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Review of Judith Anne Brown, *John Marco Allegro: The Maverick of the Dead Sea Scrolls*

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BOOK REVIEW

Judith Anne Brown,
John Marco Allegro: The Maverick of the Dead Sea Scrolls
(Studies in the Dead Sea Scrolls and Related Literature;
Grand Rapids/Cambridge: Eerdmans, 2005). Pp. xvi + 288. \$25.

Judith Anne Brown, the daughter of John Allegro, has written a fascinating account of her father's life and career, in the process shedding a welcome light on one of the more maligned of the original editors of the Dead Sea Scrolls. B. was able to draw on her father's personal papers and family archives (especially those of her mother, Joan Allegro) in constructing her account, and the result is a fuller, more personal picture than one normally expects from a scholarly biography.

Brown begins her account with Allegro's childhood in London, his career in the Royal Navy, his courtship of Joan, and his eventual decision to study for the Methodist ministry. Allegro's ministerial studies led him to a degree in Oriental Studies at Manchester University, where he studied with Harold H. Rowley. He then went on to Oxford to read for a Ph.D. with Godfrey Rolles Driver. It was Driver who recommended his student Allegro to Roland de Vaux as a member of the Dead Sea Scrolls editorial team that de Vaux was organizing in the early 1950s.

By far the most rewarding chapters of this biography for Dead Sea Scrolls aficionados will be the chapters dealing with Allegro's work on the Scrolls in Jerusalem in the 1950s and early 1960s. B. quotes extensively from her father's letters home to her mother and includes photographs of Jordanian Jerusalem and the Scrolls taken by Allegro in this period. The result is a lively portrait of an enthusiastic young scholar, entranced by his surroundings and fascinated by the Scrolls.

Several of Allegro's significant character traits emerge in these early chapters. He had an interest in bringing scholarship on the Scrolls to the attention of the general public through popular lectures and books, an interest not necessarily shared by his colleagues. Allegro had a "can-do" attitude that put him at odds with some of the more unworldly members of the team. He also was aware of the importance of money, both for himself personally (he was supporting his young family on an assistant lecturer's salary at Manchester) and for the Scrolls project as a whole.

The first real clouds appeared in Allegro's sky over the rift that occurred in the editorial team as a result of Allegro's controversial claim that 4QpNah (the Nahum peshet) describes the crucifixion of the Teacher of Righteousness and the Qumran community's anticipation of his resurrection a century before Jesus of Nazareth (pp. 76-77). Other members of the team (Roland de Vaux, Jozef Milik, Patrick W. Skehan, Jean Starcky, and John Strugnell) wrote a letter to the *Times* of London (quoted on p. 92) deploring what they termed a "misreading" of the text and a "chain of conjectures." As B. states, Allegro reacted to this with bitter anger (p. 95), and his relationship with his colleagues was never the same. The rift was exacerbated by disagreements over the publication of the Copper Scroll, which Allegro had arranged to have opened at the Manchester College of Technology. B. argues convincingly that Allegro was wrongly accused of pirating the Copper Scroll translation before Milik's official publication, when in fact he waited for over three years and credited Milik with "impeccable scholarship" in his decipherment of the Copper Scroll (pp. 115-16).

Allegro's deteriorating relationship with his colleagues seemed to be coupled with a deterioration in his scholarship. Allegro felt it was important to publish the Scrolls as quickly as possible (anticipating the controversies of the 1990s), but his one official Scrolls publication, *Discoveries in the Judaean Desert of Jordan V* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1968), is considered one of the weakest volumes in the series.

Brown spends the last third of her book discussing Allegro's career after his permanent break with the Scrolls team. This part of his life is overshadowed by the debacle over his book *The Sacred Mushroom and the Cross*, which, as B. succinctly remarks, "ruined John's career" (p. 185). Although B. is a most sympathetic reader, even she cannot hide the bad scholarship and electrifying leaps of logic that characterize this work. Rightly or wrongly, Allegro would never be taken seriously as a scholar again.

The last chapters detail a decline in Allegro's fortunes, characterized by estrangement from his family, restless hedonism, and many projects begun and abandoned. He died of a heart attack in 1988. I was left with a feeling of sadness for the enthusiastic young scholar who turned into a bitter old dilettante.

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