

## The Local Antiquary in Eighteenth-Century Rome

TAMARA GRIGGS

The conversation turned to the beauties of Rome, the curious things that there are to see here, and the difficulty of satisfying oneself without a good antiquary.

—Monsieur Dufour, *Journal d'un voyage de Bologne* (1718)

**F**IRST of all we must ask ourselves who the antiquaries were." That was Arnaldo Momigliano's comment fifty years ago, and it's still good advice. In the Renaissance, we are told, *antiquarius* meant "lover, collector and student of ancient traditions and remains." Momigliano emphasized the scholarly method and habits of mind that shaped antiquarianism as a form of knowledge, but he had less to say about the antiquary as a social type. To paraphrase Momigliano, I have no reason to challenge the view of the antiquary as an early contributor to modern historical methods, but as a description of who the antiquary was, it is far from complete.<sup>1</sup>

In the eighteenth century, for example, the word *antiquario* was often used to refer to local dealers in antiquities who worked as paid guides to tourists in Grand Tour Rome. Foreign visitors commonly discussed the need for these men in private letters and journals, as found in the diary tracing the Italian journey of four aristocratic French tourists, of whom M. Dufour was one.<sup>2</sup> Given the diversity

When this piece began as a dissertation chapter, Anthony Grafton provided line-by-line comments, both editorial and scholarly, for which I am tremendously grateful. Giovanna Ceserani, Paul Cheney, and Suzanne Marchand offered wonderful advice in its later incarnations. Finally, Claudio Giunta helped me to decode Ignazio Comi's odd locutions.

<sup>1</sup> Arnaldo Momigliano, "Ancient History and the Antiquarian," *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes* 13 (1950), 285–315, esp. 286–87. See also Peter Miller's splendid philosophical study, *Peiresc's Europe: Learning and Virtue in the Seventeenth Century* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2000), and Miller's contextual reading of Momigliano's article, "Introduction: Momigliano, Antiquarianism, and the Cultural Sciences," in *Momigliano and Antiquarianism: Foundations of the Modern Cultural Sciences*, ed. Peter N. Miller (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2007), 3–65.

<sup>2</sup> *Journal d'un voyage de Bologne*, p. 37, General Manuscripts (Bound) (C199,

of motives that drove the study and collection of antiquities in early modern Europe, it makes sense to ask how the trade in antiquities and the quickening pace of the Grand Tour shaped the practice and principles of antiquarianism. This essay focuses on the career of an antiquary who loved, collected, and studied the remains of the past but who also worked as a dealer and local guide in Rome.

### ROME AS CULTURAL CAPITAL

By 1750, the city of Rome had been transformed from the political capital of Catholic Europe into a cosmopolitan hub for artists and architects. Through the establishment of museums, art exhibitions, and academies, the papacy effectively encouraged an increasingly secular image of Rome as the capital of the arts and antiquity.<sup>3</sup> This renewed focus on artistic culture and foreign tourism owed much to the suppression of favoritism within the Roman Curia. A bull issued by the Albani pope, Innocent XII (1691–1700), in 1692 ended the nepotism that had enriched the Ottoboni family under Alexander VII (1689–1691). As a result, the papacy assumed a new responsibility for cultural patronage within the city. Moreover, popes reaped the benefits of the economic crisis that enfeebled Rome's aristocracy during the 1720s and 1730s. Strapped by debts, many of the cardinalate dynasties sold their collections to foreign buyers or to the Capitoline Museum established by Clement XI (1700–1721).<sup>4</sup> Although a few

no. 1286), Department of Rare Books and Special Collections, Princeton University Library. All translations are mine unless otherwise noted. On the history of Roman antiquaries, see Daniela Gallo, "Per una storia degli antiquari romani nel settecento," in *Mélanges de l'École française de Rome* 111–12 (1999), 827–45. Gallo offers a biographical survey of antiquaries over the course of the century, which should be read in conjunction with Ronald T. Ridley, "To Protect the Monuments: The Papal Antiquarian (1534–1870)," *Xenia Antiqua* 1 (1992), 115–54.

<sup>3</sup> Christopher Johns, *Papal Art and Cultural Politics in Rome in the Age of Clement XI* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), and idem, "The Entrepôt of Europe," in *Art in Rome in the Eighteenth Century*, ed. Edgar Peters Bowran and Joseph J. Rishel (Philadelphia: Philadelphia Museum of Art, 2000), 17–47. Also in that volume, Liliana Barroero and Stefano Susinno, "Arcadian Rome, Universal Capital of the Arts," 47–77.

<sup>4</sup> On the economic crisis, see F. Venturi, *Settecento riformatore: Da Muratori a Beccaria, 1730–1764* (Turin: Einaudi, 1969), and V. E. Giuntella, *Roma nel settecento* (Bologna: Cappelli, 1971). For details of the dissolving art collections, see Adolf Michaelis, *Ancient Marbles in Great Britain*, trans. C. A. M. Fennell (Cambridge: Cambridge

prominent cardinals (notably, Alessandro Albani and Valenti Gonzaga) remained active players in patronage and collecting, the Baroque courtly world—and the antiquarian culture it supported—was drawing to a close.

At the same time, the Grand Tour, that great cultural and social experiment of the British elite, was well under way. Although many French and German tourists came to Italy, it was British wealth that fueled the art and antiquities market.<sup>5</sup> In response to this flood of willing buyers, a new type of antiquary emerged, one who operated outside the papal court and served as an agent and urban guide to aristocratic visitors. Rome had long been a magnet for ambitious Italians and foreigners alike. However, the ecclesiastical antiquaries who officially hosted visitors did not see themselves as part of a tourist market. These older antiquaries celebrated the ideals of an eternal and universal Church, promoted the collections of their cardinal patrons, and engaged in archaeological researches that bolstered the Catholic and imperial vision of Rome. They considered erudition within a universal Christian framework and saw themselves as part of the wider Republic of Letters. To understand how the values and aims of ecclesiastical antiquarianism were transformed by the Grand Tour, I will focus on one exceptional antiquary who profited the most from it.

Francesco de' Ficoroni (1664–1747) provided Grand Tourists and Italian scholars with gems, coins, and inscriptions—anything he could buy or uncover himself.<sup>6</sup> Throughout his life, Ficoroni cham-

---

University Press, 1882). On the decline in art patronage, see Francis Haskell, *Patrons and Painters: A Study in the Relations between Italian Art and Society in the Age of the Baroque* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1980).

<sup>5</sup> Andrew Wilton and Ilaria Bignamini, eds., *Grand Tour: The Lure of Italy in the Eighteenth Century*, exhibition catalogue (London: Tate Gallery Publishing, 1996), and Clare Hornsby, ed., *The Impact of Italy: The Grand Tour and Beyond* (London: British School of Rome, 2000). On the antiquities market, see Seymour Howard, "The Antiquarian Market in Rome and the Rise of Neoclassicism: A Basis for Canova's New Classics," in *Studies on Voltaire and the Eighteenth Century* 153 (1976), 1057–68, and Francis Haskell and Nicholas Penny, *Taste and the Antique: The Lure of Classical Sculpture, 1500–1900* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1982).

<sup>6</sup> L. Asor Rosa, "Ficoroni, Francesco de'," in *Dizionario biografico degli Italiani*, vol. 47 (Rome: Istituto della Enciclopedia italiana, 1997), 395–96. Also, Luigi Lavia, "Francesco de' Ficoroni e l'ambiente antiquario romano nella prima metà del Settecento," in *Epistolario di Anton Francesco Gori: Saggi critici, antologia delle lettere e indici*

pioned the traditional value of local and empirical expertise while tailoring his antiquarian research to the tastes of Grand Tourists. By promoting himself as an insider and well-connected dealer, Ficoroni took full advantage of the emerging antiquarian industry in Rome, and between 1690 and 1745 he was the most sought-after antiquary in the city. "All the material that is worth knowing about or buying, and which is dug up every day from the ruins of the Ancient City, is customarily delivered to your home," wrote Conyers Middleton, a client from England.<sup>7</sup> After receiving an inscription from Ficoroni, the scholar Ludovico Muratori warned the director of the Capitoline Museum in Rome, "instead of turning to you, the discoverers of marble antiques go in search of the abbot Ficoroni."<sup>8</sup>

Born in 1664 in a small territory just outside of Rome, Ficoroni considered himself a native of the region. His grandfather had moved to the papal capital from Siena and managed to attract the patronage of the Farnese and Pamphili families. His duties included antiquarian research intended to enhance the reputations of his patrons' princely territories. For Ficoroni, then, the study of antiquities and topography was a family tradition. He eventually settled within the walls of the city and spent most of his life overseeing local excavations, working as a guide to foreign visitors, and making deals from his private collection of antiquities on the Via dei Serpenti. To his buyers, Ficoroni's Roman residence housed objects of covetous desire, but Ficoroni preferred (at least in public) to see his collection in less mercantile terms.

"What was formerly scattered throughout the city," wrote Ignazio

---

*dei mittenti*, ed. Maria Grazia Marzi, Carmela Cardone, and Cristina de Benedictis (Firenze: Firenze University Press, 2004), 131–46.

<sup>7</sup> Conyers Middleton to Ficoroni, August 16, 1726, in Jeffrey Spier and Jonathan Kagan, "Sir Charles Frederick and the Forgery of Ancient Coins in Eighteenth-Century Rome," *Journal of the History of Collections* 12, no. 1 (2000), 35–90 (hereafter Spier and Kagan), quotation at 52. For details of Ficoroni's dealings with another English buyer, see Diana Scarisbrick, "Gem Connoisseurship—The 4th Earl of Carlisle's Correspondence with Francesco de Ficoroni and Antonio Maria Zanetti," *Burlington Magazine* 129, no. 1007 (February 1987), 90–104.

<sup>8</sup> Muratori to Alessandro G. Capponi, September 15, 1741, in *Epistolario di L. A. Muratori*, ed. Matteo Càmpori, 14 vols. (Modena: Tipi della Società tip. modenese, 1901–1922), 9:4163. The papal museum was supposed to staunch the flow of antiquities out of Rome, so it is noteworthy that Ficoroni is here perceived as a threat to the preservation of Rome's heritage.

Comi, "is now brought together in [Ficoroni's] house for everyone to see." Comi's elegy described Ficoroni's residence as having fulfilled one of the central goals of antiquarian scholarship and collecting, that is, to reconstruct the fragments of the ancient city into a pleasing whole and thereby revive the past:

O Rome, look around, you will find yourself in these things.  
His house offers a specimen of you in your entirety.  
In the public squares, you, Fama, write down with garrulous words:  
One house alone contains this city, master of the world.<sup>9</sup>

In reality, Ficoroni's house probably resembled a stock room rather than a microcosm of ancient Rome, but Comi's poem makes clear that Ficoroni wanted to be known as more than a dealer and guide: "all that Francesco not long ago gathered under one roof he makes gleam with his pen."

Indeed, what separated Ficoroni from the anonymous dealers and *ciceroni* (learned guides) in Rome was his use of that "pen." Ficoroni's antiquarian publications were field reports of his own discoveries couched in narratives that appealed to a cosmopolitan audience. His 1732 study of ancient gold pendants came out of his excavation of several mausoleums on the Via Appia; his 1736 illustrated history of ancient theater was based entirely on his own collection of mask imagery, found on local sarcophagi, bas-reliefs, and gems; and his 1744 guidebook to ancient Rome included a tour of all the antiquities he himself had sold or donated to the papal museums. In each of these works, Ficoroni aggressively promoted himself as a well-connected dealer in antiquities and an expert in the field.

Ficoroni's archaeological studies were tailored to suit the tastes of leisure-seeking Grand Tourists; and yet these topics were equally rooted in an older tradition of antiquarianism to which Ficoroni still felt an allegiance. For all his dealings with cosmopolitan travelers, Ficoroni often directed his most erudite works against foreigners whom he believed lacked local expertise and firsthand experience of the historical sites of Rome. In this sense, Ficoroni's writings were

<sup>9</sup> Ignazio Maria Comi, "Elegia ad Romam in honorem praeclarissimi viri D. Francisci Ficoronii de omni re antiquaria optime meriti," in Ficoroni, *De larvis scenicis* (Rome: Typis Antonii de Rubeis, 1750), n.p. Comi, a Neapolitan, possibly an antiquary, is an obscure figure. He does not appear in the biographical dictionaries and seems not to have published any books under his own name.

Janus-faced, simultaneously looking backward to the Baroque ecclesiastic world and forward to the culture of the Grand Tour. It is this Janus-faced quality that makes Ficoroni a crucial figure—as dealer, tourist guide, and scholar—in the gradual adaptation of local antiquarian scholarship to the cosmopolitan tourist market in Rome.

#### OUTSIDERS AND INSIDERS

Ficoroni first came to public attention in 1709 by attacking in print the distinguished scholar and Benedictine monk Bernard de Montfaucon (1655–1741), a member of the Congregation of Saint-Maur in Paris. In 1702 Montfaucon had published a scholarly account of his journey through Italy's archives and antiquity collections. Montfaucon's travel diary was itself modeled after *Museum italicum seu collectio veterum scriptorum* (1687), by Jean Mabillon (1632–1797), which provided a detailed description of manuscript sources in Italian libraries as well as many observations on the Christian monuments of Rome. When Ficoroni issued a combative review of Montfaucon's *Roman Diary*, several critics called attention to the immense social distance between the learned and aristocratic Benedictine and the lowly Roman antiquary.<sup>10</sup>

Paolo Alessandro Maffei, a Venetian patrician and antiquary, described Ficoroni as "a man not even lightly touched with the principles of the most vulgar literature."<sup>11</sup> According to the well-born Maffei, Ficoroni was too distracted by his own menial labors to produce sound scholarship ("having been too much engaged in his occupation of conducting foreigners to see the antiquities of Rome"). He insisted that Ficoroni's dubious occupation as a tour guide automatically disqualified him from assessing the work of learned scholars. In Maffei's words, Ficoroni's book emerged from the "mercantile shop" (*spaccio*

<sup>10</sup> See Bernard de Montfaucon, *Diarium Italicum. Sive monumentorum veterum, bibliothecarum, musaeorum, &c. notitiae singulares in itinere Italico collectae. Additis schematibus ac figuris* (Paris: J. Anisson, 1702), and Ficoroni, *Osservazioni di Francesco de' Ficoroni sopra l'antichità di Roma descritte nel Diario Italico pubblicato in Parigi l'anno 1702 dal M. Rev. Padre Bernardo de Montfaucon, nel fine delle quali s'aggiungono molte cose antiche singolari scoperte ultimamente tra le rovine dell'antichità* (Rome: Antonio de' Rossi, 1709).

<sup>11</sup> P. A. Maffei [Romualdo Riccobaldi, pseud.], *Apologia del "Diario Italico" del molto Rev. padre Don Bernardino Montfaucon Monaco* (Venice: Antonio Bortoli, 1710), preface to the reader.

*mercantile*). He derided Ficoroni for claiming to be both “experienced” (*pratico*) and “learned” (*dotto*), thus evoking for contemporaries the social boundary between mechanical and intellectual knowledge. The true learned antiquary was a library researcher, well read in both ancient sources and modern antiquarian literature. The antiquary who was *pratico* was one who knew the technical details of coins, gems, and inscriptions; he was familiar with a variety of collections and could distinguish between false and true material. As Maffei’s reference to the mercantile shop suggests, this pragmatic expertise was the kind of knowledge often associated with dealers. To combine technical expertise and historical erudition was the highest achievement in the seventeenth-century Republic of Letters. In Maffei’s eyes, Ficoroni’s qualifications fell far short of *dotto*. Claude Gros De Boze, secretary of the Royal Academy of Inscriptions in Paris, agreed with Maffei. In his 1742 eulogy to Montfaucon, De Boze condemned Ficoroni as “one of these antiquaries, whose chief talent consists in showing foreigners where to find the literary curiosities of Rome and its environs, [and who] believed that after five or six years it was in his interest to stop the course of a work which markedly diminished his own utility.”<sup>12</sup>

De Boze and Maffei both misunderstood Ficoroni’s motives in this controversy. As a manual for scholars who were not Grand Tourists, Montfaucon’s publication was hardly a threat to Ficoroni’s profession as a guide. It was written in Latin and crowded with technical records of manuscript catalogues and paleographic notation rather than descriptions of artistic monuments, festivals, and fireworks. Even the motives for his journey placed Montfaucon well outside the culture of aristocratic tourism. The Benedictine went to Italy in the first place because he needed the best manuscripts in order to emend the texts of the Greek fathers.<sup>13</sup>

If Montfaucon’s diary was not a threat to Ficoroni’s activity as a *cicerone*, what prompted the Roman to issue such a scathing critique of the work? In fact, what Ficoroni objected to was the Frenchman’s

<sup>12</sup> Claude Gros De Boze, *Histoire de l’Académie royale des inscriptions et belles-lettres*, vol. 16 (Paris: de l’Imprimerie Royale, 1751), 330.

<sup>13</sup> On the aims of the Benedictine scholars, see Emmanuel de Broglie, *Bernard de Montfaucon et les Bernardins, 1715–1750* (Paris: Librairie Plon, 1891). Montfaucon’s attitude toward his sources was governed by a preoccupation with those antiquities that enabled the clarification of manuscripts.

claim that he was unearthing long-forgotten monuments and manuscripts. Indeed, it was Montfaucon’s treatment of one particular manuscript that provoked the barbed reply. In the Vatican, he had come across a report written in 1594 by a Roman sculptor named Flaminio Vacca. Vacca’s account—little over twenty pages—described the location and identity of many ancient statues discovered in Rome during the sixteenth century. To understand why this work became a point of controversy between the Roman antiquary and the French monk, it is worth taking a brief detour into Vacca’s account of Roman antiquities.

Vacca regarded excavations and the discovery of antiquities as extremely local events. His understanding of Roman antiquities was shaped by tacit knowledge rather than book learning, and his reports of discoveries were rooted in personal memory and conversation. In one characteristic passage, Vacca described an exciting find beneath the Campidoglio:

I remember when I was younger having seen a hole shaped like a chasm above the Campidoglio square, and some who went down there used to say, when coming out of the hole, that a woman riding a bull was down there; and some time later, while talking with my teacher, Vincenzo de Rossi, he told me that he too had descended down the hole and had seen the fable of Jove and Europa in low-relief marble riding the Bull...<sup>14</sup>

The words Vacca chooses here reveal his status as a sculptor-in-training. The “woman riding a bull” becomes refined through the testimony of Vacca’s mentor into “the fable of Jove and Europa in low-relief marble riding the Bull.” Vacca’s knowledge about this particular antiquity was part of his own apprenticeship, in which he moved from a vague understanding of the curiosities beneath his city to a sharper grasp of the vocabulary needed to identify buried sculpture as both ancient mythology and material technique.

In another passage, Vacca tells the story, passed down by his own father, of how a particular antiquity came to be named after its resemblance to certain ring-shaped cakes that were sold in sixteenth-century Rome:

<sup>14</sup> F. Vacca, *Raccolta di memorie di varie antichità trovate in diversi luoghi della città di Roma*, in Faminiano Nardini, *Roma antica* (Rome, 1704), 6n.19, reprinted in Valentino Martinelli, “Flaminio Vacca, scultore e antiquario romano,” *Studi Romani* 2, no. 2 (1954), 156.

[T]he Cardinal della Valle, having taken to digging for treasures, had [workers] dig in the baths of Marcus Agrippa. They found there an enormous *Civica Imperiale* [an imperial coin decorated with the civic crown] of gilded metal; and because it looked like certain *ciambelle*, which at that time they sold throughout Rome, the diggers said, Look it's a *ciambella*; and in order to get a tip, they ran to the Cardinal, saying that they had found a bronze *ciambella*; and a little while later an innkeeper came to live there, and he made his sign the so-called *Ciambella*; and in this way it came to be called forever *la Ciambella*.<sup>15</sup>

In both of these stories, Vacca relied on word of mouth; but it was a particular form of hearsay, the legitimacy of which derived from the local authority of his sources (the cardinal, his mentor, his father). In this passage, Vacca treats the story of how the antiquity got its name with distant amusement. He notes how the workers hastily transformed "gilded metal" into "bronze" for the sake of profit and how the innkeeper capitalized on the fame of the discovery and perpetuated the legend of the *ciambella* with a signboard. Vacca thus acknowledged the haphazard nature of antiquarian knowledge, tied as it was to the spontaneous opportunism of workers, innkeepers, and cardinals, but he also shared with these Romans the assumption that information was intensely local and oral.

Like most learned travelers, Montfaucon knew the value of guide-books and of the services of local intermediaries. In Vacca he found both. Montfaucon decided to adopt Vacca's report as a touchstone for his own tour of the city's antiquities. By inserting passages from Vacca's manuscript at key points in his description of Rome, Montfaucon could test his own observations of the sites and objects against the older account, thereby bringing Vacca up to date while also making him known to readers. In this way, Vacca's report became Montfaucon's textual *cicerone*.

Montfaucon assumed that Vacca's manuscript had been neglected for more than a century, a claim that incensed Ficoroni. In Rome, as elsewhere, publication was often provocation. If a well-known manuscript could be treated with generosity and forbearance, the decisiveness of a printed work and its potential for wider distribution often invited censure.<sup>16</sup> Among scholars, the publication of a work in man-

<sup>15</sup> Vacca, *Raccolta* (Nardini, *Roma antica*, 11n.53), in Martinelli, "Vacca," 156.

<sup>16</sup> On the different rules for criticism and praise of manuscripts and printed books in seventeenth-century Naples, which shared much in common with Rome, see Har-

uscript could be the source of contention, because manuscript circulation preserved a boundary between local knowledge and public knowledge in cities that relied on their own archives. Indeed, what knit together communities of early modern scholars was the shared and tacit knowledge of unpublished materials. Ficoroni's reaction to Montfaucon's *Roman Diary* was that of a local insider faced with the public manifestation of a work that served the wider learned community. But Ficoroni was not shamelessly protecting his own profession as a guide. He was staking a claim for local expertise.

Ficoroni insisted that Vacca's manuscript had long been consulted by Roman antiquaries ("his factual reports had not been hidden; on the contrary, they were known to scholars of Roman antiquities"). Raphael Fabretti, curial lawyer and custodian of Rome's Christian relics, had relied on Vacca's report in his study of Roman aqueducts. The Dutch scholar Arringho combed through it for his edition of *Roma sotterranea*, and Pietro Santi Bartoli had a copy of it made to aid his engraving of a Roman statue of Mithras. Ficoroni concluded by promoting a more recent publication of the manuscript in the 1704 edition of Famiano Nardini's *Roma antica*.<sup>17</sup> All the men cited by Ficoroni were antiquaries active in the curial administration of seventeenth-century Rome.

Ficoroni's response to Montfaucon suggests that the attempt to export local knowledge for the benefit of the Republic of Letters could encounter fierce resistance. To bring back a manuscript from the Vatican library and claim that it had been lost for centuries was not a public service in the opinion of the Roman antiquaries who had long made use of the same material for their own scholarship. Montfaucon explained that his was a rescue mission to save manuscripts under threat. Yet the attention that Montfaucon and others paid to the archives discomfited many Italians, especially because the Benedictines were producing remarkable volumes of erudition based on Italy's collections.<sup>18</sup> Twenty-five years before Montfaucon's arrival, an Italian

old Samuel Stone, *Vico's Cultural History: The Production and Transmission of Ideas in Naples, 1685-1750* (New York: E. J. Brill, 1997).

<sup>17</sup> Ficoroni, *Osservazioni*, 3.

<sup>18</sup> Mabillon's *De re diplomatica* (1681) laid out the rules for decoding and dating Latin manuscripts, and Montfaucon's *De paleographia graeca* (1707) did the same for Greek manuscripts. On the reception of this Benedictine erudition in Italy, see Arnaldo Momigliano, "Mabillon's Italian Disciples," in *Terzo contributo alla storia degli*

cardinal bemoaned the manuscript hunting of Montfaucon's predecessor, Mabillon: "I regret that we Italians are so negligent that we let foreigners come to search what is in our cabinets, in our home."<sup>19</sup>

Ficoroni, for his part, did not express nostalgia for a golden age of Italian culture, nor did he appear demoralized by the intellectual authority of the Benedictines, although he certainly knew of their reputation. In the very beginning of his *Observations*, Ficoroni made sure to praise the French for their "erudite and commendable works," but he also suggested that Montfaucon's mistakes were the result of his haste in dealing with ancient matters that required exacting study, much practice (*richiedano gran pratica, e cognizione*), and a long acquaintance with collections and sites.<sup>20</sup> For Ludovico Muratori and other "disciples" of the Maurists, the scholarship that came out of the Benedictine monasteries acted as a catalyst for their own research. In Rome, with more at stake, Ficoroni insisted that only someone native to the region and its resources could produce a trustworthy account.

If we return to Ficoroni's criticism of Montfaucon, we find that he used the Benedictine's errors as a means to test and reinforce the boundary between local and foreigner. Ficoroni's mode of attack was to reproduce a chain of learned citations from the *Diary* and then add to them his own acerbic corrections.<sup>21</sup> Montfaucon had introduced a whole range of problems regarding the accurate assessment of ancient and medieval antiquities, and Ficoroni's critique took up these controversies, both great and small. He drew some of his evidence from the dense, document-laden world that sustained the men-

*studi classici e del mondo antico*, 2 vols. (Rome: Edizioni di Storia e letteratura, 1966), 1:135-52; Eric Cochrane, "The Settecento Medievalists," *Journal of the History of Ideas* 19 (1958), 35-61; and Sergio Bertelli, *Erudizione e storia in Ludovico Antonio Muratori* (Naples: Istituto italiano per gli studi storici, 1960). On the intellectual insecurity of Italian scholars during this period, see Gabriel Maugain, *Étude sur l'évolution intellectuelle de l'Italie de 1657 à 1750 environ* (Paris: Hachette, 1909).

<sup>19</sup> Giovanni Francesco Barbadici to Antonio Magliabechi, 1685, in *Epistolae Clarorum Venetorum ad Ant. Magliabechium*, 2 vols. (Florence: Ex typis ad Insigne Apollinis, 1745-1746), 2:14.

<sup>20</sup> Ficoroni, *Osservazioni*, 2.

<sup>21</sup> This format was common in scholarly quarrels. Indeed, historians of humanism have learned to treat the "learned controversy" as a genre of its own. See Anthony Grafton, *Joseph Scaliger: A Study in the History of Classical Scholarship*, vol. 1 (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1983), 228-29. For the Republic of Letters as a social minefield, see Anne Goldgar, *Impolite Learning: Conduct and Community in the Republic of Letters, 1680-1750* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1995).

tal life of monastic and ecclesiastical librarians. He quoted an Arabic manuscript in the Barberini collection and made use of Giovanni Villani's *Chronicle* of Florence. Given his inexperience with paleography, Ficoroni did not wield these weapons well. Indeed, the chief source of his authority was not philological. Rather, the kind of information Ficoroni used to upstage Montfaucon was private and tacit, reserved for those who personally knew the collections, excavations, and researches of other local antiquaries. For example, Montfaucon described a lead seal he had seen on display in a local antiquarian collection in Milan. The seal showed the heads of Marcus Aurelius and Lucius Verus. Montfaucon judged it to be unique, having never seen anything like it elsewhere.<sup>22</sup> Ficoroni immediately pounced on this judgment, disclosing his insider knowledge:

The noble Francesco Trevisani, who knows much about antiquities, was pleased to receive from me . . . the above-mentioned seal. . . . I possess in my collection more than four hundred small lead medals with the heads of gods, heroes and emperors. . . . A dummy lead medallion with the heads of Marcus Aurelius and Lucius Vero is also preserved in Prince Chigi's celebrated series, of which I was recently honored with the organization and description. . . . having concluded that ancient lead medals were common and ordinary, we can see that the author's remarks were unwarranted.<sup>23</sup>

Montfaucon's praise of this one lead seal may have been intended as a courteous nod to Trevisani, but it provided Ficoroni with the opportunity to prove himself the better guide to the private collections of Italy—because he himself had supplied them.

When it came to Montfaucon's tour of Rome, the stakes were even higher. Here the dispute between the erudite monk and the dealer centered on the sacred monuments of the city. Montfaucon's skepticism regarding the tomb markings underneath the Church of San Lorenzo was particularly galling to Ficoroni: "[Montfaucon] believes that these are flowers, branches and other ornaments, while making no mention of them as symbols of Christians and martyrs."<sup>24</sup> Montfaucon's dismissal of the symbols of the martyrs as generic decorations

<sup>22</sup> Montfaucon, *Diarium italicum*, 71.

<sup>23</sup> Ficoroni, *Osservazioni*, 11-12. Ficoroni earned 300 scudi as a commission for selling Chigi's sculpture collection to the king of Poland in 1728. See Lavia, "Ficoroni," 131n.3.

<sup>24</sup> Ficoroni, *Osservazioni*, 22. On Montfaucon's innovative iconography, see Francis

played directly into an ongoing controversy regarding the authenticity of holy relics. A 1668 edict by the Sacred Congregation of Rites had declared the image of the palm and a vial of blood as necessary conditions for the official approval of a martyr's body. Monfaucon's predecessor, Mabillon, had argued in 1698 that the palm was an ancient symbol for death, not martyrdom per se, and that the so-called "blood-vessels" of the martyrs were not stable proofs.<sup>25</sup> A year later the ecclesiastical antiquary Raphael Fabretti, who had been Mabillon's personal guide in Rome, suggested that Mabillon had drawn his skepticism from Cicero rather than from direct observation.<sup>26</sup> In attacking Montfaucon, Ficoroni was defending Roman ecclesiastical antiquaries who saw Catholic orthodoxy and local knowledge as mutually reinforcing.

By upholding local sanctity, Ficoroni also hoped to demonstrate to potential visitors that only an antiquary who knew the territory (one who was *pratico del paese*) could provide them with an authentic experience of the city. He directed Montfaucon's readers to make use of native workers if they wished to see Christian Rome: "Throughout the winter, workers search with their shovels for the bodies of the martyrs underground. These workers, one of whom has worked continuously for more than thirty years, are very experienced [*benissimo pratici*] in those numerous underground corridors and they serve as guides for the curious, so that they can see the manner of the tombs, their symbols, inscriptions, and other things belonging to the martyrs."<sup>27</sup> Beginning in the sixteenth century, northern antiquaries often complained about the ignorance of the Romans regarding their own city.<sup>28</sup> Ficoroni, however, presents Roman workmen as honest

Haskell, *History and Its Images: Art and the Interpretation of the Past* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1993).

<sup>25</sup> Mabillon, *Eusebii Romani ad Theophilum Gallum, epistola de cultu sanctorum ignotorum* (Paris, 1698). Proving the authenticity of relics became a minor profession in the seventeenth century. Indeed, traffic in relics was another point where trade and antiquarianism intersected. For the relic trade in seventeenth-century Bavaria and Rome, see Trevor Johnson, "Holy Fabrications: The Catacomb Saints and the Counter Reformation in Bavaria," *Journal of Ecclesiastical History* 47 (April 1996), 274-97.

<sup>26</sup> Raphael Fabretti, *Inscriptionum antiquarum* (Rome: Ex officina Dominici Antonii Herculis, 1699), 555-56.

<sup>27</sup> Ficoroni, *Osservazioni*, 23.

<sup>28</sup> See, for example, the disparaging comments by Georg Fabricius quoted by An-

sources of knowledge. In Ficoroni's world, neither social rank nor deep learning were exclusive conditions for understanding the ancient remains of Rome. He drew from previously published antiquarian researches in Rome, from the terrain itself, and from his own activity as a collector. In doing so, he hoped to show that the city had its native interpreters and guides.

Ficoroni never let up in this defense of local antiquarianism. Although the title does not suggest it, his *Vestiges Found in the Territory of the First and Second Town of Labico and Their Correct Locations* was a highly personal composition. Labico was the name of an ancient town in Latium mentioned by Virgil as part of the legendary kingdom of the Latins. Its actual location was the subject of much dispute among Roman antiquaries. Flavio Biondo, the fifteenth-century pioneer of Italian chorography, noted briefly that "some people think that Labico is Valmontone."<sup>29</sup> In the seventeenth century, Valmontone and Lugnano—both territories in Latium—were still arguing over which town was the true descendant of ancient Labico, a contest kept alive by rival princely families, not populist fervor. In 1745, when Ficoroni published this work, the debate was still relevant to the local inhabitants, although it would have been of little interest to Grand Tourists.

In his preface, Ficoroni explained why he alone was qualified to provide the definitive identification of this ancient town. In doing so, Ficoroni revealed his motives for trying to resolve this old chorographic debate:

I found a report on ancient Labico by Ventura Rosati, my maternal grandfather, to Prince Camillo Pamphili, brother of Pope Innocent X, in which [my grandfather] gave notice of having discovered the subterranean walls of Labico in the territory of Lugnano. Being native

thony Grafton, "The Ancient City Restored: Archaeology, Ecclesiastical History, and Egyptology," in *Rome Reborn: The Vatican Library and Renaissance Culture* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1993), 87-123, at 87. Romans also adopted this view of themselves well into the eighteenth century. In 1740, Benedict XIV established the Academy of Roman Antiquities to compete with the archaeological research conducted by foreign residents and travelers: "We see so many wise and erudite men researching with such great interest these things, which the majority of us know so little about." See *Notizia delle accademie erette in Roma per ordine della Santità di N. Sig. Papa Benedetto Decimoquattro* (Rome, 1740), preface.

<sup>29</sup> Flavio Biondo, *De Italia illustrata* (Turin, 1527), 65.



[*nativo*] to this region and therefore familiar with every scrap [*pratico di ogni memoria*] within its borders, I can, with reason and authority, prove [this] report on the true site of the first Labico. In doing this, I will not (as some suggest) show reverence to my own region, but solely to truth.<sup>30</sup>

When describing aspects of Latium that had little to do with its antiquities, Ficoroni still made sure to find credible authority for every claim. He was clearly sensitive to the charge of bias as a local antiquary, and yet his reverence for the region manifests itself on every page. At one point, he inserted into his text an engraving of a row of elm trees planted in the mid-seventeenth century by his father and a superintendent of the region (fig. 1). Ficoroni described how he used to frequent this place as a youth, hunting for turtledoves. One day he decided to measure the width and length of the rows and concluded that the area between was "spacious enough to accommodate ten carriages"—a measurement confirmed by a local doctor with expertise in architecture. Ficoroni lingered on the aesthetic and physical pleasures provided by his *piccola patria*: "one can imagine how enjoyable it is to pass through [the elm rows] during the summertime, for they give a pleasing coolness to the air along with the surrounding territories full of herbs and shrubs."<sup>31</sup> In a work ostensibly devoted to a narrow question of historical topography, Ficoroni managed to celebrate the local culture as well as the prominent citizens of the region. He praised the Easter festival in Lugnano, complete with a horse race, foot race, and lottery, and he listed the names of all the ecclesiastical authorities in the territory.

Aside from detailing his discoveries in the region, Ficoroni paid a great deal of attention to the connections between ancient and modern topography. In trying to prove that ancient Labico was in the territory of Lugnano, Ficoroni offered observations of the region that testified to his detailed knowledge of the land and of the changes that had occurred during his lifetime. For example, when treating the Via Latina, one of the many ancient Roman roads leading out from the city gates, Ficoroni noted that a new road had been created recently;

<sup>30</sup> Ficoroni, *Memorie ritrovate nel territorio della prima e seconda città di Labico e i loro giusti siti* (Rome: G. Mainardi, 1745), 2.

<sup>31</sup> Ficoroni, *Labico*, 15. Ficoroni's efforts to prove the exact site of an ancient Roman road may not have paid off, but there is now a street named after him in the town of Labico, just a few kilometers from his birthplace.



1. The "Olmata" of Lugnano. Ficoroni, *Memorie ritrovate nel territorio della prima e seconda città di Labico e i loro giusti siti* (Rome: G. Mainardi, 1745), opposite page 62. Marquand Library of Art and Archaeology, Princeton University.

consequently, the ancient road had fallen into disuse, "reduced to a little path for vineyard workers."<sup>32</sup> The urban project of road building had effectively obliterated this ancient highway; but for Ficoroni's memory, all traces would have been lost.

At another point, Ficoroni zeroed in on a precise spot in the countryside where evidence of another ancient road required a trained eye: "After passing Mount Aricino and Nemi, [one can observe] there an ancient section of flint-stone assembled by the Romans in order to pave their consular roads... the enormous trees that have grown out of this mass show veins of very hard stone within their open roots..."<sup>33</sup> Ficoroni even witnessed the way in which modern road construction in papal Rome literally built on the practices of the ancients. "At some distance," he wrote, "as the ancient road continues along near some wheat fields, I was taking a walk when I

<sup>32</sup> Ficoroni, *Labico*, 17.

<sup>33</sup> Ficoroni, *Labico*, 17.



encountered some workers, by an order of Clement XI, remaking the modern road, uneven and flooded by heavy rains. In digging on the left side, they hit an ancient road overgrown with flint, and taking handfuls of it, they added it to the modern road..."<sup>34</sup> Ficoroni had a marvelous eye for the physical changes in the landscape, a talent that complemented his grasp of the historical changes that had transformed the region. Although these descriptions were in service to his topographical argument, Ficoroni knew that they also bolstered his own authority as someone *pratico della contrada*.

When assessing previous antiquarian studies of Latium, Ficoroni took northern antiquaries to task for not understanding the topography. In particular, he accused the German polymath Lucas Holstenius of neglecting to mention the condition of the sites he described: "[Holstenius] was not dealing with things somewhat ancient or modern, which one can easily know; he was dealing with the site of a city that had been completely extinguished from history through the course of eight or ten centuries, so who can have faith in the credulity of Holstenius, a northerner who offered hardly any evidence and was not at all knowledgeable about the region [*pratico della contrada*]?"<sup>35</sup> Ficoroni's defense of local antiquarian expertise had a long, complicated history in Italian scholarship. Although the Counter-Reformation sharpened the conflicts between *ultramontane* and local along confessional lines, objections to German and Dutch scholars were primarily bound up with competition for patronage in papal Rome. Fashioning oneself as the local antiquary could be an effective strategy for attracting a patron who otherwise might select an exotic convert from the north—as Holstenius surely was.

Ficoroni's critique of northerners and his devotion to Roman chorography mark him as a successor to seventeenth-century ecclesiastical antiquaries.<sup>36</sup> Those men, however, had been assured of an audience, whereas Ficoroni lacked a consistent patron or institution to support his work. In the early decades of the eighteenth century, British scholars and gentlemen considered Italy as prime hunting

ground. This was the world that Ficoroni served as dealer and guide. Although he never entirely severed ties with the antiquarianism of the seventeenth century, Ficoroni was one of the first to reshape it for a new audience.

#### CATERING TO GRAND TOURISTS

If Montfaucon thought of Rome as an archive, the aristocratic tourist saw the city as a moving spectacle. In his *Osservazioni* of 1709, Ficoroni offered a list of the aristocratic gentlemen whom he had had the good fortune to guide in Rome, "worthy witnesses who, having made their pilgrimage through this city, pleased themselves in visiting me and walking through the cemeteries of underground Rome."<sup>37</sup> Ficoroni's catalogue of the "lords and learned knights of England" and "their learned governors" reveals the distance between his clientele and the scholarly society of Mabillon and Montfaucon. Although many of them consented to visit the catacombs, Ficoroni's lords more often came looking for ways to improve their own gardens and estates back in England, and they moved through Rome with the eyes of landscape gardeners and interior decorators, not scholars.<sup>38</sup>

Ficoroni could not compete with Montfaucon's erudition, but he knew how to talk to these polite gentlemen of taste. In 1730 he published a short description of Rome in the form of a letter to an English aristocrat, which was in fact a kind of virtuoso preamble to a more pressing inquiry. The English nobleman apparently expressed interest in a particular medal, and Ficoroni was hoping to sell it; so he attached to his glamorous explanation of the medal a walking tour of the Roman sites. Both performances were intended to please his client, whom Ficoroni addressed in the most flattering terms: "one of the most noble pilgrims whom I have had the pleasure to know this year, no less worthy for your gentle manners than for your intelligence regarding books, paintings, sculpture and gems."<sup>39</sup>

<sup>37</sup> Ficoroni, *Osservazioni*, 24.

<sup>38</sup> Ilaria Bignamini, "Italians as Spectators and Actors: The Grand Tour Re-lected," in Hornsby, ed., *Impact of Italy*, 29–47; Brinsley Ford, "The Grand Tour," *Apollo* 114, no. 238 (December 1981), 390–400; Damie Stillman, "Chimney-Pieces for the English Market: A Thriving Business in Late Eighteenth-Century Rome," *Art Bulletin* 59, no. 1 (March 1977), 85–94.

<sup>39</sup> Ficoroni, *Le memorie più singolari di Roma, e le sue Vicinanze, notate in una lettera al*

<sup>34</sup> Ficoroni, *Labico*, 30.    <sup>35</sup> Ficoroni, *Labico*, 50.

<sup>36</sup> The frequent citations of Raphael Fabretti's antiquarian publications in his critique of Montfaucon and in his study of Labico suggest that Ficoroni modeled his erudition after this prominent local antiquary who died in 1700. Fabretti's sharp and lively critiques of another northerner, Athanasius Kircher, shaped Ficoroni's comments on Holstenius and Montfaucon.

In this letter, Ficoroni led a tour through the very same monuments and collections that he had presumably discussed during the client's visit, pointing out the views and "the incomparable perspectives," and reminding him of the questions he had posed and his reactions to the monuments while in Rome. "I don't know if you recall," Ficoroni wrote, "but you were attentively considering these ruins with me, wondering which columns were of the Corinthian order ... which were the temples of Jove ... where was the Lago Curzio ... and other things."<sup>40</sup> Ficoroni made sure to acknowledge the man's taste and connoisseurship: "passing over the plain terra-cotta amphitheater, you repeatedly stopped, with good reason, to consider and contemplate the enormity of Vespasian's amphitheater ... [and] you recognized easily that it was superior to any other amphitheater in the world." Discussing the ancient sculptures, which "made for a delightful grazing," Ficoroni praised his student for having "recognized, with the aid of medals, the images and portraits of the emperors, Caesars and Augustan women" and for detecting in them "Egyptian, Latin, and Greek workmanship."<sup>41</sup>

In all of this flattery, Ficoroni was parading his own skill as an instructor, guiding his client through the comparative techniques employed by antiquaries. Yet his emphasis on taste and on the proper expressions for describing the artistic monuments of imperial Rome is strikingly different from his earlier concern with defending the authenticity of Rome's sacred relics and catacombs. This flattering sales letter was also a departure from the archaeological sensibility displayed in Ficoroni's topographical study of Latium. It is as if Ficoroni had mastered, over the course of fifty years, a whole repertoire of antiquarian discourses, which he strategically deployed for the appropriate audience. There was the local community of antiquaries who

cavaliere Bernard Inglese, aggiuntavi nel fine la spiegazione d'una medaglia d'Omero (Rome: Giovanni Maria Salvioni, 1730), 6. The only "Bernard" found in John Ingamells's comprehensive listing of British and Irish travelers is an Irish priest who came to Rome in the spring of 1729. The dates coincide, but Ficoroni would not have addressed a priest as "cavaliere" nor would he confuse the two nationalities in print. See Ingamells, *Dictionary of British and Irish Travelers in Italy, 1701-1800* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1997), 83. On the other hand, Ingamells did not cite any of Ficoroni's works as evidence of a traveler's presence in Rome.

<sup>40</sup> Ficoroni, *Le memorie più singolari di Roma*, 9.

<sup>41</sup> Ficoroni, *Le memorie più singolari di Roma*, 13.

would appreciate his attack on Montfaucon and his chorographic researches, and then there were the aristocratic clients who preferred to see Rome as an open-air museum of secular and artistic treasures.

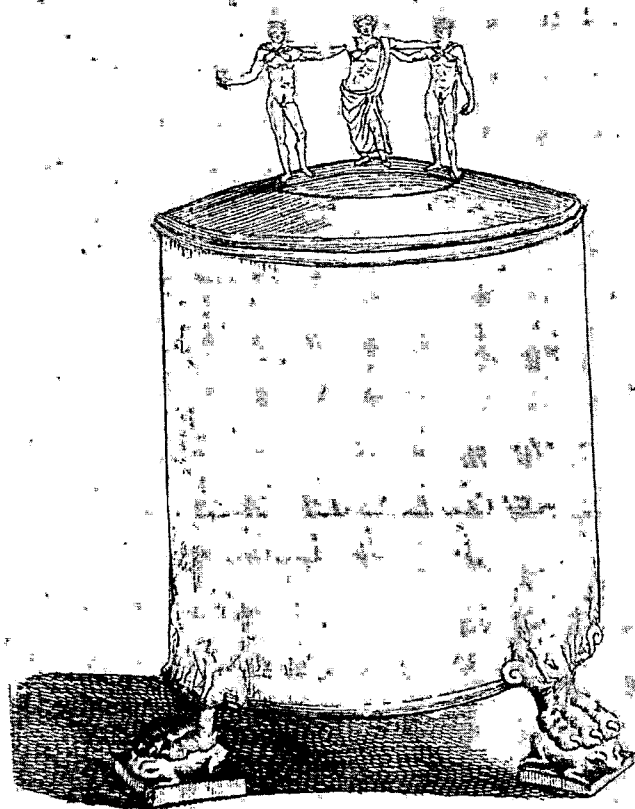
Along with this ability to write for different audiences, Ficoroni's activities as a dealer suggest conflicting priorities. One of his most famous finds was a fourth-century bronze funerary box now known as the "Ficoroni Cista." The rather spare image of the object that Ficoroni inserted into his Labico study does not do justice to the intricate design of the engraved relief that encircles the object (fig. 2), but Ficoroni knew what he had and made sure to tell his readers that this particular antiquity was not for sale: "I have to say without boastfulness that the noble Englishman, [Sir Charles] Frederick, wanted me to give it to him and he placed on the table a fistful of *zecchini*, but in vain, and so that it would always be preserved, I gave it voluntarily as a gift [*ne feci volentieri donativo*] to the famous Kircher gallery."<sup>42</sup> Even commerce had its limits, it seems. Ficoroni's pride in preserving the cultural patrimony of Rome through selective donations was the reverse side of his looting and exporting for profit—and he seems to have moved easily between the two roles throughout his career.

If we turn to Ficoroni's activities as a dealer and to the wider context of the antiquities market in Rome, we see a vast difference between the values of the older Roman antiquarian culture and those of the new patrons whom Ficoroni served so well. Unlike the French Hellenist Jacob Spon (1647-1685), the Scottish historian of England Gilbert Burnet (1643-1715), and Montfaucon, all of whom relied on an economy of gift exchange between learned men in possession of coins, inscriptions, and manuscripts, the Grand Tour travelers turned to dealers for their collecting. One Italian living in Rome at the time made clear his disgust for this savvy intermediary who wanted to be paid for his labor: "They are merchants rather than scholars, and consequently they always seek a profit not only for the antiquities

<sup>42</sup> Ficoroni, *Labico*, 75. Ficoroni explains this gift as an exchange for certain favors granted by the Jesuit custodian of the Kircher museum, Father Contucci Contucci, who translated certain of Ficoroni's works into Latin. A contemporary review argued that Contucci did more than improve Ficoroni's literary style. See *Storia letteraria d'Italia*, vol. 1 (1750), 251, printed in *Annali di Antonio de' Rossi: Stampatore in Roma (1695-1755)*, ed. Enzo Esposito (Florence: L. S. Olschki, 1986), 549. Contucci was known to have supplied behind-the-scenes erudition to many antiquarian writers in Rome.

## 72 LE MEMORIE DEL PRIMO E SECONDO

il territorio. Ultimamente in sito poco distante fra il territorio di Lugnano, e di Palestrina, comprai da due operaj una tal rarità, di cui tra tante innumerabili passate per le mie mani non ho fin quì osservata la consimile.



Consiste questa in un gran vaso con tre figure in pie-

2. The Ficoroni Cista. Ficoroni, *Memorie ritrovate nel territorio della prima e seconda città di Labico e i loro giusti siti* (Rome: G. Mainardi, 1745), 72. Marquand Library of Art and Archaeology, Princeton University.

they sell, but also for their industry and their pain of sending and receiving merchandise ... they want their payment in cash and they won't let any medals escape their hands until they have extracted their reward."<sup>43</sup> It soon became standard practice for dealers, both high and low, to charge for their troubles. Charles de Brosses, a member of the parliament of Burgundy who visited Italy in 1739 and observed closely the encounters between tourists and locals, remarked, "the English swarm here and they spend an enormous amount. It is the nation dearest to the Romans, who appreciate the money they bring."<sup>44</sup>

The Cambridge cleric Conyers Middleton (1683–1750) was one buyer who embraced the antiquities market. A writer best known for his battles with the humanist scholar Richard Bentley and for his skeptical writings on religion, Middleton first arrived in Rome in 1723 and immediately sought out Ficoroni. After returning to Cambridge, he wrote to Ficoroni, offering to sell his latest book on antiquities to friends in England in gratitude for Ficoroni's past services. He also tried to reserve priority among Ficoroni's customers. Middleton's letters suggest that—at least in his eyes—Ficoroni's collection was far from a microcosm of encyclopedic knowledge or a site for civil conversation. "I intend among other things to utterly despoil you—," Middleton writes, "strip you of all your possessions—and I know what reinforcements would be needed to carry off such an assault. That house of yours is so stuffed with riches, so heavily defended by battle-hardened troops, that I realize it can hardly be taken without a great onslaught of money."<sup>45</sup> Middleton's words nicely echo Ficoroni's own reference to Sir Frederick's "fistful of zecchini." Both expressions combine humor with an undercurrent of hostility. Indeed, in the correspondence between local dealers and foreign buyers, expressions of affection and obligation were often juxtaposed with statements of services rendered, and frank discussions of prices were increasingly common.

Francesco Palazzi, another Roman dealer, was fairly open about the bargaining process. "[T]hey certainly deserve a higher price than

<sup>43</sup> Letter from Paolo Maria Paciaudi to the comte de Caylus, April 10, 1759, in *Lettres de Paciaudi au comte de Caylus* (Paris: Tardieu, 1802), 49.

<sup>44</sup> Charles de Brosses, *Lettres d'Italie*, vol. 2 (Paris: Éditions du Raisin, 1928), 68.

<sup>45</sup> Middleton to Ficoroni, August 16, 1726, trans. Spier and Kagan, 53.

what you have offered me," Palazzi wrote to Middleton regarding some medals he had for sale.<sup>46</sup> Palazzi knew how to make his customers aware that the relationship between them would not last long, even when ostensibly reassuring them: "I can sincerely assert to Your Excellency that the gems have been highly praised here by connoisseurs [*amatori*] and experts [*intelligenti*] in this field. Since this year there have been many English gentlemen in Rome, a number of whom I have had the honour to deal with and to serve as antiquary, I could easily have passed on the gems to my advantage, but since I was already committed to you, I would not have failed my duty for any sum."<sup>47</sup> What is remarkable here is that the language of patronage—the values of intimate and faithful service—no longer matched the antiquary's practices. To the English collector Andrew Fountaine, Ficoroni spoke of his "devoted service" and continued desire for Fountaine's "patronage," terms that made little sense in a world where exchanges were fleeting and full of misgivings.<sup>48</sup>

The absence of an intimate and enduring patronage made men like Palazzi and Ficoroni particularly vulnerable, especially because much of what these dealers sold was newly protected under Rome's export regulations. In June 1731 Francesco Valesio (1670–1742) recorded in his diary that "a certain Sterbini has left Rome, a priest, but [also] a public dealer [*pubblico negoziante*] of antiquities. He's been many times in England and he has carried with him many things to sell: 800 rings [and] 4,000 scudi worth of stuff from Ficoroni, and many marbles, inscriptions, statues and busts from Cardinal Albani."<sup>49</sup> While Sterbini was selling these antiquities in London, Ficoroni was facing his own troubles back home. Roman constables searched his house, confiscated his material and his writings, and then carried him away, all because "he had bought an antique head of porphyry from certain masons who had found it in a dig."<sup>50</sup> That summer, Ficoroni was put on trial while another dealer who sold medals in the Piazza Navona

was taken to prison. Ficoroni managed to get off with a fine, but the episode suggests that the protection afforded to seventeenth-century antiquaries by the households of cardinals and by bureaucratic offices within the Curia did not extend to the antiquary-dealer of the eighteenth century.

The correspondence between dealers and Grand Tourists in this period reveals more than changes in patronage; it also shows the degree to which local knowledge itself had changed since the Renaissance. Ficoroni, Sterbini, and Palazzi possessed an understanding of antiquities far richer than that of their predecessors in the sixteenth century. These new locals had read more (they had more to read), they knew the "canon" and the territory, and they made use of this knowledge in their dealings. For example, when Conyers Middleton asked for the authority behind Palazzi's identification of two gems, Palazzi responded that "both can be found on ancient coins, as can be seen particularly in the *Imagini illustri* of Fulvio Orsini."<sup>51</sup>

Local antiquaries in the eighteenth century also understood the practices and tastes of connoisseurs in ways that sixteenth-century antiquaries could not have imagined. Bernardo Sterbini not only sold antiquities, he also offered first-rate advice to collectors about the proper way to display them so that they best reflected the owner's good judgment. Regarding a pedestal found near the Celian Hill, Sterbini assured Middleton that "to remove the corrosion, it is sufficient to use a small bristle brush, without water. Trying to remove it from such ancient things in this way will be the best thing for what other *dilettanti* look for. One should never remove from ancient things what is not superfluous, for one would undermine the quality of the sculpture or the erudition in it."<sup>52</sup> Two centuries of antiquarian literature and at least three decades of serving foreign collectors had endowed the "local" antiquary in Rome with more than just an empirical grasp of the terrain.

<sup>46</sup> Palazzi to Middleton, May 1, 1726, trans. Spier and Kagan, 55.

<sup>47</sup> Palazzi to Middleton, August 28, 1726, trans. Spier and Kagan, 58.

<sup>48</sup> Ficoroni to Fountaine, September 2, 1702, trans. Spier and Kagan, 50.

<sup>49</sup> Francesco Valesio, *Diario di Roma*, ed. Gaetano Scano, 6 vols. (Milan: Longanesi, 1977), 5:148. Regarding Bernardo Sterbini, we know very little, but he served many English clients and was mentioned in Ficoroni's will. See Spier and Kagan, 44.

<sup>50</sup> Valesio, *Diario di Roma*, 5:150.

<sup>51</sup> Palazzi to Middleton, May 1, 1726, trans. Spier and Kagan, 55–56. Fulvio Orsini (1592–1600) was an antiquary in service to the Farnese household in Rome. He built up a considerable collection of gems, paintings, inscriptions, and coins, and his *Imagines et elogium virorum illustrium et eruditorum ex antiquis lapidibus* (Rome: Ant. Lafrerij formeis, 1570) was an illustrated collection of engravings of famous men taken from the antiquities in this collection.

<sup>52</sup> Sterbini to Middleton, November 14, 1732, trans. Spier and Kagan, 61–62.

In 1732 Joseph Spence, an Oxford professor of poetry, described Ficoroni in a letter to his mother: "He is one of those people we call antiquarians here. Their business is to go around Rome to shew strangers the antiquities, palaces, pictures and statues that are there without number. They have generally old Roman rings and other pieces of antiquity to sell to the gentlemen they conduct about the town."<sup>53</sup> If Spence's perception of Ficoroni as "conductor" to Grand Tourists was accurate as far as his own experience was concerned, Ficoroni would never have accepted such a limited definition of his occupation.

During the 1730s, as Ficoroni was leading men like Spence and Middleton around Rome, he published three illustrated studies of antiquities, all of which dealt with objects of luxury and leisure in ancient Rome. In this respect, they occupied a middle ground between seventeenth-century erudition and eighteenth-century marketing. In each of these works, Ficoroni included tantalizing images of select pieces from his own collection, usually recent finds from excavations around Rome, and he made sure to situate these objects within a wider body of antiquarian scholarship. Despite the often vast erudition that lay behind his topics, Ficoroni wanted his readers to believe that chance discoveries gave rise to the subject matter of his works.

Ficoroni dedicated most of these works to local cardinals in Rome, men who could fund his excavations or even pay for printing costs, but he also embarked on another strategy of appealing to cosmopolitan readers. He crowded the title pages of his books with lists of the various academies and private societies of which he claimed to be a member, most notably the French Academy of Inscriptions and the Royal Society, neither of which actually admitted him.<sup>54</sup> In his antiquarian studies, Ficoroni tried to create a balance between being a local and a

<sup>53</sup> Joseph Spence, *Observations, Anecdotes, and Characters of Books and Men*, ed. James M. Osborn, vol. 1 (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1966), 331–32, no. 816.

<sup>54</sup> Claude Gros De Boze was enraged that Ficoroni was passing himself off as a member of the learned French academy. In an undated letter Scipione Maffei wrote from Rome: "Ficoroni claims that he is a member of the academy; here (in Rome) this is said to be true, and I am silently accused of being malicious: the fact that I come from [Paris] and that I have several letters from De Boze and Bernude—who urge me to make the truth known—are not enough to gain credibility." S. Maf-

fe, *Epistolario (1700–1755)*, ed. Celestino Garibotto, 2 vols. (Milan: Giuffrè, 1955), 2:933.

cosmopolitan; both identities were necessary to convey his authority to potential buyers. Only after Ficoroni's death did a new generation of antiquaries at the French academy recognize what Ficoroni had achieved in these works. In the first volume of his *Recueil des antiquités*, the comte de Caylus, a powerful art critic and antiquarian collector in Paris, paid tribute to the Roman dealer: "I don't know what they have said and written against Ficoroni ... on the subject of this antiquary whom I have known well in Rome. ... Antiquity owes some particular obligations to him."<sup>55</sup> Caylus's own groundbreaking work attempted to trace the taste of ancient Gauls, Romans, Greeks, and Egyptians through their artistic technologies, and Ficoroni's sensitivity to the physical and visual properties of Roman antiquities must have provided a powerful model.<sup>56</sup>

Ficoroni's first illustrated treatise, *La bolla d'oro de' fanciulli nobili romani* (1732), made use of the archaeological, artistic, and literary skills developed by antiquaries since the Renaissance. He divided the work into two parts: the first centered on golden neck charms as status markers for aristocratic youth in ancient Rome, and the second described the Via Appia tombs in which they were found. Many of the objects uncovered in this dig originally went to Cardinal Gualtieri, who funded the excavations in 1705, but Ficoroni recovered and sold them later.<sup>57</sup> To make his book appealing to potential buyers, Ficoroni camouflaged what was essentially an antiquarian study of sepulchral monuments behind a more dramatic revelation of an untapped treasure house of antiquities (*un vastissimo tesoro*).<sup>58</sup> Indeed, by

<sup>55</sup> Anne-Claude-Philippe de Tubières, comte de Caylus, *Recueil des antiquités égyptiennes, grecques, étrusques et romaines*, vol. 1 (Paris: Desaint et Saillant, 1752), xiii–xiv.

<sup>56</sup> Several of Ficoroni's bronzes ended up in Caylus's collection through the assistance of another Italian antiquary in Rome. Throughout the 1750s, Caylus was preoccupied with recovering the ancient technologies of glass paste, encaustic painting, and Egyptian embalming. In this endeavor, he could have looked back to Ficoroni, who also investigated the techniques of ancient artisans and artists. See the remarks by Ficoroni in his *Osservazioni*, 27.

<sup>57</sup> François de Polignac, "Francesco Bianchini et les 'cardinaux antiquaires,'" in *Francesco Bianchini (1662–1729) und die europäische gelehrte Welt um 1700*, ed. Valentin Kockel and Brigitte Sölch (Berlin: Akademie Verlag, 2005).

<sup>58</sup> Ficoroni, *La bolla d'oro de' fanciulli nobili romani e quella de' libertini ed altre singolarità spettanti a mausolei nuovamente scopertisi* (Rome: Antonio de' Rossi, 1732), 9.

the time of this publication, Ficoroni had already sold Conyers Middleton one of these pendants, along with a fragment of an antique gold glass, both of which were prominently displayed in the pages (figs. 3 and 4).

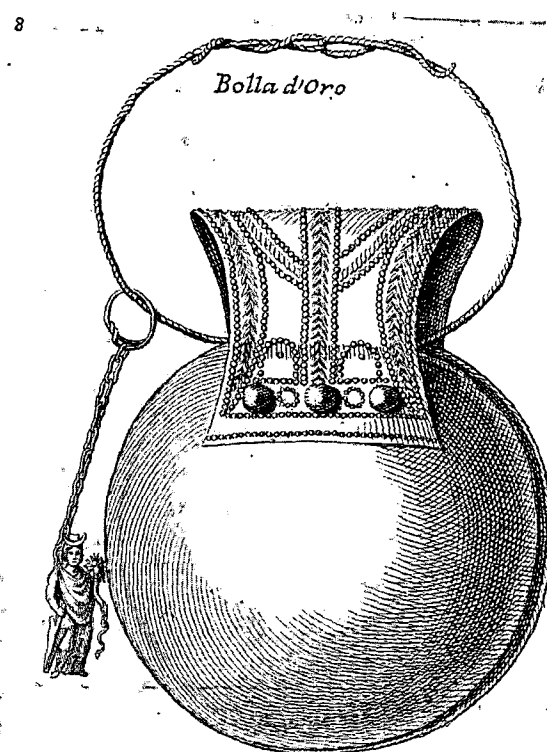
The implicit salesmanship should not distract from the seriousness of the work. Ficoroni knew that his publication had a distinct advantage over previous scholarship on ancient Roman rituals because he drew his information directly from the ground. He thus showed what contemporary antiquaries could learn from objects found on-site. "The first thing to notice," Ficoroni writes, "is that, having been found with burnt bones in the same sepulchral urn, [the *bullā* shows that] the young boy had died before his seventeenth year. Given that the boy died before he reached the proper age to take it off, evidently the practice was to place the *bullā* in with the bones rather than remove and consecrate it to the domestic gods, or in the temples, as was the custom when noble young boys had left their boyhood behind."<sup>59</sup> After linking the artifacts to their original site and drawing conclusions about them from what he knew of ancient Roman practice, Ficoroni stressed the materiality of the objects by listing their precise measurements, including the weight of the gold. This attention to the physical aspects of the artifacts served two purposes: it attracted future buyers who wanted their antiquities in the form of valuable metals, and it challenged older studies based on literary sources.<sup>60</sup> By telling personal stories of his archaeological discoveries, Ficoroni effectively displaced the erudite philological contexts beloved by seventeenth-century antiquaries.

Ficoroni's most popular publication, *Stage Masks and Comic Illustrations of the Ancient Romans* (1736), capitalized on a much-studied topic in antiquarian literature while providing more evidence of his efforts to discover new material underground: "I will begin this theater collection with a written marble that was found in 1733 with hundreds of other sepulchral stones in two of my excavations of the Columbari."<sup>61</sup> Ancient theater was the subject of several articles published

<sup>59</sup> Ficoroni, *La bolla d'oro*, 8–9.

<sup>60</sup> Ficoroni was able to shatter one antiquarian fiction, namely, that these ancient objects were shaped like hearts. Ficoroni traced this belief to the credulity of early Christians who mistook the pagan *bullae* for the wax heart-shaped discs known as *Agnus Dei*. Ficoroni, *La bolla d'oro*, 14–15.

<sup>61</sup> Ficoroni, *Le maschere sceniche e le figure comiche d'antichi Romani* (Rome: Antonio de' Rossi, 1736), 23.



La prima particolarità si è, che essendosi ritrovata colle ossa brugiate nel medesimo vaso sepolcrale, si viene à vedere, che il fanciullo di cui era detta Bolla d'Oro, morisse prima delli diecisette anni, e perciò essendo morto avanti di compir l'età di portarla, era facilmente il costume di riporsi colle ossa, e non deporla, e consacrarla alli Dei Domestici, o ne i Tempj, come costumavasi quando li fanciulli nobili era-

3. Roman *bullā* made of gold. Ficoroni, *La bolla d'oro de fanciulli nobili romani* (Rome: Antonio de' Rossi, 1732), 8. Courtesy University of Chicago Library, Special Collections Research Center.

*Si damnosa senem juvat alea ludit & hares  
Bullatus, parvoque eadem movet arma Fritillo.*

Per quei curiosi, che non han l'occasione d'aver sotto l'occhio la Bolla d'Oro originale, e che perciò non possono sapere di quanti pezzi d'oro sia composta, quale sia la propria sua forma, e come da' fanciulli nobili colla Pretesta venisse portata pendente nel petto, stimo bene dimostrarlo col seguente disegno, delineato fedelmente dall'originale d'un rotondo vetro dipinto, al quale è dietro un'altro vetro faldato, come si riconosce à lento fuoco, per la conservazione della pittura graffitavi.



B 2

Rap-

4. Ancient painted glass showing a young Roman boy wearing the bulla. Ficoroni, *La bolla d'oro de Fanciulli nobili romani* (Rome: Antonio de' Rossi, 1732), 11. Courtesy University of Chicago Library, Special Collections Research Center.

II  
Giovenale  
Satir. XIV.  
vers. 4.

by the Paris Academy of Inscriptions, but much of this earlier academic erudition still drew from the literary sources.<sup>62</sup> For example, one of the French academy's articles on the origins of theater masks traced the exaggeration of the features to the huge size and structure of outdoor theaters.<sup>63</sup> Ficoroni offered a different explication, focusing less on the practical functions of the masks and more on their capacity to enchant the crowd: "they served as a delight for spectators, a *capriccio* born from the deception of the eyes, but ably revealed by the mind, which sees an altered form either more terrible or more ridiculous than his natural being."<sup>64</sup>

Not possessing any actual Roman theater masks, Ficoroni cleverly abstracted mask imagery from the objects in which they originally figured. For example, in a collection of terra-cotta lamps found in the local tombs, Ficoroni presented only the faces suspended in mid-air (fig. 5). By presenting his masks in this way, Ficoroni could trace the history of ancient Roman theater without concerning himself with the bas-reliefs, gems, and lamps on which these decorative images appeared. In fact, Ficoroni transformed one lamp figurine into a free-standing statue (fig. 6, lower left) and introduced it in such a way that the reader could see the figure as representative of ancient theater practices: "his head shaven, with a huge nose, curved and hooked, and with fangs of silver hanging out the sides of his mouth in such a way that his face is larger than life. He is a true monstrosity, stolid, and foolish, resembling a buffoon or Pulcinello, which they usually introduce into our theaters to make the on-lookers laugh."<sup>65</sup> Thanks largely to engravings like these, Ficoroni's *Maschere sceniche* went through five editions between 1736 and 1757, two of which were in Latin.<sup>66</sup>

<sup>62</sup> See the various articles on ancient Roman theater and games composed between 1711 and 1717 and later printed in volume 3 of *Histoire de l'Académie royale des inscriptions et belles-lettres avec les mémoires de littérature tirés des registres de cette Académie*, 51 vols. (Paris: L'Imprimerie royale, 1736–1808) (hereafter MAI). An unsigned article on the *bullae* worn by Roman children suggests that Ficoroni's *La bolla d'oro* was a subject of interest to antiquarian scholars at the academy. See "De la bulle que les enfans romains portoient au col" (1711–1717), MAI (1746), 3:211–13.

<sup>63</sup> Nicolas Boindin, "Discours sur les masques & les habits de théâtre des anciens" (1712), MAI (1746), 4:132ff.

<sup>64</sup> Ficoroni, *Le maschere sceniche*, 16.

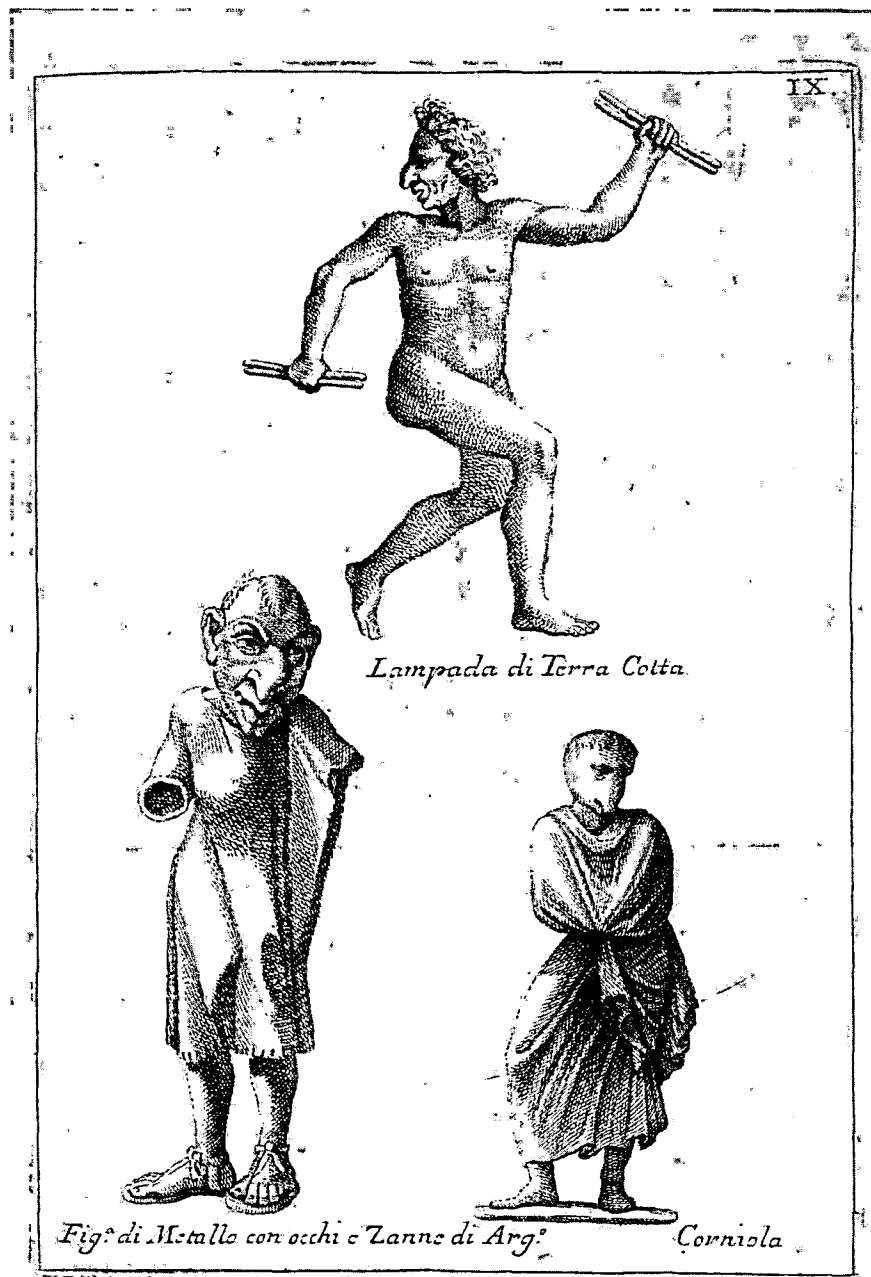
<sup>65</sup> Ficoroni, *Le maschere sceniche*, 48–49.

<sup>66</sup> The volume contains eighty-three engravings by different artists, more images





5. Theater masks represented on terra-cotta oil lamps. Ficoroni, *Le maschere sceniche e le figure comiche d'antichi Romani* (Rome: Antonio de' Rossi, 1736), plate IX. Marquand Library of Art and Archaeology, Princeton University.



6. Theater characters represented on terra-cotta and metal lamps. Ficoroni, *Le maschere sceniche e le figure comiche d'antichi Romani* (Rome: Antonio de' Rossi, 1736), plate X. Marquand Library of Art and Archaeology, Princeton University.

Ficoroni's study of masks even benefited Roman dealers who were on the look-out for new ways of cataloguing objects. In a 1738 letter to a prominent English collector, Pietro Foriere described the discovery of three statues in Rome, one of which had been identified by others as "a clothed Silenus." Armed with Ficoroni's new work, however, Foriere decided that the statue was actually "a comic actor ... fancifully *portraying* Silenus" (emphasis added). Foriere then referred to "a very similar figure of an actor found on an engraved cornelian" published by Ficoroni, "the renowned antiquary."<sup>67</sup>

#### THE END OF THE LOCAL ANTIQUARY

All his life, Ficoroni claimed allegiance to an older generation of Roman antiquaries at the same time that his activities as a dealer and *cicerone* anticipated their replacement. If his words and deeds show a conflict of interest, he did not sense it. He defended homespun ecclesiastical antiquaries against erudite northerners whom he believed lacked the local expertise and firsthand experience of Rome to write about ancient topography or antiquities. He also promoted himself as a guide to British tourists who were far more willing students than the Dutch and German scholars of the previous century. Both of these gestures—attacking *ultramontanes* and guiding tourists—allowed Ficoroni to champion the value of his own expertise as an empirical and hard-won knowledge. His published studies of Roman antiquities reinforced his status as a local dealer who knew the terrain, but they were equally bids to compete in the cosmopolitan Republic of Letters.

Ficoroni's lifelong promotion of native expertise became increasingly difficult to sustain over the course of the eighteenth century. By 1760, local knowledge was no longer in the hands of locals. English and Scottish residents who had first come to Rome as artists and architects gradually took over as dealers, guides, and excavators, dis-

than any other of Ficoroni's books. It was dedicated to the French ambassador to Pope Clement XII, and he may have subsidized the cost.

<sup>67</sup> Pietro Foriere to Charles Frederick, [1738], trans. Spier and Kagan, 77–78. Ficoroni's illustrations may have served as a source for Emma Hamilton's performative pantomimes of ancient figures during her residence in Naples. See Lori-Ann Touchette, "Sir William Hamilton's 'pantomime mistress': Emma Hamilton and Her Attitudes," in Hornsby, ed., *The Impact of Italy*, 123–46.

placing the Romans themselves. In 1747, the year Ficoroni died, Domenico Augusto Bracci, a Florentine antiquary, settled in Rome and began working as a *cicerone*. Bracci represented a new type, the dealer who was expert in one particular niche of the antiquarian trade.<sup>68</sup> Bracci devoted himself to engraved gems, and he often charged the owners of these collectibles for his professional descriptions. In a wonderful letter to the custodian of the Florentine gallery, Bracci offered a cost-benefit analysis of antiquarian tourism in Rome:

All the English who come to Rome either do so—as I believe—from vanity, or for pleasure; they immediately look for an antiquary in order to see the rarities of Rome, which they see in fifteen or twenty days. Every English lord who comes to see these things will offer more than the English lord who studies the language over five or six months. If one finds an English lord who is a real dilettante, that is, he enjoys such precious rarities and returns to see them again and again, these ones give much more. If one could do both things, that is, show them the antiquities and teach them the language, I would do it, but not being able to do it, I am stuck with the maximum profit that one can draw from them.<sup>69</sup>

Bracci mentioned that there were very few dealer-guides when he arrived in Rome. The real competition began in 1750, when Thomas Jenkins and Richard Wilson, two English painters, presented themselves there as antiquaries-for-hire. Bracci complained about the advantage they enjoyed as Englishmen and simultaneously attacked them as failed artists. "These two painters," he wrote, "agreed to abandon their brushes, since they were of no other use than fat brushes are to Lombardian housepainters, who can profit only when painting wedding chests or some bottega sign-board."<sup>70</sup>

In 1766 William Patoun (also a Scot), wrote a guidebook for Grand Tourists that confirmed the social estrangement of collectors and travelers from the local community of Rome in the second half of the eighteenth century. Patoun also made clear that the local antiquary was no longer integral to the Grand Tourist's education. The

<sup>68</sup> On Bracci, see Miriam Mazza and Bruna Tomasello, eds., *Antonio Cocchi: Primo antiquario della Galleria Fiorentina, 1738–1758* (Modena: F. C. Panini, 1996), xxvii–xxviii (hereafter Mazza and Tomasella).

<sup>69</sup> Bracci to Antonio Cocchi, September 7, 1750, in Mazza and Tomasella, 101. Bracci described the language teachers in Rome as "slaves" of the piazza.

<sup>70</sup> Bracci to Cocchi, May 7, 1751, in Mazza and Tomasella, 104–5.

relationship between travelers and local Italians, as he saw it, was a matter of bribes, tips, and services rendered: "consider yourself in money matters as entering a hostile country." In Rome, rather than the services of a local antiquary, Patoun recommended the Scottish *cicerone* Colin Morrison ("the best medallist") and James Byres ("the most agreeable and communicative").<sup>71</sup> Had Ficoroni heard Patoun's closing line—"by this time your lordship will be *pratico del paese*"—he would have rolled over in his grave.

<sup>71</sup> William Patoun, "Advice on Travel in Italy," ca. 1766, manuscript in the Exeter Archives at Burghley House, Lincolnshire, published in Ingamells, *Dictionary of British and Irish Travelers in Italy*, xxxix–lii, quotation at xlv. Byres, a Scottish architect, became the antiquary most sought after by British tourists in Rome during the 1760s and 1770s, the peak decades of the Grand Tour. See Brinsley Ford, "James Byres: Principal Antiquarian for the English Visitors to Rome," *Apollo* 99 (June 1974), 446–61, and Jules David Prown, "A Course of Antiquities at Rome, 1764," *Eighteenth-Century Studies* 31, no. 1 (1997), 90–100. For other influential British antiquary-artists, see David Irwin, "Gavin Hamilton: Archeologist, Painter and Dealer," *Art Bulletin* 44 (1962), 87–102, and John Fleming, *Robert Adam and His Circle, in Edinburgh and Rome* (London: J. Murray, 1962). On the role of the British antiquaries as guides and dealers, see John Fleming, "Some Cicerones and Artist-Dealers," *The Connoisseur Year Book* (1959), 24–27.

## Peiresc and the Study of Islamic Coins in the Early Seventeenth Century

PETER N. MILLER

*With Appendixes Identifying Peiresc's Coins by*

JOHN CUNNALLY AND STEFAN HEIDEMANN

PEIRESC, COINS, ARABIC

NICOLAS CLAUDE FABRI DE PEIRESC (1580–1637) was one of the great numismatists and coin collectors of the seventeenth century (fig. 1). His collection was at least as large as the largest of his time, and maybe substantially larger.<sup>1</sup> But it was also an interesting collection. Its strengths were not in the highly collected and sought-after areas of Greek and early Imperial Rome, but in late antique and medieval coins. Indeed, these latter made up the bulk of his collection.<sup>2</sup> Moreover, working through the posthumous, and perhaps

I am extremely grateful to John Cunnally and Stefan Heidemann for their ample, generous, and freely given assistance. My work could not have been completed without them. All identifications of particular coins in the body of the text are based on their work in the appendixes. I also wish to thank Alan Stahl for the invitation to present this work and Ann Blair for discussing some translations with me.

In addition to the numismatic documents discussed in this article, there are additional Arabic materials in Paris, Bibliothèque Nationale (hereafter BN), ms. Latin 9340, which I will discuss elsewhere.

<sup>1</sup> Antoine Schnapper, who gives a figure of 17,000 objects for Peiresc, writes that the maximum for the great collections of the seventeenth century was 17–18,000 pieces. François de Ranchin, the chancellor of the University of Montpellier, had 15,000; Queen Christina of Sweden, 16,000; and Charles, Duc d'Arschot, 17,000. Abraham Van Goorle [Gorlaeus] had the largest at 29,000 pieces. Peiresc's mentor, Rascas de Bagarris, had only 2,000, and his friend and fellow Aixois, Boniface Borriilly, only 3,000. Schnapper, *Le géant, la licorne et la tulipe: Collections et collectionneurs dans la France du XVII<sup>e</sup> siècle* (Paris: Flammarion, 1989), 151. If one includes an additional 8,000 medals mentioned by Peiresc but not seemingly included by Schnapper, his total rises to 25,000 (Schnapper, 140).

<sup>2</sup> Rough numbers are 2,262 Greek, 3,481 Roman, and 6,330 medieval coins. I will discuss his collection at greater length in part one of my projected *Peiresc's Orient: Historical Research in the Seventeenth Century*.