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Richard Cooper, *Roman Antiquities in Renaissance France, 1515-65*. Farnham, Surrey: Ashgate, 2013. vii-435 pp. Illustrations, bibliography, and index. £80.00 (hb). ISBN 978-1-4094-52652.

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For the past forty plus years, Richard Cooper has conducted deeply interesting, meditative probes into the complex literary and cultural relations that developed between learned circles in Renaissance France and Italy. His investigations, transnational *avant la lettre*, have always yielded important insights into the careers and literary legacies of major figures such as François Rabelais, Jean du Bellay, and Marguerite de Valois, among others, in meticulous editions of key works.[1] For a long time, he has joined his interest in such textual excavations with the study of the material manifestations of these cultural relationships as found in coins, antique statuary fragments, and the paraphernalia of ceremonial entries.[2] His new book on the emerging French mania for Roman antiquities among figures at the French court and in provincial towns in the first half of the sixteenth century joins these two domains together within the context of diplomacy and politics, long a characteristic of his approach. Yet where many scholars after such a distinguished career write big summative books to wrap things up, Cooper instead offers a sprawling, at times unfinished but always suggestive headlong dive into the very deep end of this pool, opening up rather than closing new lines of investigation that should keep him and the next generation of scholars busy for some time to come.

The book begins by exploring the growing awareness of classical antiquities in both France and Italy during the first three decades of the sixteenth century. Chapter one examines how, in the wake of Charles VIII's invasion of Italy in 1494, direct experiences as well as travel accounts and guidebooks nourished a desire to collect ancient coins, inscriptions and sculpture, especially in southern French towns with Gallo-Roman origins and at the royal court. Decorative arts, architecture, and performances like royal entries all began to evince an *all'antica* flavor that only grew in intensity. Not to dispute the prominence that Cooper ascribes to early humanists in Lyon and Nîmes in promoting interest in the classical past, but it should be noted that equally strong, though differently inflected attractions and uses of antique literary motifs and architectural referents shaped the rich body of writings left after 1460 by courtly writers in northern France known as the *rhétoriciens*—a point Cooper only brings up fleetingly at the end of the book.[3] The problem here is that the more one looks, the more it becomes evident that French interest in ancient Rome existed far back into the Middle Ages. Simply take the case of Julius Caesar. Even during the Middle Ages, numerous manuscript editions of his *Commentaries*—some complete, most abridged—existed in Latin.[4] A French translation of 1213, *Li Fait des Romains*, was presented to Philip II, whose sobriquet “Auguste” of course invoked Rome's first emperor and Caesar's nephew. This highly popular work survives in some sixty identified manuscripts.[5] Two new translations into French came about in the fifteenth century.[6] One dated to 1473 was by Jean Duchesne, a writer and copyist who lived in Lille. Duchesne essentially just reworked the original *Li Fait des Romains* and offered flattering parallels to the achievements of his patron, Charles the Bold, Duke of Burgundy.[7] Some twenty manuscript versions of the text exist, but it was never published.

This medieval interlude points to the essential change that Cooper does not fully identify, namely, that the longstanding literary interest in and use of classical antiquity in medieval and early Renaissance

France came also to include in the early sixteenth century a palpable desire to possess, indeed even inhabit, a revived antique world, not simply meditate upon the faint glimmerings of it found on a manuscript leaf or early printed page. This dialectic between words and objects was to continue far after the sixteenth century and down to the present. In this sense, Cooper's book forms an important chapter in a very long book. The next two portions of his study move decisively toward the new materiality of this relationship with the classical past. A primary (though hardly exclusive) conduit of antiquities came via French diplomats in Italy, chiefly Cardinals Jean du Bellay and Georges d'Armagnac, who bought, had restored, and then shipped back to France crate upon crate of objects for the king, their own collections or those assembled by other aristocratic connoisseurs. The advice of humanist scholars helped with the selection and appraisal process; indeed, it seems clear from this telling that was mainly why their patrons kept them around. Chapter three concentrates on Du Bellay's unusual decision in the 1550s to build a villa and sumptuous gardens on the grounds of the Baths of Diocletian in Rome which he stuffed with antiques until their dispersal upon his death in 1560. Especially fascinating and worthy of much further study is the shady traffic (familiar still today) in these antiquities which involved greasing palms to obtain export licenses or even smuggling objects out of Italy, often on perilous sea voyages.[8] The use of these objects as gifts and then eventually commodities in a burgeoning antiques market bears more investigation, too. Also intriguing was the practice of "restoring" damaged stone inscriptions or statuary, adding words or body parts to the fragmentary remains unearthed in digs in and around Rome and elsewhere. These practices remind us that the encounter with the Roman classical past was as much an exercise in imagination as anything else.

In chapter four, the discussion moves to France to examine the taste for the antique from the point of view of collectors at the courts of François I and Henri II. The kings hired French artists like Primaticcio and Sebastiano Serlio to redesign places, especially Fontainebleau, to display copies of classical sculpture or originals procured in Italy. Their goal was nothing less than to rebuild Rome in France. Grandees at court, such as the Guise, soon followed suit.[9] Printed etchings in fine bound editions served as another way to possess ancient objects, if only as simulacra, and also depict them in fantastical, ruined settings. Here Cooper focuses on the roles of provincial humanists, like the bibliophile Jean Grolier from Lyon, the leading center of antiquarian taste making in France until mid-century. In the next chapter, Cooper looks at visits to Italy by major French artists and architects such as Philibert de l'Orme and Jean Bullant, at their sketchbooks, and at antiquarian influences in their art. Of special importance were the numerous collections of engravings of Roman art and architecture published by Antoine Lafréry which served as pattern books back in France. In these, the ongoing interplay between fantasy and reality continued to animate visions of the ancient past and attempts to recreate it or meditate upon its shambles. Chapter six takes up the emergence of "antiquarian art" as classical motifs began to inflect the decorative style of the emerging school of Fontainebleau as seen in the classicized landscapes strewn with picturesque ruins by artists such as Antoine Caron. Allegorical meanings infused these often enigmatic qualities of scenes evoking the ancient world, prompting moral reflection on the vanity of worldly ambitions and possessions. The irony here, though unstated by Cooper, comes in the ensuing chapter's focus on Renaissance royal entries which combined traditional ritual with ceremonial elements of the Roman triumph. These performances, as can best be gathered from the albums created by provincial humanists like Jean de Vauzelles, provided the crown and towns a chance to broadcast their splendors in elaborate and evermore ostentatious spectacles celebrating earthly power.

The final two chapters of the book return to where Cooper's career began, namely Renaissance fiction and poetry, and delve into how the desire to possess and envision the ancient past shaped more complicated textual expressions. Cooper discerns, as other scholars long have, the deep ambivalence about antiquarianism from satires by Erasmus to spirited defenses by the aptly named Julius Caesar Scalinger. These debates intersected with religious controversies of the time in the anti-Romanism of Protestantism or later invocations of an original pristine Gallic heritage that survived the original Roman conquest. Admiration of the pagan past mixed with misgivings about its idolatrous character,

while patriots decried the unbridled desire for Roman antiquities as positively unFrench. Local historians such as Jean Poldo d'Albenas of Nîmes helped through their research and writing to foster this emerging proto-national discourse.[10] Illustrations and ancient topographies, along with sham archaeologies and outright fabrications by Annio da Viterbo, among others, shaped the retelling of legends, histories, and the creation of new stories by writers such as François Rabelais, whose own first-hand knowledge of Rome was quite considerable as seen in his edition of Bartolomeo Marliani's *Topographia antiquae Romae* (1534). Poetry also found inspiration in ancient objects, often when cunningly displayed in châteaux or gardens. The theme of ruin frequently ran through this verse too, nowhere more so than in the works of Joachim du Bellay. Cooper describes the poet's attitude toward the past as "complex," which could really be said just about everyone whom he discusses in his book. Du Bellay's preoccupation with ruinscape vouchsafed a deeper anguish about the transience of worldly things and a nostalgic longing for an irrecoverable past. In this respect, we arrive at the cusp of modern historical consciousness.[11]

In many ways, Cooper's winding "antiques roadshow" through Renaissance France nicely pairs with Margaret McGowan's equally interesting book published some fourteen years ago.[12] No elegant set of arguments or tidy synthetic reinterpretation closes his excursion, however, for which this reviewer is most grateful. Instead, Cooper promises and we can only eagerly await his own companion study as he draws upon—as will his motivated readers—the great horde of baubles, gewgaws, and outright treasures of this richly stocked *cabinet des curiosités* assembled in a lifetime of vital scholarship.

NOTES

[1] See in particular his *Rabelais et l'Italie*, vol. XXIV of *Etudes rabelaisiennes* (Geneva: Librairie Droz, 1991); *Poésie néo-latine de Jean du Bellay*, with G. Demerson (Société des Textes Français Modernes, Paris 2007); and Marguerite de Navarre, *Chrétiens et mondains, poèmes épars*, vol. 8 of *Œuvres complètes de Marguerite de Navarre* (Paris, Librairie H. Champion, 2007).

[2] See, for example, his "Collectors of coins and numismatic scholarship in early Renaissance France," in *Medals and Coins from Budé to Mommsen*, eds., M. H. Crawford, C. R. Ligota & J. B. Trapp, Warburg Institute Surveys & Texts, XXI (London: Warburg Institute, 1990), pp. 5-23; "Dionysos exhumé: les archéologues français à la Renaissance", in *Dionysos: origines et résurgences*, ed. I. Zinguer (Paris, 2001), pp. 123-35; and his edition of Maurice Scève, *The Entry of Henri II into Lyon, September 1548*, text with an introduction and notes, (Tempe, Ariz.: Medieval and Renaissance Texts and Studies, 1997).

[3] David Cowling, *Building the Text: Architecture as Metaphor in Late Medieval and Early Modern France* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1998).

[4] Jeanette M. A. Beers, *A Medieval Caesar*, (Geneva: Droz, 1976), especially chapters eight and nine; and V. Brown, "Latin Manuscripts of Caesar's 'Gallic War,'" in *Palaeographia, diplomatica et archivistica. Studi in onore di Giulio Battelli*, v. I, (Rome, 1979), pp. 105-157.

[5] L. F. Flutre, *Les manuscrits des Faits de Romains*, (Paris, 1932) and L. F. Flutre, *Li Fet des Romains dans les littératures française et italienne du XIIIe au XIVe siècle*, Paris, 1932. An anonymous cleric in the Ile-de-France translated *Li Fet des Romains*, which contained selections from Lucan, Sallust, and Suetonius.

[6] R. Bossuat, "Traductions françaises des *Commentaires de César* à la fin du XV^e siècle," *Bibliothèque d'humanisme et renaissance* 3(1943): 253-411.

[7] S. Montigny, *Edition partielle de l'oeuvre de Jean du Quesne, traducteur de César et chroniqueur à la cour de Charles le Téméraire*, Thesis for the *diplôme d'archiviste paléographe*, 2006, t. I : *Première partie: Edition partielle de la traduction de La Guerre des Gaules par Jean du Quesne (1473-1474)*.

[8] For more on this, see the recent essay by Barbara Furlotti, "Le cardinal Jean Du Bellay et le marché des antiquités à Rome au milieu du XVI^e siècle," in *Le cardinal Jean Du Bellay. Diplomatie et culture dans l'Europe de la Renaissance*, eds. Cédric Michon and Loris Petris (Rennes: Presses Universitaires de Rennes, 2014), pp. 245-258.

[9] On the Guise strategies of self-display, see the recent study by Marjorie Meiss-Evan, *Les Guise et leur paraître* (Rennes: Presses Universitaires de Rennes, 2014), which includes precious objects within the overall scenic panorama created by clothes, tableware, and various decorative furnishings, along with the crippling costs they brought--something Jean du Bellay knew all too well, too. More generally, see also Renata Ago, *Gusto for Things: A History of Objects in Seventeenth-Century Rome*, trans. Bradford Bouley and Corey Tazzara (Chicago, Ill.: University of Chicago Press, 2013 [2006 Italian edition]).

[10] Michael Wolfe, "Antiquarianism and Urban Identity in Sixteenth-Century Nîmes", in Vesna Drapac and André Lambelet, eds., *French History and Civilization 2* (2009), pp. 3-15 at <http://www.h-france.net/rude/rude%20volume%20ii/Wolfe%20Final%20Version.pdf>

[11] Here Cooper reprises a topic eloquently analyzed years ago by Thomas M. Greene, whose work unfortunately does not figure in the otherwise copious bibliography. See especially his "Resurrecting Rome: The Double Task of the Humanist Imagination," in P. A. Ramsay, ed., *Rome in the Renaissance: The City and the Myth: Papers of the Thirteenth Annual Conference of the Center for Medieval & Early Renaissance Studies* (Binghamton, N.Y., 1982), pp. 41-55 and his *The Light in Troy: Imitation and Discovery in Renaissance Poetry* (New Haven, Conn., 1982).

[12] Margaret McGowan, *The Vision of Rome in Late Renaissance France* (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 2000).

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