The first was the stripping from him of his university chair at Rome in November 1931, when, along with

² See Leandro Polverini, introduction to de Sanctis, *La guerra sociale*, Florence 1976, xivf.

³ Letter of de Sanctis to Giovanni Mercati, 23 November 1939, quoted by Paolo Vian, "Un provvedimento segreto", *Strenna dei Romanisti* 2006, 669–685, at 677.

⁴ Polverini (above n. 2) xivf.

⁵ The list can be found in de Sanctis, *Scritti minori* (henceforth *SM*), 6 vols, Rome 1966–83, vol. V, appendix.

only ten others out of a total university professoriate of about 1,200, he refused to take the oath to teach nothing in conflict with the ideology of the Fascist regime. How any work in the 1930s was possible is amazing, but in fact his Greek history was produced in this decade.⁶

As horrendous as this political victimisation was, de Sanctis at the same time suffered an even worse disaster: he went blind.⁷ He had henceforth to rely on readers and amanuenses.⁸ He alludes to this affliction in his diary. In February 1932 he apparently hoped that his sight would recover. He complained of the enforced idleness. He could still read slowly, but could not skim texts. By May he could not read: all around him was a white fog in which objects were indistinct. By the next year he could barely see what he was writing.⁹

Distractions in the 1920s

The above matters go a long way to explaining the fact that *thirty* years elapsed between the appearance of IV,1 (1923) and IV,2 (1953), although the ground was being prepared in the 1920s. There is to hand, however, much more

⁶ How he survived financially is now known. As editor for the *Enciclopedia italiana* until 1939 he received 1,300 lire per month. When this came to an end, his friend in the Vatican library, cardinal Giovanni Mercati, induced Pius XII to continue the same sum in payment for his presidency of the Pontifical Academy and for lectures, which he in fact never gave, at the Pontificio Istituto di Archeologia Cristiana. Vian (n. 3).

⁷ Arnaldo Momigliano states that his blindness threatened in 1929 and was 'definitivo' in 1931: "In memoria di Gaetano de Sanctis", *RSI* 69 (1957) 177–195 = *Secondo contributo*, Rome 1960, 299–317, at 315. Momigliano (1908–1987) was a student of de Sanctis in the mid 1920s at Torino. He was, in fact, to be appointed his successor in 1932 when de Sanctis was dismissed, only to be dismissed himself in 1938 under the racial laws. Piero Treves also states that de Sanctis' blindness began in 1929 but that it led to total sightlessness in the following decade: "Gaetano de Sanctis", *Dizionario biografico degli Italiani* 39 (1991) 297–309, at 305. Treves (1911–92) was one of de Sanctis' last students in Torino, 1928/9. Albino Garzetti stated that de Sanctis spent the last twenty-seven years of his life in complete blindness: "Gaetano de Sanctis", *Vita e pensiero* 41 (1958) 389–402, at 390, so from 1930. Garzetti (1914–98) was a student at Pavia but came under de Sanctis' influence as a postgraduate. Luigi Moretti, de Sanctis' last assistant, and author of the article on him in *Enc. ital.* (Supplement 3, 477) states that he was completely blind from 1938.

For a list of de Sanctis' students in Torino, see *Commemorazione di Gaetano de Sanctis*, Torino 1970, 47.

⁸ Polverini (above n. 2) xxiii.

⁹ S. Accame (a cura di), *Il diario segreto di Gaetano de Sanctis*, in *Nuova antologia*, 1994–5, republished in Florence (ND), quoted by numbered sections: 475, 477, 504, 511, 516.

evidence about de Sanctis' activities in the 1920s. Thanks to the tireless efforts of Silvio Accame, his literary executor, we know of at least *three* very time-consuming and distracting matters.¹⁰ The first was his membership of, and candidature for, the Partito Popolare. The papal ban on Catholic political activity from 1870 was finally lifted in 1919, when the party was formed. From that date de Sanctis was "firmly convinced that the only route to salvation for Italy and humanity" (note the rather characteristic overstatement) "is that indicated by the Partito Popolare."¹¹ The party stood, amongst other things, for the defence of the small farmers and votes for women. De Sanctis stood as a candidate three times: in November 1919, in 1920, and in May 1921. He lost on the first and third occasions, and in 1920, in provincial elections, although he won, he was disqualified on a technicality. This political activity was extremely time-consuming and draining of energies, but in fact, it was being conducted while the first part of volume four was being completed.¹²

The second major activity at this time was the Catholic Association of Culture, established in Torino in 1920 to disseminate and defend Christian thought and art. It made very rigorist calls for the constant and total subordination of life and profession to religion. De Sanctis was the first President. The association was supposedly apolitical (!): one wonders what these people thought was happening all around them. We know that de Sanctis was himself quite aware. In October 1922 he declared that "Catiline is marching on Rome."¹³ On the other hand in 1921 he suggested a lecture on Ireland – without any reference to contemporary events! The constant preoccupations of

¹⁰ S. Accame, *Gaetano de Sanctis fra cultura e politica*, Florence 1975. Accame (1910–1997) was de Sanctis' student in his last year at Rome 1931. He was his literary executor. This volume is most useful for the light it throws on de Sanctis' life in the 1920s, but also frustrating. One hardly needed a volume of this size for what could have been elucidated in two articles. Accame could not bear to throw away a single line, but at the same time acts as a censor in blotting out names in interesting contexts. One is reminded of the criticism of Lothar Wickert for his massive biography of Theodor Mommsen.

¹¹ *Ibid.* 227

¹² *Ibid.* 120. Two further political matters are revealed. In the early 1920s de Sanctis was very favourable to Prince Umberto, hoping that he might head an anti-Fascist movement: he was bitterly disappointed (313f). And he was very pleased with the Lateran Pact (331, 343) – not realising that it cut the ground from under Catholic opposition to the Fascists and led to the oath of 1931!

¹³ *Ibid.* 120. One might compare de Sanctis agonising in 1922 over the relations between the Federazione Universitaria Cattolica Italiana and the Unione Femminile Cattolica Italiana (127).

the President were, in fact, the finances and the arranging of the programme of lectures: so many speakers approached either declined – or accepted and then failed to appear.

The third activity was de Sanctis' appointment in 1922 as President of the Piedmontese chapter of the Ordine Militare Gerusalemitano del Santo Sepolcro.¹⁴ This organisation was especially devoted to the Torino Shroud and to the promotion of a Catholic presence in Palestine. Accame intriguingly reveals that on the first matter de Sanctis was not convinced of the authenticity of the Shroud! As for Palestine, in 1922 the League of Nations approved the British mandate. It is astounding to find that the Patriarch was deeply concerned about the possibility of Protestants gaining any advantage in the Holy Land. De Sanctis was, however, mainly occupied with squabbles over the order of precedence with the other military orders and endless shameless demands from would-be new members, while those who were members showed appalling apathy in regard to their duties. In all this, the mention of the Order's main focus, namely churches and missions, let alone schools, orphanages and hospitals, is very rare.

In sum, de Sanctis' activity for the Partito Popolare until it was dissolved in 1926 was very demanding, but may well have been instructive for the historian: he saw parallels between its programme and that of the Gracchi, on whom he was lecturing in the early 1920s. The other two matters, however – the Catholic Cultural Association and the Order of the Holy Sepulchre – were simply endless leeches of his energies in the most frustrating and fruitless bickering and sectarianism. They lasted until he left Torino in 1929.

Alongside these occupations, another of far greater importance is only briefly alluded to: the Unione Accademica Internazionale. This was formed immediately after the war, and de Sanctis was the delegate of the Torino Academy both at the national and the international level. He saw it as his main mission to restore international academic collegiality, notably by the inclusion of the scholars from the defeated countries. He travelled to Paris in 1919, and his advice on archaeological cooperation was crucial at the League of Nations in 1923. His enormous contribution was recognised by his election as President of the International Union 1926–9.¹⁵ Anyone with the patience to read his indefatigable reports in the proceedings of the Torino Academy over a dozen

¹⁴ *Ibid.* 271f.

¹⁵ *Commemorazione* (above n. 7), 18f, 48f.

years, however, will soon see how exhausting his duties were here. He was the delegate of the Torino Academy from the inception of the Union in 1920. Congresses were held each year in Brussels, usually in May, and he almost always attended. In the first years, indeed, he was the sole Italian representative: even the Lincei could not bother sending a delegate! The Union instantly began a number of grand projects: a new edition of du Cange's *Glossarium*, the Corpus of Greek vases, supplements to the *CIL* and the *Forma Orbis Romani*, not to mention a catalogue of the Greek alchemists. From the beginning de Sanctis was negotiating with the government for adequate funds for Italy to play her full role. He characteristically threatened to resign if they were not granted, and by 1923 100,000 lire had been assigned. He had a finger in every pie; for example proposing amendments to British proposals for the administration of the antiquities of the late Ottoman Empire – which were accepted. In 1924 he drew up the statute for the national union. Then in 1925, the President, Theophile Homolle, died, and although de Sanctis could not for once attend the next meeting because of his broken thigh, such was his reputation that he was elected. Then all his anxieties about Italy's part in the many projects were transformed into international ones. Moves were finally made in 1926 for the establishment of an international committee for historical sciences; de Sanctis was delighted that the divisions of the war would finally be healed. The first meeting was in Paris in November 1926, and de Sanctis was present. In 1930 he was succeeded as President by the English papyrologist Frederick Kenyon, and although he had moved to Rome in 1929, he continued as Torino delegate until 1932.

The *Storia dei Greci*

The above activities explain in good part the fate of the *Storia dei Romani* in the 1920s. We turn next to the 1930s. Everyone mentions that he wrote and published then his *Storia dei Greci*, but its place in his life is analysed only very superficially. Why did he turn to a history of the Greeks while his history of the Romans was only half finished and when his personal life in the most fundamental ways was undergoing upheaval? Perhaps the most obvious answer was that in 1929 he gave up a chair in ancient history to become Beloch's successor in Greek history at Rome. It may be assumed that a *magnum opus* in that field was expected. The real answers are, in fact, much more profound.

De Sanctis' first great work was his *Atthis* (1898), his 'habilitation' thesis. His first travel outside Italy had been to Greece and Crete in 1895 and 1899. His reviewing for the *Rivista di filologia* had been equally divided between Greek and Roman works. And of the 124 articles in the *Enciclopedia Italiana* 1929–1948, sixty-three are on Greek matters, twenty-two on Carthage, related African subjects, and the Punic Wars, and only thirty-seven on other Roman topics; indeed, only two relate to the late Republic: Jugurtha (XVII,313–5) and Saturninus (XXX,911).

The 1930s were devoted to the *Storia dei Greci*, not the *Storia dei Romani*. Why this is so de Sanctis himself strangely gave little indication where one would expect it, in the preface. He revealed only that the Greek history was not a history "in the strict sense of the word, because it was not a true and organic development. In fact, among those political formations (i.e. the *poleis*) in their totality, there was never an effective unity or a wish for, or even vague notion of, political unity." In the all-important judgement on the nature of the radical Athenian democracy, he declared it "an amazing spectacle", but it shattered the "moral unity" of Athens which existed before the Persian wars, by alienating the aristocratic "malcontents" and turning them into traitors.¹⁶

The most memorable and revealing chapter of the whole work is the last: Sokrates. He is depicted by de Sanctis as the founder of a "true ethicalness" in western history, based on a knowledge of goodness and justice. He was a member, astonishing to relate, of the "City of God", and represented "the conscious affirmation of sacred and intangible rights of the human personality contrasted with those of the city (state)." Had he sought to escape the penalty meted out to him he would have annihilated everything for which he stood. He was the "protomartyr in the history of Western thought." Athens' reaction was an attempt to obstruct human progress: the introduction of a new element in human history, the ethical personality. That conflict between the individual and the state would henceforth dominate European history.¹⁷

The history which appeared in 1939 was not the end of the story. That central figure Perikles required further definition, and the biography appeared in 1944. This was a characteristic frontal attack on orthodoxy. The indictment of the man so often the subject of adulation could not be clearer: Perikles' policies

¹⁶ *Storia dei Greci*, 2 vols, Florence 1939, 1,3, II,119.

¹⁷ *Ibid.* II, chap. 16.

were a disaster on all fronts. His war strategy could not have led to Athens' victory, and the mistakes which ultimately led to Athens' defeat cannot be blamed on others. The Sicilian expedition was consistent with Perikles' expansion north and west. Parallel with that, he wrecked the ideals of the Delian League and turned it from mutual defence into exploitation. On the other hand, Athens was a real democracy, and no city of the ancient world was so well governed (compare the *Storia* above). Athenian society was vitiated, however, by the existence of slavery and the contradictions of empire: the freedom of Athens and the enslavement of her subjects. Athens represented a "triumph of civic selfishness"; even the great works of art were paid for by others.

There are two contemporary references: long periods of personal power mean that supporters and opponents of the great man are usually mediocre [!] and when de Sanctis emotionally relates Perikles' call to resistance when "the dear and glorious country is in danger," a footnote reveals that this was written during the second Allied bombardment of Rome.¹⁸

Some modern commentators have drawn attention to the themes which so attracted de Sanctis here. Greek history, noted Pietro de Francisci, raised fundamental questions. Within the *polis* there was the tension between individualism and the state; outside there was the conflict between the autonomy of the *polis* and the drive towards larger units, even Greek unity, not to mention the problem of power, illustrated by the "fatal law" of the Melian dialogue.¹⁹ Only two of the most acute commentators, however, have cut to the heart of the problem. The Greeks were the people whom de Sanctis loved best, asserted Piero Treves. That history illustrated one of his favourite maxims: "where there is no freedom, there is no history".²⁰ Or as Emilio Gabba put it, "there is no doubt that de Sanctis was controlled by a concept of Greece seen as the eternal paradigm of the love of freedom, of art, of thought and of politics."²¹ We have de Sanctis' own words:

¹⁸ *Pericle*, Milan 1944, 272, 265.

¹⁹ Pietro de Francisci, "Commemorazione del socio Gaetano de Sanctis", *RPAA* 30/31 (1957–9) 23–33. De Francisci (1883–1971) was a student at Pavia.

²⁰ Treves (above n. 7) 306, 308.

²¹ The negative side of this was pointed out by Gabba in a review of *Storia dei Romani* 4,3, in *RSI* 76 (1964) 1056: an inability to understand and evaluate fairly cultures other than Greek; for example, praise for the Athenian expedition to Egypt as the first attempt to bring European civilisation to the barbarians (*Pericle*, 102), referring to fifth century Egypt! It is notable – and expected – that a major source of criticism of de Sanctis' historiography came from Pavia.

"There is in the ancient period no higher, more conscious, more effective force of freedom than that demonstrated in the most noble pages of the history of the Greeks."²²

De Sanctis' secret diary

There is still one source of supreme value to be investigated if we wish to understand de Sanctis in the 1920s and 1930s: his diary. It sheds an entirely sharper and harsher light on him. He declared that it was a mirror of his spiritual life, written entirely for himself. It would not be published, he thought, but might be read – or if it were published it would be too late to help his reputation.²³

It is, in fact, very disturbing to read. It recalls Augustine's *Confessions* in so many ways, and reveals a tortured man. They were his own words: "Who would have said, with his calm appearance, that he was torturing himself so?" And the suffering was not only his own, but what he forced on those closest to him. He wrote in 1920 of his craving for a kind word and of his future as a "grey, flat sea". The excitements of scientists, artists and mystics [sic] were denied him, as he "stumbled about in the gloom of little scientific investigations and inadequate artistic expression." By 1921 he wrote of his need for constant "conversion" from sin, his agonising over the motives for suffering and joy, as he called for more Christian heroism, and the dangers of truth to the thing dearest to him, his moral life. By the early 1930s he was analysing martyrdom and the way it might increase one's influence: think of Sokrates and Christ; it certainly separated the trivial from the immortal in one's work. Not that non-resistance appealed to him: in this way the force for good was rendered infertile. He realised that he was the great dissenter from his fellow-citizens and contemporaries. He was desperate about not being understood, even by those he most loved; the soul thirsting for love was a daily cross. He became increasingly convinced of the "incurable wickedness of human nature" – because he was unmoved by others' misfortunes. He returned to the theme of martyrdom: his life had been one long battle under the banner of God. He

²² Alberto Ghisalberti, "Gaetano de Sanctis", *Rassegna storica del Risorgimento* 44 (1957) iii–xi, at v.

²³ *Il diario segreto* (n. 9) 466, 465, 472.

feared most that some "wicked contingency" would strangle his creativity in "the sweatbath of Necessity", but although he might fall at his post, others would take up the struggle for human progress. Although almost all his friends had betrayed him, he "brandished his unconquered will like a steel blade." In 1932, condemned to immobility and darkness, and with his helpers "trampled on", he preferred to be alone. His most beloved student had betrayed him. Even the people dearest to him made him suffer, because he could not understand their lack of feeling for him.²⁴

There are naturally many contemporary allusions of great value. In November 1922 he recorded the abuse of freedom, usurped in the name of violence by armed gangs. Now only those regarded as mad or criminal seriously desired freedom – meaning that they found it intolerable to be either slaves or masters: recalling the dedication of the *Storia* 4,1. In January 1924 he described the behaviour of mobs and how most intellectuals made a show of agreeing with them; those who disagreed or even remained silent were persecuted. In November 1931 he expressed his desperation in the face of pain, hatred, calumny and treachery. In the aftermath of his refusal to take the oath, he was proud in forty years "never to have buckled," but now he was tired and wounded; the struggle had, nevertheless, to continue. In January 1932 he wrote of the "brutalising and treacherous embrace" of the lie and how anyone who escaped its contagion was regarded as less than human. As his pain increased and his energies flagged he still, however, looked forward to the battle for the triumph of "Good and Truth on earth." One of the most memorable entries (February 1932) described Nero's hypocritical adulators. Once again he drew comfort from the ultimate triumph of Sokrates and Christ, and recalled that as a child he had read the lives of the martyrs and wished to imitate their example! He had been tested and given witness, but instead of overwhelming joy, he felt only the agony of the wound. And he continued to dwell on the repellent vice of

²⁴ *Ibid.* 483 (tortured), 416 (kind word), 417 (future), 418 (excitements), 430 (conversion), 435 (motives), 439 (truth), 465 (smiles), 469 (martyrdom), 468 (resistance), 472 (dissenter), 479 (understanding), 493 (wickedness), 502 (battle), 507 struggle), 511 (unconquered), 512 (helpers), 515 (betrayal).

As to the identity of the betrayer, one might think of Momigliano, who took over de Sanctis' teaching at the Sapienza after his dismissal, but more likely is Aldo Ferrabino, whose *Dissoluzione della libertà nella Grecia antica*, Padova 1929 had been severely reviewed by de Sanctis (*SM* VI, 439–55) and who then wrote a short article on freedom (1931) in which he contrasted that of Greece and Rome and held up the former to a withering criticism as 'arbitrary and protectionist', *Scritti di filosofia e storia*, Florence 1962, 89–95.

adulation, the characteristic vice of slaves, except that those whom he had in mind had been colleagues and students, acquainted with the highest culture.²⁵ As unpleasant as it is to intrude upon de Sanctis' most private thoughts in the two most crucial decades of his life, we discover a man tormented in every way from the 1920s. And yet this is not the explanation for his failure to complete the *Storia dei Romani*, because he turned instead to Greek history. This, as we have seen, was his favourite history, and his retelling of that classical epic was seen by him as the most effective way to emphasise the values which he held most dear. The diary also reveals analysis of parallels to his own situation in Sokrates – and Christ.

And thus he returned to the *Storia dei Romani* at the end of the Second World War. Now, however, there were more distractions than ever. He was restored to his chair for life in 1944, and that meant teaching obligations which, despite his blindness, he took very seriously. He was President of the *Enciclopedia Italiana* 1947–54; as such, incredibly, he had read to him the complete proofs for the two volumes of the 1938–1948 supplement! He was President of the *Pontificia Accademia di Archeologia* until his death, a post to which he had been appointed in 1930. He was *Commissario della Giunta Centrale per gli Studi Storici* 1944–52; in this capacity he was responsible more than anyone else for the reestablishment of the *Istituto per la Storia del Risorgimento*. He was one of the special commissioners for the reestablishment of the *Accademia dei Lincei*. He was the first President of the Association of Catholic University Teachers. And from 1950 he was Senator for life. As always there was personal tragedy: his beloved wife Emilia died in 1947 after a long battle with cancer.²⁶

It seemed, however, that as the previous great upheaval in his life, the appointment to Rome and then his dismissal, had brought him to the Greeks, so this next great change, the Liberation and his restoration, was to send him back

²⁵ *Ibid.* 443 (armed bands), 444 (freedom), 448 (mobs), 457 (desperation), 458 (tired), 459 (lie), 462 (battle), 464 (prophecy), 481 (Nero), 484 (Sokrates and Christ), 487 (oath), 496 (adulation).

²⁶ Treves (above n. 7) 308 says that he was fully occupied by the *Enciclopedia*. On the *Istituto Risorgimento* see Ghisalberti (above n. 22). On the *Lincei*, see de Sanctis' *Ricordi della mia vita*, Florence 1970, chap. 14, one of the most moving. Emilia Rosmini, born Casalmoferrato 30 June 1877, died Rome 28 June 1947. It is extraordinary that none of the many biographical sources on de Sanctis provide these dates. She and her husband are buried side by side in the Verano (Riguadro 35). I owe the greatest debt of gratitude to Lucos Cozza for helping me with this.

after twenty years to the Romans to finish what he had begun. It was then that the cruel fate that had dogged his life dealt him yet another blow. He had finally completed the manuscript by January 1946 and handed it to the publisher. The latter's car was stolen on the way from Rome to Milan – and the manuscript was never seen again.²⁷ Blind and in his mid-70s, de Sanctis set to work again, and IV,2,1 finally appeared in 1953, IV,2,2 in 1957, eight months after his death, and IV,3 in 1964, the sections devoted to the cultural, social and economic history of the second century from 167 to 134 BC.

The reconstruction of the missing history

We now turn to our second question, the content of the missing history. This can be fairly fully reconstructed. It is again Leandro Polverini who alone has devoted some attention to this matter.²⁸ He lists the main sources available for the reconstruction, but offers only a page or so on the nature of that history. He also quotes a valuable letter of de Sanctis to Ernesto Codignola in 1951 explaining his interpretation of the late Republic in broad terms. The first part of volume four (1923) showed Roman imperialism while it respected others' freedom; the following parts showed the transition to intolerance of that freedom. The fifth volume was to show how Rome, "having destroyed others' freedom, necessarily lost her own."

The starting-point, as everyone agrees, is the famous paper "Dopoguerra antica" of 1920, consciously informed by the situation after 1918.²⁹ De Sanctis compared the fall of the Carthaginian empire with that of the Austro-Hungarians and the exhaustion of 202 with that of 1918; he contrasted the peace of 202 with that of Versailles (of which he disapproved). For Rome, however, after that date, the picture he painted was of great pessimism. Popular sovereignty had been replaced by senatorial government, in which the ruling oligarchy was tighter than ever, but the senate was not fit to govern. It was

²⁷ Ghisalberti (above n. 22) iii, recorded de Sanctis weeping over the loss.

²⁸ Polverini, "La storia dei Romani che non fu scritta", *StudRom* 30 (1982) 449–462.

²⁹ "Dopoguerra antica", *Atene e Roma* 1 (1920) 3–14, 73–89, reprinted with an excellent commentary by Treves in his *Studi dell'antichità classica nell'Ottocento*, Milan 1962, 1246–82.

arrogant, in alliance with the unscrupulous nouveaux riches (the *equites*), and ever more conservative when reform was essential.

His analysis was three-fold. First, constitutionally, the senate was unable to devise a practical and accountable form of government for the overseas provinces; this failure led to anarchy, civil war, and the end of freedom. Second, socially and economically, the Italian small farmers were in crisis. As they declined the urban poor increased, and the *equites* profited. There was no hope of a compromise solution, only revolution, with the same results as the constitutional failure. Third, on the international front, after 202 war became essential for Rome. And that point led to de Sanctis' famous view that Rome made a fatal mistake in directing her energies to the East instead of the West. He was strongly in favour of "civilizing" imperialism. Rome's conquest of Spain was "a very important step in the history of human progress." There was similar scope in Gaul (although he recognised Camille Julien's lament for the loss of Gallic freedom). These western wars were, however, disorganised and incompetent. Augustus was the first consciously to understand Italy's duties in the West. In the East, on the other hand, were three great monarchies in balance, and constituting no threat to Rome. Even before the Hannibalic War, however, Rome had interfered across the Adriatic, even before she controlled the Alps. This is what caused Philip's alliance with Hannibal, although he in fact did nothing to help him. In sum, the West offered space and resources to Rome, the East had neither.

The first non-defensive war by Rome was the Second Macedonian, which set her on the road to world conquest. She would no longer tolerate equals. The Greek world, of which Rome destroyed the delicate balance, offered "riches, glory and power." Behind this new policy was Scipio Africanus. His influence on world history was thus enormous. Rome may have wanted only political and economic domination (!) but the conquered had to be rendered unable to challenge Rome again. Rome's intervention was marked by atrocities: for example, the enslavement of 150,000 Epirotes by Aemilius Paullus. Italian farmers were ruined by conscription, and Italy was flooded with slaves (de Sanctis judged that their lamented power as freedmen simply illustrated the "justice immanent in history" avenging their enslavement).

There were also moral consequences of these conquests: the decadence of the nobility and the *equites* in the late Republic. There were no checks on anyone, there was contact with peoples of "inferior culture", and instant riches. The claim that "captive Greece took captive her conqueror" is hardly true. The

damage to Greece, in fact, was enormous: the destruction of her flourishing culture in philosophy, science and literature. For de Sanctis the senseless killing of Archimedes was emblematic. The end of Greek culture under Rome signalled the end of classical culture. Plinio Fraccaro may have declared de Sanctis' preference for Roman imperialism in the West "of no value",³⁰ but his wide-ranging re-evaluation of the second century marks an important stage in modern Roman historiography.

The very next year, 1921, he published "Rivoluzione e reazione nell'età dei Gracchi," showing the product of his lectures.³¹ He placed the Gracchan revolution in a very broad context: it ended in the military monarchy and the death of political liberty ("the glory of classical civilisation"), which was recovered by the "Latins" only two millennia later with the French Revolution.

Tiberius Gracchus had no idea of starting a revolution. The people supported his land law against the illegal occupation of state land. On the family relationships of the Gracchi de Sanctis referred to Friedrich Münzer's *Römische Adelsparteien und Adelsfamilien*, which had appeared only a year earlier – so we know that he had already read it.³² The oligarchy's resort to tribunician veto was natural. Tiberius replied with the *iustitium*, and tried to reach a compromise, but in vain. His deposition of Octavius was "the path to revolution." Such treatment of magistrates was accepted in Greece, but in fact was known also in Rome: Fabius proposed to abrogate Scipio's power in 205 (Livy 29,19,6), tribunes proposed dismissing Manlius, consul 178 (41,6,2), and Lepidus was stripped of all powers in 36 (*Epit.* 56). De Sanctis strangely thought that the procedure was invalid against tribunes, given their sacrosanctity (but that was their protection against assault). "That day wounded the champion and fulcrum of the constitution, the sacrosanct tribunician power,

³⁰ Plinio Fraccaro, *Opuscula*, Pavia 1956–7, 1,32.

³¹ "Rivoluzione e reazione nell'età dei Gracchi", *A&R* 2 (1921) 209–37, reprinted *SM* IV, 39–69.

³² De Sanctis has further comments on Münzer in *SM* VI, 512 and 526, a review of Richard Haywood's *Studies on Scipio Africanus*. Münzer's book was "fundamental" but exaggerated the effect of family relationships on politics. De Sanctis claimed that such divisions had little influence on the "wonderful unity" of the senatorial war effort. The book was rich in material evaluated for the first time, but the factions were not to be considered too rigidly: they formed and dissolved continually; for example, after opposition between Fabius and Scipio, Paullus' two sons were adopted by those two families. There was enmity between Cato and Africanus, but the former supported Aemilianus in the Third Punic War. See also below n. 49.

and the constitution was virtually overthrown."Tiberius had signed his own death warrant (de Sanctis compared the Jeu de Paume oath of 1789).

Reconstruction, according to de Sanctis, passes through subversion. Patience might have worked: obstructing tribunes could have been defeated in election (he was clearly here reliving his own contemporary political action focussing on education of the masses, but this was quite inappropriate in a state based on annual rotation of office).³³ By holding out prompt solutions to his electors, Tiberius had become their prisoner. The ruling classes were blind, never imagining that the people would assert its power. De Sanctis declared that the deposition of Octavius and subsequently the land law were both nul and void, but the law could not be touched, because the people was too powerful. Tiberius needed reelection to protect him from danger, but that would have given him powers "incompatible with the constitution of a free state." The presiding magistrate was crucial. At first it was Rubrius, who was favourable to Tiberius. When the first two tribes voted for him, his enemies were in uproar. Then Rubrius was to be replaced by Mucius, who had succeeded Octavius. When the other tribunes objected, the election was postponed. Tiberius was not a Robespierre: he lacked the fanaticism. The final assault was led by the young aristocrats, who had had military training. The result was that the constitution was fundamentally changed: now the aristocracy could rule only by force. However revolutionary Tiberius was, the reactionaries were far greater subvertors of the constitution. The blind aristocracy could not make even economic sacrifices for the good of the nation. And if anyone thought that Scipio Aemilianus was the right leader, he was, to the contrary, "the arch incarnation of Roman imperialism."³⁴

Four years later de Sanctis was awarded an honorary doctorate by Oxford. He read a paper to the Society for Roman Studies on Sallust and the Jugurthine War, again obviously derived from his lectures.³⁵ This is a fundamental attack on the reliability of that Roman historian, whose indictment

³³ This paper was mocked by two famous historians who declared it the programme of the Popular Party in Gracchan guise (in chiave gracchiana), *Commemorazione* (above n. 7) 41.

³⁴ Gabba noted two major objections: that Rome was drawn into overseas conquests in fact by appeals from allies; and that the Gracchi may have been generous, but were also anachronistic in trying to reinstate small farmers: "Riconsiderando l'opera storica di Gaetano de Sanctis" (above n. 1) at 20.

³⁵ "Sallustio e la guerra di Giugurtha", *SM IV*, 157–76.

of the Roman nobility had gone virtually unchallenged.³⁶ Sallust believed that it was Rome's duty to intervene in Numidia, but the kingdom's position as *amicus et socius* required no such thing. Numidia constituted no danger to Rome, even when "reunited". The main danger to Rome at this time lay to the north, from the Germans, who had defeated the consul Carbo in 113.

The rational way to curb Jugurtha's power, in de Sanctis' view, was "peaceful intervention". Unlike Thucydides and Polybios (the latter for once was right about something!),³⁷ Sallust does not examine in detail the causes of the war: its necessity is assumed. Its opponents are, by definition, corrupt. De Sanctis argued that the real reason was not the modern "civilising mission", like the policy of France in Algeria or Italy in N. Africa (what bitter ironies lie in wait for historians' judgements!) because the Romans left Numidia at the end of the war. It was rather for profit, and thus it was promoted by the *equites*, while the senate was dragged in and the people was least enthusiastic of all. The division, contrary to Sallust, was not between senate and people, but between senate and *equites*. The alliance which had destroyed the Gracchi was now broken.

The first intervention was by L. Opimius and nine other envoys. They were corrupted, claimed Sallust, but in fact the division of the kingdom made sense. Opimius was, however, condemned in court, by the people's whim (*Iug.* 40,5) stated Sallust, quite oblivious of the fact that the courts were in the hands of the *equites*! And when Cirta was captured by Jugurtha, Italians were killed by his order (*Iug.* 26,3). Challenging this, de Sanctis compared the capture of Phokaia in the Antiochan War, when the praetor Regillus was unable to control his troops (Livy 37,32). Even then Sallust claimed that there were apologists in the senate (*Iug.* 27,1). When the Romans intervened, Calpurnius Bestia (consul 111) aimed at peace with honour, leaving Jugurtha in power, but Sallust claimed that he had been corrupted.

³⁶ It is interesting to see that it is, in fact, regularly cited in books on Sallust; for example, R. Syme, *Sallust*, Berkeley 1964, 174f; George Paul, *Historical commentary on Sallust's Bellum Jugurthinum*, Liverpool 1984, seems to avoid it altogether.

De Sanctis summed up Sallust elsewhere as "one of the most lying historians of antiquity" (*SM* VI, 350). (He seems not to have begun to see through Tacitus, although his own countryman, Emilio Ciaceri (1909) did, thus founding our current understanding). What he held most against Sallust was his hypocrisy, "Dopoguerra antica" (above n. 29) 1278.

³⁷ "The more one studies Polybios, the more one's respect for the writer and the man decreases," he wrote in 1928 (*SM* VI, 394).

There followed the "scandalous comedy" of Jugurtha's coming to Rome as King's Evidence [sic]. Memmius, "a factious vulgarian", was exalted by Sallust; his opponent, the tribune Baebius, was said to have been bribed (*Iug.* 33,2), but he was never tried. All of Jugurtha's bribery could not, however, avoid the war. Numidia was to be subject to the same misgovernment and exploitation as the rest of the Mediterranean. There were even graver, unforeseen results: "an unnecessary colonial war" had to be fought by the proletariat, because the better-off were unwilling to fight, and they were then linked to their general in an unprecedented way. Political factions, as well, had been envenomed by the "struggles without quarter."

In close connection with the Jugurthine War was the paper which appeared, by an incredible irony, in 1931. The subject was Metellus Numidicus.³⁸ De Sanctis continued his attack on Sallust's credibility. The brother of Metellus' predecessor Postumius was supposed to have been defeated and passed under the yoke (*Iug.* 38,9–10), and the treaty repudiated by the senate. There is, however, no mention of guarantors or hostages; this was only a preliminary to peace, not ratified by senate or people. When Metellus took over, his aims were not military occupation, but security for Roman commercial interests. He could not defeat the guerilla fighters or destroy the forts: he made expeditions across enemy territory to tempt or demoralise them, attacked arms depots, and plotted to have Jugurtha betrayed. Marius followed the same three-pronged strategy, but had many more troops.

Metellus was censor in 103, but did nothing about the Italian problem. Then in 100 he headed the opposition to just rewards for the troops who had defeated first Jugurtha then the Germans. This resulted in all the upheavals which followed: the alliance of Marius with Saturninus, the illegality, and the *sanctio*. Metellus refused to take the oath. De Sanctis questioned whether that was a consistent and heroic act, which distinguished him from the general cowardice. He thought that it showed, rather, Metellus' "inability to recognise reality and the inescapable necessity which it imposed." And it ended his career: even on his return from exile, he was outside the play of the parties. His rigidity led to his failure as a politician and a general, and hastened the fall of the nobility which he wished at all costs to avoid. It was in November of the very year in which this paper was published that de Sanctis refused to take the

³⁸ "Q. Caecilius Metellus Numidicus", *Atti II Cong. Stud. Rom.*, 1931 = *Problemi di storia antica*, Bari 1932, 215–23 = *SM V*, 101–7.

Fascist oath, and was expelled from his chair. Unlike Metellus, however, after a wait of not two years but fourteen, he was restored – and to an even more active and respected role.

In the same year de Sanctis provided three brief chapters, covering from the Gracchi to Sulla, published in the famous German general history, the *Propyläen Geschichte* in ten volumes, in volume II, *Hellas und Rom*, published in Berlin. This enables us to complete any gaps left by the above papers. Gaius Gracchus was "the most important revolutionary in antiquity." He won over the plebeians by a very destructive food law (the grain was sold way below cost); de Sanctis offered no comment on the *equites* and the jury law. His downfall was caused by the alliance of senate and *equites* and the antagonism of the people to the franchise law. That was the fundamental question, which would not go away. The best aristocrats finally acted, led by Drusus the Younger. The Social War was followed by the Mithradatic. Since the victorious general in that would be the "uncrowned leader" of the state, the democrats³⁹ renewed their alliance with Marius. Cinna was the most clever and energetic leader of that party. Sulla's victory did, indeed, overthrow all constitutional norms. He did not aspire to rule alone, but as a "party man", re-establishing the oligarchy. His lasting influences were, abroad, the destruction of Athens and, at home, the destruction of the Samnites and Etruscans, which made it impossible to reinvigorate Rome from these peoples. The Italians were to play only a subsidiary role in Roman history. Sulla thus broke the last power in Greece and the rising power of the Italians. Roman life was turned back to before the Gracchi.

These observations can further be supplemented by comments in de Sanctis' reviews, his indefatigable work as editor of *Rivista di filologia* until 1929 and later. He had paradoxically the highest regard for Sulla's generalship. His campaign in Greece was "notable for genius and boldness in concept and execution"; so with the war against the Marians on his return. Both campaigns he labelled "Napoleonic".⁴⁰ Sertorius, on the other hand, he breezily declared to be "historically unimportant", which called forth protests.⁴¹

³⁹ De Sanctis used terms such as democrats, proletarii, capitalists, throughout.

⁴⁰ *SM VI*, 350.

⁴¹ *SM VI*, 350 (in a review of Adolf Schulten's biography). Gabba protested against this inaccurate judgement, an example of de Sanctis' "incomprehension" of the last century of the Republic: review of *Storia dei Romani IV,3* (above n. 21) 1056.

His views on Cicero may be glimpsed in his review of Emilio Ciaceri, *Cicerone e i suoi tempi* in 1926. He praised Cicero for destroying Sulla's law depriving Arretium of citizenship, but noted that he was also capable of arousing the lowest passions of the jury (as in the *pro Fonteio*). De Sanctis enjoyed pointing out by the way that those who had once idealised German scholarship were now its fiercest critics! The less attractive side of Cicero was again stressed in 1935. The unprincipled lawyer first defended the provincials (in the *in Verrem*), then defended a corrupt governor (Scaurus in Sardinia in 54).⁴²

There is similarly a pointer to Pompey in the famous review of Rostovtzeff's *Social and economic history of the Roman Empire*. There was a profound difference between him and Caesar: only a madman could have thought of killing Pompey as a tyrant!⁴³ And what of the Principate? It was the end of freedom and therefore of history, noted Treves and Polverini. We have, in fact, his own words. In his *Ricordi* he wrote of "the tyranny of Caesar and Octavian."⁴⁴

The one chapter that was written

There was to be one last surprise. Almost two decades after his death there appeared one whole chapter of the missing fifth volume, but it was the fourth, on the Social War. Some have wondered why he chose to devote himself to this before all else. The answer is partly that he had already obviously done much work on the Gracchi and the age of Marius and Sulla. The real answer, however, is that, as he liked to say, "life is the teacher of history". If there was one topic in the late Republic which would fascinate him it was, as he himself made clear, the last stage in the political unification of Italy, the parallel to the events immediately preceding his own birth and which had such a definitive influence on his own formation. This dream of Italian unity was revived only twenty centuries later.⁴⁵

⁴² *SM VI*, 287f, 934.

⁴³ *SM VI*, 295f.

⁴⁴ Treves (above n. 7) 308; Polverini, *Storia* (above n. 28) 45; de Sanctis, *Ricordi* (above n. 26) 32.

⁴⁵ *La guerra sociale* (above n. 2) 41.

Apart from the narrative of the military operations, which occupies the major part of the chapter of 130 pages, there are telling themes and judgements. De Sanctis had good reason to be interested in oaths: that of the Italians to Drusus (Diod. 37,11) created a "clandestine army" of Italians. The Italian organisation "claimed Italy as a political entity for the first and last time in antiquity." Marius was looked at askance by the oligarchy for his Italian sympathies. De Sanctis praises him not only for his political concessions, but also, unusually, for his generalship, winning victories, tying up major forces, and blocking the road to Rome. The *lex Julia* "for the first time in the history of humanity laid the basis for a great state composed of citizens equal in rights and duties." The *lex Pompeia* was also crucial: it finally broke down the barrier between Gallo-Celtic northern Italy and the Italo-Greek centre and south, although that was not Strabo's aim, which was to counterbalance the various groups of new citizens.⁴⁶

De Sanctis was far too acute to end the chapter there.⁴⁷ He emphasised the selfishness of the oligarchy, which acted as though it had won the war and could resume where it had left off. Sulpicius Rufus continued Drusus' reforms (de Sanctis warned of partisan sources and uncritical moderns). His citizenship law was connected with that on Marius' command: the latter was to guarantee the former. The fatal mistake of Sulpicius and Marius was their failure to foresee the intervention, for the first time, of the army (an early "march on Rome" !). Sulpicius' reforms did not endanger the state, only the oligarchy; Sulla acted for personal reasons, but unwittingly founded the military monarchy.⁴⁸

The above numerous and varied chapters and articles allow us to reconstruct the broad lines of the missing last century of de Sanctis' history of the Republic. It is a very provocative interpretation. It is dominated by, and premised upon, his gravely pessimistic view from the beginning of the second century BC. The world had totally changed with Rome's defeat of Hannibal. A new world power was on the scene, one which would henceforth indulge in endless aggressive wars, the main result of which would be the destruction of

⁴⁶ *Ibid.* 24, 42, 56, 70, 68, 94.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.* A reviewer who either did not read the whole book or did not understand what he did read, complained, *JRS* 71 (1981) 153f – five years after the book was published.

⁴⁸ *La guerra sociale* (above n. 2) 104, 106, 110f, 121. In all this, Polverini noted de Sanctis' attention to Münzer and use of prosopography; for example, the *Livii Drusi* (*ibid.* 10f).

the delicately balanced kingdoms of the Hellenistic world and the end of Greek culture – which for de Sanctis meant the end of classical culture. This foreign policy was based on a fatal mistaken choice: the turn to imperialism in the East instead of the West.

These international problems were paralleled by internal ones: the inadequacy of the city-state government to rule the provinces effectively, the crisis in Roman agriculture with the decline of the small citizen farming class, the uncontrollable corruption of the capitalistic equestrian class, and, looming over everything, the problem of the Italians. De Sanctis flatly declared that the Roman oligarchy was totally incompetent to deal with any of these crises. And his negative estimation of both the Scipios is striking.

He naturally favoured the various reformers: the Gracchi, Drusus the Younger, even Sulpicius Rufus and Cinna. Tiberius Gracchus was an unwitting revolutionary. The turning-point in his tribunate was the deposition of Octavius: this was the beginning of the revolution. His brother's programme made him the most important revolutionary in antiquity. (Had de Sanctis heard, for example, of Akhenaten or Urukagina?)

The history of the end of the second century allowed de Sanctis to turn his attention to a major source – and his estimate of many of them (especially Polybios and Livy) was highly critical. He thought Sallust one of the most mendacious historians: his account of the Jugurthine War was almost totally unreliable. De Sanctis' defence of the oligarchy at this time, however, is rather at odds with his previous judgement. Rome had no need for military interference in Numidia, but Metellus' strategy was adequate, and Marius simply copied it. Metellus was, however, no hero to de Sanctis. By blocking fair rewards for the legions which had fought in Africa and against the Germans, he contributed to the political upheavals that followed.

The Social War was probably seen by de Sanctis as the key event of the last century before the institution of the military monarchy. The war was for him epoch-making in the attempt at nation-building. The main heir of the war, Sulla, was for de Sanctis a political monster – but a brilliant general – although he destroyed his favourite city, Athens! In contrast to such a black and white character, he found others pale and ambivalent, notably Cicero, but Pompey at least was no tyrant. The unavoidable conclusion to the oligarchy's incompetence and reaction was chaos, civil war, and finally autocracy: the age of Caesar and Augustus.

The Pavia School especially dismissed de Sanctis' interpretation as useless and moralising and liable to see the past through the eyes of the present. The history of the last century of the Republic was indubitably life as the teacher of history: he was responding to the Italian trauma during the First World War and then the Fascist horrors of the 1920s and 1930s, not to mention his own birth when the next chapter in Italian unity was written after two millennia. He had told a Torino colleague that documents are dust and that the historian has to give them spirit and life.⁴⁹ John Bagnell Bury in 1926 declared that "no history can be instructive if the personality of the writer is entirely suppressed" and cited Gibbon, Macaulay and Mommsen.⁵⁰ Few historians have had a more individual personality than Gaetano de Sanctis, or left a greater personal impress on their history. Fewer still have paid a higher price to uphold their highest principles.

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⁴⁹ De Sanctis, *Ricordi* (above n. 26) 97.

⁵⁰ J. B. Bury in *The Morning Post*, 30.11.1926, reprinted in *CHJ* 2 (1927) 196–7. This paper was originally given at the Australasian Society for Classical Studies conference at Newcastle, New South Wales, in January 2007, and again at the Finnish Academy in Rome in November of the same year.