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## The Antiquarians Who Were They?

Ginette Vagenheim

Because of the short time, but also of the kind of exercise we wanted to propose Tony and me, I will focus today my inquiry on the word “antiquario” as it appears in Pirro Ligorio’s books on the roman antiquities “le antichita romane”, (the date of Ligorio are 1512-1583) and also as it appears in other sources, documents as payments or letters, as well as in scholarly works written by his contemporaries both in Italian and in latin in which the word is translated as “antiquaries” or more often in Ligorio’s case, by a periphrasis.

Let’s keep out of our inquiry two cases in which Ligorio uses the word “antiquario” with meanings that do not interest our subject : in the first case, antiquario indicates a museum of antiquities, for example that of the cardinal Hippolitus the second, Ligorio’s first patron from 1549, that Ligorio describes in his villa on the Quirinal (**handout1 + diapo1**), or the anticario of the duke alfonso the second of Ferrara hippolitus’s nephew and last patron of Ligorio from 1569, when Ligorio came to Ferrare to take Enea Vico’s place who just died, precisely in the function of “antiquario” (**handout2+diapo2+ diapo3**).

Let’s see now the second meaning of “antiquario” used by Ligorio, this time to indicate a particular profession, that is the profession of dealing antiquities with the main purpose to make money, that is, mutatis mutandis, the “contemporary antiquarian” (**handout3+**); the kind of objects that these antiquarians proposed were precisely the quadroto mentioned in the “anticario of Ferrara”, some of them as you can read at the end of handout 3 “rimaste in mano di alcuni venditori di antichita”, one of the most famous “antiquario” of this kind being Antonio conteschi best known as Antonio or antonietto delle medaglie (**handout 4**) and having a house on the Quirinal with a great numbers of antiquities (**diapo 5**), like this statua del mondo, but also inscriptions coins, all kind of objects (**diapo6**) that these “antiquarii” founded during excavations that they made for their own, in different places in Rome; Rodolfo Lanciani in his storia degli scavi di Roma, recorded a notarial act of 7<sup>th</sup> December 1554 that gives Antonio antiquario the permission to excavate in a private property near the Lateran (**handout 5**); and his business be owed fruitful considered that already in 1546, he was able to proudly place on the façade of his house the following inscription (**handout 6**) written in the noble latin language that defines him as an “antiquarius” in the modern sense mutatis mutandis of “curator of antiquities”

Back to Ligorio who is commonly qualified as an “antiquario” during his life, precisely in the first payment in 1549, when he entered the service of Hippolitus the second and painted a frieze for the villa on the Quirinal mentioned above, or in a letter of the ferrarese ambassador of Alfonso secondo, when he recommended Ligorio to the duke in 1568 and described him as “un antiquario, il primo di Roma”; in his book on the art

of gymnastic of 1573, Girolamo Mercuriale defined him as *peritissimus in veterum monumentis renovandis* and Stephanus Pighius, as *antiquitatum studiosissimus* in his *Hercules Prodicus* published in 1587, that records the visit Ferrara in 1574, of his patron the prince of Cleves very impressed by the museum of antiquities, the "anticario" of the duke and by the library. In 1584, one year after his death, a document of the ferrarese administration, mentioned him "messer pirro Ligorio antiquario". Also in the following centuries Ligorio was always defined as an antiquario until his most recent biography published posthumously in 2004 by David Coffin, his major specialist, with the title : *Pirro Ligorio the renaissance artist, architect and antiquarian*.

In his works, Ligorio rarely defines himself as an "antiquario". I only found, still now, one quotation in a polemic passage against the scholars that Ligorio accuses to be completely deprived of any knowledge of the visual image of antiquity (**handout 7 and 8**). **And who want to seem as the antiquarian per parer anticari**

In the other hand Ligorio clearly presents himself as an artist and as an architect, to go back to Coffin's title, the title of architect is to be found, again in paintings as Fernando Loffredo has shown recently in some paintings of the camera apostolica in april 1566, or one year before in the letter to Cardinal Farnese who intervenes on his behalf when he was put in jail (**handout 13**).

I then believe that if we want to understand the meaning that Ligorio gives to the word "antiquario" we also have to reflect on the definition that Ligorio gives to the 2 other words when used in his behalf.

The first auto qualification by Ligorio is as an artist and precisely, in the first manuscript, that of Oxford, dedicated to the antiquities of his native Naples and surroundings, and lost today, except of this page and of some few other sheets [**diapo 70** Ligorio presents himself as an artist "pittore Napolitano", a title that will appear only in the oxford manuscript. In his other books, Ligorio will presents himself as Pirro Ligorio (**diapo8**), or Pirro Ligorio Napolitano, and after 1560, he will add cittadino romano, after patritio napolitano and after 1580, cittadino ferrarese. Pyrrhus Ligorius Pictor neapolitanus was found in the epigraphical collections of Johannes Metellus, a burgundian scholar and secretary of the Spanish scholar Antonio Agustin, at the beginning of his stay in Rome in 1545 when he began to collect inscriptions and received at this same time copies from Ligorio.

Going back to his manuscripts, does the changing of self presentation in the title of his work coincide with the passage of Ligorio from "painter" to "antiquarian"? that is from his profession in Naples and also during the first years in Rome where he arrived presumably around 1534 and where he is recorded for works of paintings until 1545; in any case, this "new" profession clearly implicates, for Ligorio, an activity of "writing" ; in fact, in his manuscript of Oxford he explains that he made this book

(questo libro ho volute fare) per esser cosa assai al nostro proposito [**hadout 9**because of the great benefit for him] e anchora per non marcire nel ocio delle notti lunghe e di quel tempo che mi e rimasto dopo la stanchezza di dipingere"; so the start of ligorio's new life, seems also to be linked with a conflict with the new patterns in the paintings and the greed of the patrons, as he explains further (f.43r.). The activity of writing on antiquities is recorded other times in his manuscripts at the third person : "Pyrrho Ligorio che ha scritta quest'opera (taur.13,f.14)" or "Pyrrho che ha scritta quest'opera con li proprii occhi lacrimevoli (**hand10** taur.6, f.57v)." after having seen, for example the despoliation of the basis of the Trajan column; so, does that mean that we can deduce from the title of his works "libri di Pirro Ligorio delle antichita romane" that he defines himself as an "antiquario" and that he considers that the profession of "antiquario" is to write on antiquity?

Yes of course, but to write on antiquity implies to have collected antiquities; and Ligorio explains, in one of his last manuscript, the 23th volume of Turin, the way in wich he began to collect the antiquities: "pellegrinando le reliquie antiche con non poca fatica et contrasto di fortuna per forza l'havemo compilate con estrema fatica (**hand 11f.1v**)".

**To collect antiquities** means to be able to reproduce them graficcaly and **to write on antiquities** means to be able to interpret them ; Ligorio did both, as he explained in the last volumes of his works, and precisely in the volume 23 **had 12**: incominciando in tali pensieri che dovesse fare, con animo deliberative mi diedi alle cose matematiche, al disegno per potere formare ogni sorte d'animale o di figura che mi piacesse non per farne nell'arte della pittura profittevole ma per possere esprimere le cose antiche o d'edificij in prospettiva et in profilo o in modello et per poter cavare gli essempli delle cose delle medaglie et d'altre sculture et col disegno inamorato delle cose et con leggere ogni scrittori semo venuti a fare quest'opera (f.6r.).

And when he went "in archaeological pellegrinaggio" to Tivoli around 1538, in the same period as Michelangelo, Palladio, Sangallo and others, he was already able to draw ancient buildings in prospettiva et in profilo and to comment them on the basis of literary sources; in fact the great number of drawings of the ancient villas and antiquities of Tivoli and probably his first description of the Hadrien's villa intituled "descrittione" are of this period.

It is then not surprising that Hippolitus the second takes Ligorio with him as antiquario, when he went to Tivoli for the first time in 1550, as a governor, and then definitively in 1560 when Ligorio played a great role, together with the scholars of the entourage of the cardinal like Marc Antonie Muret in the realization of both the excavations at Villa Adriana and the building and decoration of the Villa d'Este and its gardens. **Diapo 10**