

**Rezension zu:**

**Ilaria Bignamini/Clare Hornsby, *Digging and Dealing in Eighteenth-Century Rome*. With additional research by Irma Della Giovampaola and Jonathan Yarker (New Haven and London 2010)**

Antonino Crisà

*Digging and Dealing in Eighteenth-Century Rome* is a posthumous work by Ilaria Bignamini. When she died prematurely in 2001, she was able to complete only two chapters; however, she left a substantial set of notes, outlines and transcribed records. Subsequently, Clare Hornsby, Irma Della Giovampaola and Jonathan Yarker started to revise and complete Bignamini's notes. This invaluable collaboration has led to this notable work.

The present monograph is relevant to the history of antiquarianism during the late eighteenth century in Rome. As the title makes clear, the two main subjects are the digging and dealing of antiquarian objects. Two of its most significant points of strength are the catalogue of sites and the wide collection of letters, arranged in the second volume, which provide substantial data on excavations, finds, dealers and antiquarians of the time.

After the usual *Acknowledgements* (pp. VIII-IX), the work opens with a *Foreword* (XI-XVIII) by Professor Paolo Liverani, which describes Ilaria Bignamini and her research activity on antiquarianism, which was her favourite field of study. In addition, Liverani describes how Bignamini's uncompleted work has been accomplished and finally published as the present volume. This introduction, translated in Italian and English, represents a sort of tribute to Bignamini's memory and helps the reader to understand her indefatigable research among archives in Italy and in the UK.

Bignamini summarizes the history of antiquarian research in Rome and introduces her research in the *Preface* (XX-XXIV). She explains synthetically how antiquarianism changed from the eighteenth century to the late eighteenth and into the early twentieth centuries. At that point, the world of antiquarians, dealers and complex bureaucracy seems to disappear and is replaced by the 'professionalisation of scholarship and fieldwork' (XXIII).

The *Introduction, The British Conquest of the Marbles of Ancient Rome: Aspects of the Material and Cultural Conquests* (1-16) reports how antiquarian dealing 'conquered' Rome in the late eighteenth century. Bignamini asserts rightly that this massive phenomenon is linked to the Grand Tour since the early eighteenth century and is one of its most remarkable consequences. British travellers prepared the ground for increasing interests in antiquities collecting and dealing.

Afterwards, a key-event was the arrival in Rome of Thomas Jenkins, Gavin Hamilton, Colin Morison and Robert Fagan, four English antiquarians, who performed new excavations and increased finds dealing substantially, as soon as they realized it was a very profitable business (2). In this regard, the present work is directly linked to their arrival in Rome. The author raises also an important question: 'How did eighteenth-century British diggers and dealers contribute to archaeological knowledge?' (7). As the author states, one of the most significant effects of this phenomenon was the dispersion of finds and the creation of substantial antiquarian collections all over the world (7).

Subsequently, antiquities prices were strongly influenced by excavation provenance (11-12). New Roman imperial *villas* were dug and a great quantity of marbles was discovered. Bignamini states rightly that this complex phenomenon at the same time contributed to ‘a rediscovery of Roman imperial art, notably of the second century AD’ (12). Thus, surviving letters and reports disclose a lost world, made up of passionate discoveries, detailed description of finds, relationships between antiquarians and dealers, which scholars can use historically to reconstruct sequences of excavations and dealing.

*Technical Introduction* (17-30) is an indispensable report for understanding digging and dealing in the late eighteenth-century Rome. It comprises an exhaustive description of legislation of the time, in particular how excavators asked for licences (*Excavations and licences: a background*, 17-18; *Legislation*, 21-22; *Licences*, 23; *Responsibilities of the excavator*, 24), papal officers operated (*Officers*, 19-21), how finds were shared among landowners, discoverer and the Pope (*The Share*, 25), and how antiquities exports were allowed via relevant permits (*Export licences*, 27-28). Targeted extracts from records, quoted by the author, are used effectively to show how precisely offices, officers and licences were mentioned, and to understand how bureaucratic practices took place in that period. Furthermore, the list of *Responsibilities of the excavator* (24) testifies to an imposition of complex and strict duties for excavators, who were controlled regularly by papal officers. Records testify that excavators upheld their responsibilities, since they sent officers and Commissario delle Antichità e Cave di Roma technical reports on excavations and relevant duties (18).

Next follows the crucial core of the volume, entitled *Part I. A catalogue of sites* (31-191). An introductory *Note on method* (33-34) clarifies the catalogue structure, which is arranged by alphabetical order and comprises detailed information on recorded excavations. Moreover, a *Calendar of excavations* (35-37) orders the works chronologically and provides page quotations, relevant to the catalogue entry. The *Contents* (38) reports a list of sites in alphabetical order. They are both useful tools to track excavations very rapidly.

The substantial catalogue is made up of 57 sites, which is a fairly considerable amount. The author describes each site, providing information on the following headings: name and description, licences, estate, maps, previous and later excavations, present remains, reports, finds. In addition, an extensive collection of illustrations, such as of statues, drawings, maps, completes the impressive amount of data provided in the catalogue.

Rome was obviously the core of excavations and focus of dealing. Bignamini identifies 10 main archaeological sites: namely Isola Tiberina, Polveriera (Palatine Hill), Porta Fabrica, San Carlo al Corso, San Francesco di Paolo ai Monti, River Tiber, Via Appia, Villa Fonseca, Villa Mandosi and Villa Negroni.

The catalogue is a valuable resource, since it presents considerable sets of information on the history of excavations. Certainly, the authors have performed an in-depth research to track maps in archives and land registers of the time; for instance, they quote *Catasto Alessandrino*, dated to the seventeenth century.

After the detailed catalogue of sites comes *Dealers and other characters* (192-346). It is a substantial section, which has been divided in two different parts. The first includes two biographical accounts – *British conquerors of the marbles, 1: Gavin Hamilton as Archaeologist* (194-207) and *British conquerors of the marbles, 2: Thomas Jenkins as Connoisseur* (208-221). These are detailed descriptions of both antiquarians’ activity in Rome and other biographical information. However, as the au-

thor recognises, further archival research could offer much more data on these significant figures of antiquarianism in Rome (220: for example, tracking Jenkins' diaries).

Subsequently, the second part, preceded by a brief *Note on method* (223), is a vast and detailed collection of 56 biographies (224-346). However, the most exigent scholar should also consult the *DBITI* (Ingamells and Ford 1997). Biographies are offered of people who operated in Rome in the dealing of antiquities. These are comfortably arranged by alphabetical order. Based on thorough bibliographical and documentary research, each biography comprises the following headings: name of person and bibliography, sales, and exports of finds (if any). Various illustrations, such as paintings of antiquarians, drawings and photos of finds, complete this detailed accurate part of the book. One can note that the most extended biographies focus on Gavin Hamilton (271-281), Thomas Jenkins (288-295) and Charles Townley (326-331).

In the main text, names in bold refer to antiquarians, who have a related biography. Also sites in bold are connected to specific entries of the above-mentioned catalogue. It is a well conceived method, which recalls a sort of hypertext and avoids the use of footnotes. A separate list of antiquarians has not been provided by the authors; thus, it is necessary to consult the *Index* to track antiquarians rapidly.

The *Bibliography* (347-387) has been divided in two sections, *Part 1: Catalogue of sites* (347-372) and *Part 2: Dealers and other characters* (373-387), according to the general division of the work. *Photograph credits* (388) and *Index* (389-408) close the first volume.

As identified, the second volume of this work offers a considerable set of records. The *Note on method* (II: 1-2) introduces the volume briefly and explains how it has come about. It is important to stress that the volume 'is not a complete set of the letters' of the three antiquarians, since 'much material not strictly relevant to the subject of this book has been removed' (II: 1).

Obviously, the core of archival research comprises a set of records, which are transcribed faithfully and ordered appropriately. In this case, the records are 423 letters, most of all now preserved in various English archives, such as the Townley Archive at the British Museum of London, Archive of Southampton University and the National Library of Ireland. They were written by antiquarians and noblemen of the time, especially by Hamilton and Jenkins to Townley. Each letter has been arranged by chronological order and referenced by a progressive number. Footnotes contain reference information to track records in the archives. In addition to this, further notes report data on finds, in the event that they have been quoted in previous references or sold in auction, such as in Christie's notably one in 1930.

Unfortunately, a specific index, in the shape of a list of correspondents with places and dates of the relevant letters, is absent from this work. However, as it has been already reported for antiquarians, the *Index* compensates for this gap.

Finally, it is useful to observe that *Digging and Dealing in Eighteenth-Century Rome* has been already reviewed positively (Manacorda 2010); it can be considered a remarkable work, which is difficult to criticize substantially. The catalogue, which forms the most important section of the first volume, is well-organized and presents a considerable wealth of information on various sites. Detailed reports, targeted quotations of records and relevant figures complete fully the descriptions of sites and excavations.

Equally, the substantial set of records collected in the second volume, reveal new data on the antiquarian research in late eighteenth-century Rome and successfully support the historical reconstruction of events. Therefore, Bignamini's work is cer-

tainly a first-rate reference point for scholars, who are interested in the history of late eighteenth-century excavations in Rome and its neighbouring territories. However, it is certain that scholars will have to continue archival research constantly, in order to obtain new unpublished data and improve our knowledge on the history of modern Italian archaeology.

**References:**

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**Contact to the author:**

Antonino Crisà  
PhD Student  
School of Archaeology and Ancient History  
University of Leicester  
[ac472@le.ac.uk](mailto:ac472@le.ac.uk)

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