Late Antiquity and the Antiquarian

ABSTRACT Arnaldo Momigliano, the most influential modern student of antiquarianism, advanced the view that there was a late antique antiquarianism, but also lamented the absence of study of the history of antiquarianism in this period. Part of the challenge, however, has been to define the object of such a study. Rather than “finding” antiquarianism in late antiquity as Momigliano did, this article argues that a history that offers explicit analogies between late antique evidence and the avowed antiquarianism of early modern Europe allows a more self-conscious and critical history of late antique engagement with the past. The article offers three examples of this form of analysis, comparing practices of statue collecting in Renaissance Rome and the late Roman West, learned treatises on the Roman army by Vegetius and Justus Lipsius, and feelings of attachment to a local past as a modern antiquarian stereotype and in a pair of letters to and from Augustine of Hippo. KEYWORDS Antiquarianism, Arnaldo Momigliano, Renaissance, statue collections, Vegetius, Augustine of Hippo, comparative history, the past

The prominence of the past in Late Antiquity has become popular among students of the period as a distinguishing characteristic of late antique culture: Averil Cameron has suggested that “remaking the past” was a major cultural and intellectual preoccupation across society; Marco Formisano has proposed that the “processing not just of the past but of relation to the past” is a key to late antique literary aesthetics; and David Scourfield has advanced the idea that the special character of late antique culture was the multiplicity of ways that the past was integrated into the present.¹ In substantiating these arguments about


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the distinctive culture of the past in Late Antiquity, the dominant contemporary approaches are the renewed study of literary historiography and discussion of the role of religious identities in shaping interest in the past. To take the first of these, late antique historiography has become a hot topic in both anglophone and continental scholarship, with much fresh work both on established questions of sources and sincerity and on new areas like rhetoric and generic development.\(^2\) So too, the question of whether and how religious outlook affected the reception of the past (or pasts, classical and biblical) has been very productive, perhaps most prominently as one of the central themes of Alan Cameron’s The Last Pagans of Rome.\(^3\)

This article takes a different approach to late antique engagement with the past, one focused on how inhabitants of the late Roman empire related to traces of former times, by looking for antiquarianism in Late Antiquity.\(^4\) Taking a comparative approach to defining what might count as “antiquarian” in the late


\(^{2}\) The breadth of recent scholarship on late antique historiography is difficult to encapsulate: there has been important work on specific historians, on historiographic genres, notably the chronicle, and on historiography in languages other than Greek and Latin. Brian Croke, “Historiography,” in The Oxford Handbook to Late Antiquity, ed. Scott Fitzgerald Johnson (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), 405–16 provides bibliography and a quite recent state-of-the-field. Despite the range of the work being done, Peter Van Nuffelen has suggested that this topic is still marginalized in the study of Late Antiquity: “Introduction: Historiography as Cultural Practice,” in L’histoire tardo-antique et la transmission de savoirs, eds. Philippe Bladeau and Peter Van Nuffelen (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2015), 11–20.


\(^{4}\) For pragmatic reasons this article concentrates on evidence from the western empire in the third to fifth centuries; there is no reason to think that the search for late antique antiquarianism must be limited to this time and place. For the breadth of the potential, see Richard Payne, “Avoiding Ethnicity: Uses of the Past in Late Sasanian Northern Mesopotamia,” in Visions of Community:
Roman world, I put late antique archaeological and literary materials alongside more recent, self-consciously antiquarian phenomena. Through comparative method, we can avoid conceiving the late antique past only in terms of continuity or departure from classical or biblical historical consciousness, but instead think of it in relation to another society, early modern Europe. Christopher Celenza has already advocated for comparative work on Late Antiquity and the Renaissance on the grounds that both periods are defined by religious change and complexity and by a belatedness with respect to classical Roman antiquity. This article, then, takes up this suggestion by using early modern antiquarianism to re-contextualize the evidence for forms of late antique interest in the past. I contend that such a comparison is a valuable heuristic for a broader understanding of late antique historical culture, beyond any specific literary genre or particular religious community. It allows us to be sensitive to social practices and literary texts that both take the past as past and, implicitly or explicitly, assert the possibility of a presence for that past in their contemporary moment.

In this article, I first address the problem of locating “the antiquarian” in Late Antiquity, particularly in the wake of the work of Arnaldo Momigliano. This discussion justifies the approach in the second part, where I offer three examples where we can find analogies between late antique and early modern practices, ideas and texts (statue collecting; learned study of military organization; antiquarian sentiment) as test cases for an explicitly comparative study of Late Antiquity and the antiquarian. This article is not intended as a full history of late antique Roman antiquarianism, but rather as a reflection on how this history has (not) been and could (still) be written.

LOOKING FOR LATE ANTIQUE ANTIQUARIANISM

As for other periods and cultures, the possibility of late antique antiquarianism has been raised in recent scholarship, but it has received little exploration beyond use as a convenient label for particular texts or activities. Paradoxically,
this lack of study may be due to the influence of the most distinguished histo-
rian of antiquarianism, Arnaldo Momigliano. His profoundly influential 1950
essay, “Ancient History and the Antiquarian,” is an inviting history of antiquar-
ianism from the fifth century BCE to the twentieth century.7 He charted it
from its emergence in the form of Herodotean description, through the golden
age of antiquarian erudition in early modern Europe and the ultimate incorpo-
ration of learned method into history proper in the age of Gibbon, and finally
to the modern relegation of antiquarianism from respectable intellectual activ-
ity. What has made the essay enticing and valuable for so many scholars in the
67 years since it was published, however, is not simply the map of the antiquar-
ian territory that it provided, but also the moments when the guide pointed out
empty plots along the way.8 Significantly for readers of this journal, in one of
these moments, Momigliano asserts that “the whole history of Roman antiquar-
ian studies from Fenestella to John Lydus is still to be written.”9

7. Arnaldo Momigliano, “Ancient History and the Antiquarian,” Journal of the Warburg and
8. Anthony Grafton, “Momigliano’s Method and the Warburg Institute: Studies in His Middle
Period,” in Momigliano and Antiquarianism: Foundations of the Modern Sciences, ed. Peter Miller
(Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2007), 97–126, at 100: “his articles [on antiquarianism]
provided a schematic London Underground map of the early modern world of learning, rather than
an Ordinance Survey map of its details.” Momigliano himself called the paper “a very provisional
map of a field” when it was reprinted in 1966.
However, Momigliano’s assertion that there was a late antique antiquarianism—represented, at least, by the later part of the period between Fenestella (first century CE) and John of Lydia (sixth century CE)—and his consequent assumption of a simple gap in scholarship are less straightforward claims than they might first appear. Previous histories of antiquarianism, often written as forms of self-justification by practitioners or from the perspective of archaeology, had tended to see antiquarianism as either a Varronian invention that had died and been reborn in fifteenth-century Italy or as a modern science: the absence of Late Antiquity in these accounts was symptomatic of the inward focus of these avowedly disciplinary histories. 10 Momigliano’s “Ancient History and the Antiquarian” essay takes a very different position: it is focused on the specific problem of the role of antiquarianism in the history of historiography, especially the moment in the eighteenth century when history borrowed the erudition of antiquarianism in the face of Pyrrhonist historical scepticism. 11 Although he nods in the 1950 paper to a formal generic distinction between synchronic antiquarianism and diachronic history, it is clear ultimately that this was not for him the only distinguishing quality of antiquarianism. 12 Instead, as he makes especially clear in the version of his Sather lecture on antiquarian research published in *The Classical Foundations of Modern Historiography*, he also saw differences both between an antiquarian interest in historical facts *per se* and the historian’s preoccupation with historical problems and between

10. The early histories of antiquarianism were written as prefaces for large-scale antiquarian works on Rome: in the sixteenth century, Onofrio Panvinio and Johannes Rosinus both placed antiquarianism in the tripartite temporality of Renaissance humanism (ancient origins – medieval decline – modern rebirth), which connected the decline of the Roman empire with the disappearance of antiquarian study. In the introduction of his *Thesaurus Antiquitatum Romanarum* (published 1694), Johannes Graevius suggested that antiquarianism was solely a modern science, the contingent product of the ruin of antiquity. Finally, early histories of archaeology tended to affirm the idea that antiquarianism, the putative disciplinary ancestor, was a modern proto-science: see Bernhard Stark, *Systematik und Geschichte der Archäologie der Kunst* (Leipzig: Wilhelm Engelmann, 1880), 43–44.


12. Momigliano, “Ancient History and the Antiquarian,” 286: “I assume that to many of us the word ‘antiquary’ suggests the notion of a student of the past who is not quite a historian because: (1) historians write in a chronological order; antiquaries write in a systematic order; (2) historians produce those facts which serve to illustrate or explain a certain situation; antiquaries collect all the items that are connected with a certain subject, whether they help to solve a problem or not.”
the social and cultural interests of the antiquaries and the subject matter of political history. Indeed, a later paper, “Storiografia su tradizione scritta e storiografia su tradizione orale,” restates the antiquarian-historian distinction as a difference in terms of sources: written versus oral. In other words, rather than formal criteria, a conception of antiquarianism as an “other” to true history drove Momigliano’s story of the discipline.

In making this distinction, Momigliano could call on predecessors like Francis Bacon, who distinguished normatively between history proper and history defaced (antiquarianism), but the Italian scholar went further in his insistence on the significance and persistence of the dichotomy. Nino Luraghi has recently pointed out the very likely inspiration for this view in the historicism of Benedetto Croce. In the opening pages of his History as the Story of Liberty, Croce makes a strong distinction between erudition and history: “Neither is an historical work to be judged by the greater or less number of historical facts it contains, if only for the obvious reason that there are very copious and correct collections of facts which are quite clearly not histories... neither the dull metal of the chronicles nor the highly polished metal of the philologists will ever be of equal value with the gold of the historian.” For Croce, the central task of the historian was to solve historical problems, not to recover facts.

13. Arnaldo Momigliano, The Classical Foundations of Modern Historiography (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1990), 54: “Throughout my life I have been fascinated by a type of man so near to my own profession, so transparently sincere in his vocation, so understandable in his enthusiasms, and yet so deeply mysterious in his ultimate aims: the type of man who is interested in historical facts without being interested in history.” See also, at 59, the three traits of ancient and modern antiquarianism: erudition, systematic writing, non-political subject matter.


16. For Bacon’s judgment of antiquarianism, see The Advancement of Learning (1605), 2.C2, antiquities are “history defaced, or some remnants of history which have casually escaped the shipwreck of time” (quoted by Momigliano, “Ancient History and the Antiquarian,” 292).


19. Croce, History as the Story of Liberty, 23: “The unity of an historical work lies in the problem formulated by an historical judgment and in the solution of the problem through the act of
Momigliano’s view of antiquarianism is founded on precisely this Crocean distinction and dehistoricizes it by applying to the whole history of western historiography the idea of a persistent antiquarian other for the historian.

This position, then, led him to assert that there was a history of antiquarianism from Fenestella to Lydus still to be written: an assumption that the historians in all periods had erudite companions who were interested in the past without truly writing history. For example, Momigliano, in his essay on pagan and Christian historiography in the fourth century, contrasts the “lonely” historian Ammianus Marcellinus with the “true pagans” of his age: Macrobius, Servius, Donatus, and Symmachus, who were dedicated to antiquarianism and old texts.20 In characteristic terms, then, he found late antique antiquarianism among those who wrote about the past but stood, somehow, outside history proper.

However, given the lack of clear ancient evidence for such a distinction in antiquity, Momigliano’s view has recently faced criticism as projecting a modern contrast onto the ancient past.21 Students of early modernity too have raised questions about the reality of such a distinction even in the heyday of the antiquarians.22 As in these other periods, it is very difficult for students of Late


Antiquity to operationalize this contrast between history and antiquarianism: is it useful to distinguish between, for example, Servius and Donatus as antiquarians and the *Origo Gentis Romanae* as an historical text, despite their clear overlaps in source material and outlook? Or to mark out Zosimus’ treatment of Roman institutions as “antiquarian” digressions from his history proper rather than treat them as an integral part of his historical vision?²³ Instead of holding onto these distinctions, generated in modern debates on historical method, perhaps it is time we rethink what we are looking for when we seek the antiquarian in Late Antiquity.

On the one hand, it is widely assumed, in the wake of Momigliano, that an antiquarianism did exist in Late Antiquity; on the other hand, we lack any emic concept from the period that is easily translatable as “antiquarianism”—the Latin and Greek terms *antiquarius*, *antiquitates*, and *archaiologia* all have quite different meanings.²⁴ Looking for late antique antiquarianism, then, means making choices about how to identify particular late ancient texts, passages of texts, practices and people as antiquarian, given the inevitable modernity (and Eurocentrism) of the term. Recent work on world antiquarianisms has raised this problem, but with only a little explicit reflection on how it should be done.²⁵


²⁴. The Greek term might best be translated as “ancient history”: in Plato’s *Hippias maior*, the sophist defines *archaiologia* to include the genealogies of heroes and men, the foundations of cities and lists of magistrates (285d–c). Josephus’ and Dionysius’ histories are the only two surviving works by this name, but we have testimonies of the same title for books by Berosus, Cleanthe, and Juba. The Latin terms: *antiquarius* means admirers of archaic diction in early imperial Latin (Tac. *dial*. 21.4, 37.2, 42.2; Suet. *Aug*. 86.2) and a copyist of manuscripts in late antique usage (Jerome *Ep*. 9.2; Cod. Theod. xiv. 9.2, see Cameron, *The Last Pagans of Rome*, 495–496 for the new late antique *antiquarii*); Varro’s *Antiquitates* is the only ancient work that we can confidently say had this Latin title and so is probably not probative of genre (*Antiquitates* as a title for works by Diophantus of Sparta and Ps.-Philo are both questionable).

²⁵. The definition of antiquarianism is a theme in Alain Schnapp, ed. *World Antiquarianism: Comparative Perspectives* (Los Angeles: Getty Research Institute, 2013), though note the differing and often *ad hoc* definitions of antiquarianism between essays in the volume: Alain Schnapp, ”Introduction: the Roots of Antiquarianism,” in *World Antiquarianism: Comparative Perspectives*, ed. Alain Schnapp (Los Angeles:Getty Research Institute, 2013), 1–10 at 9, antiquarianism as collection; Lothar Von Falkenhausen, ”Antiquarianism in East Asia: A Preliminary Overview,” in *World Antiquarianism*, ed. Alain Schnapp, (Los Angeles: Getty Research Institute, 2013), 35–66 at 35, antiquarianism as systematic interest in the past; Peter Miller, ”A Tentative Morphology of European

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I suggest that we do not simply see comparison of ancient phenomena with the modern conceptions of “the antiquarian” as an error of the past, but as a useful foundational principle for the study of historical culture in Late Antiquity.26

COMPARING THE ANTIQUARIAN

What does it mean to identify activities and texts as “antiquarian” in comparative terms? It is essential that this comparative move be explicit and disciplined (to use the preferred adjective of the theorist J. Z. Smith) and not simply stand as an appealing analogy.27 This means that we should steer clear of global analogies that make either overstated claims about the essence of antiquarianism, which had a long and varied history even in Europe between the fifteenth and twentieth centuries, or rely on a general commensurability of Late Antiquity with European modernity. Following Smith, this comparativism is explicitly phenomenological and based on limited similarities within broader cultural and social differences. The aim is not to find a late antique antiquarianism that mirrors the later intellectual activity in toto, but rather to highlight the similarities between specific practices, texts, and ideas as antiquarian. Taking this approach in the second part of this article, then, I offer three brief comparisons between elements of modern European antiquarian culture and late antique phenomena: collections of “antique” statues; systematic treatises on military organization; and parochial antiquarian sentiment. Without doubt, we could find other comparanda, but my choice here is intended to highlight both the diversity of early modern antiquarianism and of possible late ancient equivalents. These examples are also inevitably partial, but can make the point about how our evidence for various late antique engagements with the Roman past might appear similar (from our perspective) to self-consciously antiquarian activity

Antiquarianism, 1500–2000,” in World Antiquarianism: Comparative Perspectives, ed. Alain Schnapp (Los Angeles: Getty Research Institute, 2013), 67–87 at 69, antiquarianism as reconstruction; Rojas, “Antiquarianism in Roman Sardis”, 192 n.3, antiquarianism as interest in the study or collection of the past. It is also a theme in a very recent volume edited by Benjamin Anderson and Felipe Rojas, Antiquarianisms: Contact, Conflict, Comparison (Oxford: Oxbow Books, 2017), in which the essays by the editors, in particular, seek useable pasts for post-processural archaeology at the cost of what seems to me to be a historically-conscious definition of antiquarianism.


and, so, locate these engagements within a more generous picture of late antique historical culture.

One of the most salient forms of early modern antiquarianism was the practice of collecting ancient art. In contemporary French and Italian, as a consequence, the nouns *antiquaire* and *antiquario* primarily mean “dealer of antiques.” Kathleen Christian’s recent *Empire without End*, a study of major early antiquities collections in Rome, shows how ancient sculpture, in particular, was the prime object of collecting in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries.\(^{28}\) Roman native aristocratic families collected reliefs and plastic sculpture for display in their urban properties. For some, like the arriviste Lorenzo Manlio, this sculptural display happened on the walls facing the city streets; for more secure families, gardens and courtyards were used for the presentation of classical art and, consequently, as venues for noble self-fashioning.\(^{29}\) The most famous effort of this type was the statuary collection of Julius II (1503–1513) displayed in the Cortile del Belvedere, headlined by the *Laocoön* and the *Apollo Belvedere*.\(^{30}\) This period also saw the beginning of public display of antiquities: in 1471 Sixtus IV moved a set of ancient bronze statues to the Capitoline as a gift to the *populo Romano* and as a “restoration.”\(^{31}\) This Capitoline collection was later augmented when anxiety during the papacy of Pius V (1556–1572) about keeping idolatrous statuary in the Vatican led to the transfer of more statues from the Cortile del Belvedere.\(^{32}\)


\(^{29}\) Christian, *Empire Without End*, 74–78 for Lorenzo Manlio (the antiquities are still visible in the wall along the via del Portico d’Ottavia in the Roman Ghetto) and 48–51, 78–85, 208–211 for the collections inside the properties of noble families.


This collecting was antiquarian (rather than mere spoliation) in the sense that it was informed by increased knowledge of the Roman past and some measure of connoisseurship. The account of ancient sculpture in Pliny’s *Natural History* shaped collections and was used for the identification of iconography and artists.\(^33\) For example, Julius II pursued the purchase of the *Laocoön* in part because of the appearance of the statue in Pliny’s text and its attribution to named artists.\(^34\) It also fit with the clear Virgilian connections of the statuary in Julius’ Belvedere display, which included a *Hercules*, *Venus Felix*, and “Cleopatra” beside the two famous statues already mentioned.\(^35\) The bronzes placed on the Capitoline by Sixtus IV were linked by antique Roman symbolism: they included the famous statue of the wolf, imperial portraits, and a *Hercules Victor* that had been found in the Forum Boarium.\(^36\)

There are good late antique comparanda for this antiquarian practice of intentional collection and display of ancient statues. Despite early Christian hostility to idolatry—shared with Renaissance Rome—and sometimes vivid stories of idol-smashing saints, there is tangible evidence of concern with preservation, recovery and display of pagan statuary.\(^37\) The collection of Greek art

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\(^34\) Barkan, *Unearthing the Past*, 2–7 discusses the reception of the Laocoön after its disinterment. The famous account of the discovery by Francesco da Sangallo makes the link clear: “immediately my father said, ‘that is the Laocoön, which Pliny mentions’.” (quote from Barkan, *Unearthing the Past*, 3). See also Haskell and Penny, *Taste and the Antique*, 245–47.


\(^36\) Michaelis, "Storia della collezione capitolina di antichità fino all’inaugurazione del Museo (1734),” 12–19 and Barkan, *Unearthing the Past*, 53–54. Note the caution of Christian, *Empire Without End*, 116: not all the statues moved had clear political resonance, such as the genre sculpture of the Spinario.

by Constantine in order to populate his new capital at Constantinople with appropriate decoration is the most prominent example. From Rome itself, a set of artist inscriptions, which attributed old statues to named artists, date to the third or fourth century and attest to connoisseurship. For example, a statue base for Cornelia, mother of the Gracchi, had the inscription “work of Tisicrates” (opus Tisicratis) added to it. The other names are Praxiteles, Phidias, Bryaxis, Polyclitus, Timarchus, and Calamis. It is unlikely that the statues given these attributions were actual works by the artists. Rather, this phenomenon (whether sincere or not) was a display of learning and, perhaps, artistic appreciation: the artists were Greeks who lived in the Classical and Hellenistic period and appear in the Roman literary accounts of art, like Pliny’s *Natural History*, that shaped Renaissance engagement with ancient statues over a millennium later.

Elsewhere, we can find interest in old statues on a much smaller scale: Claude Lepelley has brought attention to how, by Late Antiquity, the west bath at Cherchel (ancient Iol Caesarea in Mauretania) contained a deliberate collection of statuary. Some fifty statues were recovered in excavations during the


40. _CIL_ 6. 10043.

nineteenth century, of various dates and quality; a set of late inscriptions on the bases of some of these statues—including images of Juno Regina and Hercules—records that they were moved from decrepit locations (*translata de sordentibus locis*). Similar inscriptions, recording the relocation of statues from out of the way or ruined locations, are attested from elsewhere in Africa and Italy. At Cherchel, however, this movement of statues was not merely *ad hoc* conservation: they were not placed haphazardly in their new locations, but were ordered into curated groups on the basis of iconography—matching gods and goddesses, a group of satyrs. Among the sculpture was also a portrait of the last Mauretanian king Ptolemy, perhaps suggesting that local history was also a theme. Like Sixtus IV’s display of bronzes on the Capitoline for the Roman people, then, the west bath housed an antiquarian collection of statues for Cherchel.

As in Rome during the fifteenth and sixteenth century, the archaeologist Lea Stirling has shown that there are also signs that domestic collection of old statues in Late Antiquity existed alongside these more public efforts. There are some challenges to identifying these collections, and it can be unclear from excavation (or old excavation reports) whether particular sculpture was on display during late antique occupation of houses. Even where it is possible to know what was visible, the processes of collection can be unclear, and it is difficult, without the epigraphic testimony available for public statues, to choose between gradual acquisition and intentional collection. In some cases, however, domestic collection at Cherchel in the context of archaeological data from baths elsewhere in empire. Lepelley also identified a similar “museum” at Bulla Regia (11–12), but note the recent skepticism of Anna Leone, *The End of the Pagan City: Religion, Economy, and Urbanism in Late Antique North Africa* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), 169–176.

42. *CIL* 8. 20965 (= *ILS* 5482); 20965; 21069; 21079. The lack of a patron’s name for these movements (unlike in other parallel cases) might be suggestive that this was a communal effort (though perhaps not a formally political action authorized by the *ordo* or similar body).

43. These inscriptions have been discussed by Lepelley, “La musée des statues divines,” and Curran, “Moving Statues in Late Antique Rome.” Examples are known from Beneventum (*CIL* 9. 1563 and 1588), Ostia (*CIL* 14. 4721), Verona (*CIL* 5. 3332), Liternum (*CIL* 10. 3714) and Thurbursicu (*CIL* 8. 25998).


45. *CIL* 8. 9142.

collections of old statuary are apparent. At a villa near Cordoba known as Casa del Mitra, recent archaeological work has established that a group of second-century statues, including the eponymous Mithras Tauroktonos, were put on display in the third and fourth centuries. During the late third century—certainly after 248 CE—the villa was reconstructed; one of the new elements was the placement of two niches in a central court for the presentation of sculpture. The gap between the date of the statues and the location of display suggests the owner’s concern for these then-old objects. Similarly, at the villa at El Ruedo, in the same region, the excavators assigned a much larger collection of statuary, some of which dated to the early imperial period, to the fourth- and fifth-century phase of occupation, which was the most opulent period in the life of this building. The most intriguing piece in this collection is a portrait of the emperor Domitian, recut from an earlier portrait of Nero. Given the posthumous unpopularity of Domitian, it is hard not to imagine that the fourth-century owner of the portrait did not make the same identification as modern art historians and held onto the antique sculpture for its value as an old object. These Spanish examples are not exceptional, despite a general trend away from the display of statuary in late imperial Roman villas. In this light, these late antique sculptural collections, public and private, are commensurable with the famous antiquarian collections of Renaissance Rome. Seeing the late antique collections as antiquarian should, in turn, highlight how much more historical culture in Late Antiquity we can find if we do not confine ourselves to seeing antiquarianism as the “not-history” written by authors like Macrobius or Servius.

48. The dating is based on a coin of Philip the Arab found beneath a floor and the style of mosaics in the villa.
49. D. Vaquerizo Gil and José Miguel Noguera Celdrán, La villa romana de El Ruedo (Almedinilla, Córdoba): decoración escultórica e interpretación (Córdoba: Servicio de Publicaciones, Universidad de Córdoba; Diputación de Córdoba; Universidad de Múrcia, 1997).
50. See Vaquerizo Gil and Noguera Celdrán, La villa romana de El Ruedo, 106–11. This portrait was found in the nineteenth century and only later associated with the villa. See Stirling, “Statuary Collecting and Display in the Late Antique Villas of Gaul and Spain,” 313 for the suggestion that the portrait did not hold specific iconographic relevance for its late antique owner.
This does not mean that texts need fall out of the picture completely: two treatises on the old ways of war are worth reading in parallel. The first, Justus Lipsius’ *De militia Romana* (1595–6), treated the Roman army, one of several antiquarian studies of that institution published in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries.52 In his preface, Lipsius explains to his reader that the work is the first part of a bigger project, an “historical torch” (*fax historica*) that would illuminate Roman *mores* and the passages in Roman historians that touched on them.53 The author had been exposed to the Italian antiquarian tradition during a stay in Rome in 1568–1570 and the text lives up to the style of his predecessors by offering a systematic treatment, based on the text of Polybius’ sixth book.54 The second text is the *Epitoma rei militaris*, composed in either the late fourth or early fifth century by an author we now know as Vegetius.55 A comparison between these two texts might strike readers who know them well as eccentric: Lipsius’ dismissal of Vegetius’ book on the grounds that the latter mixed the military customs from different periods of Roman history was decisive for the (negative) modern reception of the *Epitoma* and implies a significant difference in approach.56 Modern readers have also been ambivalent about the application of...
the antiquarian label to Vegetius' book: N.P. Milner, for example, calls it “an originally antiquarian account of Cato’s army tricked out and rearranged as a commentary on present-day inadequacies.” A juxtaposition of the two books, however, shows greater similarities between the early modern antiquarian work and the late antique treatise than either Lipsius or modern scholars imply.

Both texts offer a systematic study of the Roman republican army. For Lipsius, it must be admitted, the structure of the book appears baroque: his De militia Romana is organized both as a five-book commentary on Polybius 6.19–42 and as a dialogue between himself and a student. The Polybian text, however, is not treated in the order of the original, but is rearranged in the interests of a logical presentation, so that the internal speakers discuss recruitment in the first book, personnel in the second, armament in the third, battle in the fourth, and discipline in the last book. Lipsius also outfitted the end of each book with Ramist epitomes—graphical summaries of the content—to guide the reader to his logical arrangement. His use of Polybius also allows him to focus on the army of imperial conquest; he writes that after the civil wars of the first century only the name and shadow of the Roman army survived. The De militia Romana is laden with extensive quotation from other Greek and Roman authors and, occasionally, illustration from inscriptions and coins to support interpretations of Polybius’ text. The effect is a commentary by collage.

Späthumanismus, 171–182 argues against the idea that Lipsius actually effectuated a break from the Vegetian tradition of military thinking. Elsewhere in the de militia Romana, Lipsius both corrects Vegetius (17, 59, 76, 118–119, 141, 151–152) and cites him as an authority, though often only for late antique practice (44–45, 73, 75, 76, 79, 183–184, 215, 242, 244, 145–147, 168, 242, 244, 245–246, 246, 276, 305, 308–311, 353, 364). Vegetius also served as a prominent source in his earlier Politica, a Tacitean work on statescraft: see Schwager, Militärtheorie im Späthumanismus, 170–171.

57. Milner, Vegetius: Epitome of Military Science, xviii and 51 n.2: “not as an essay in antiquarian reconstruction”; OCD s.v. "Vegetius Renatus, Flavius" (Campbell): “He took an antiquarian interest in the army, ignoring the detailed changes accomplished by Diocletian and Constantine”; and Yann Le Bohec, ed., The Encyclopedia of the Roman Army, 3 Vols. (Hoboken, NJ: John Wiley & Sons, 2015) s.v. "Writers: Late Empire" (Rance): “A significant part, however, may be classed as ‘antiquarian,’ in method if not in intention; Vegetius clearly aimed to resolve the problems of his day.” See also Brian Campbell, "Teach Yourself How to Be a General," Journal of Roman Studies 77 (1987): 11–29 at 27 for an insistence that ancient military treatises not be viewed as antiquarian on the grounds that they had utility.

58. For the background to Lipsius’ choice to use Polybius to examine the militia Romana, see Arnaldo Momigliano, “Polybius’ Reappearance in Western Europe,” in Essays in Ancient and Modern Historiography (Oxford: Blackwell, 1977), 79–98. The choice to use a dialogue form may have been influenced by a famous predecessor: Machiavelli’s Arte della Guerra (1521).


60. Lipsius, De militia Romana, 46, 97–98, 149, 209, 366.

61. Lipsius, De militia Romana, 12.
Similarly, Vegetius treats past Roman military practice in a systematic order: his four books address, in turn, recruitment and training, army organization, battle on land, and, together in a final book, sieges and naval battle.62 The reader is guided through this four-book structure by an initial table of contents and then lists of chapters (capitula) appended to the front of each book.63 In all parts of the book, Vegetius’ primary interest is the military practice of what we would call the Republican period; he calls it antiqua consuetudo (1.praef.; 1.4; 1.8; 1.20), antiqua virtus (1.28), vetus consuetudo (2.8), and writes of the antiqua legio (2.4) and of the practices of the antiqui (1.11; 1.20; 2.13; 2.20; 3.6; 3.14; 3.2.4). As Lipsius noticed, this programmatic interest is not always matched in practice—often more contemporary customs are described and the author switches often between past and present tenses—but a clear retrospective gaze pervades the whole.64 Vegetius’ treatment of his sources is also comparable with Lipsius: ancient treatment of sources of information differed from early modern practices of quotation and citation, but the late antique author is explicit about his reliance on earlier writers. Although we might suspect that he actually engaged with the literary tradition through unmentioned epitomes, Vegetius valued the appearance of learning: he gives lists of sources at 1.8 and 2.3, claims to use documents (the constitutiones of Augustus and Hadrian), and quotes poets (1.6, 1.19, 2.1).65

Neither author, however, simply provides a description of the Roman army as an object contained within the deep past; instead, a clear thread of military revivalism runs through both texts. At the start of the treatise, Lipsius as dialogic character expresses some diffidence in the relevance of his topic: “for our soldiers look down at this sort of thing, thinking them to be the songs and games of boys.”66 The student character immediately refutes this view by arguing that these soldiers simply do not yet know about the past, but they should learn; in

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62. Vegetius tells us in the preface to the second book that the first book had been published to a favorable response by the emperor and that had led to the addition of the later books.
63. See Reeve, Vegetius: Epitoma rei militaris, xxxiv-xxxvi for the likelihood that these paratextual features are original.
64. At first glance, the fourth book may seem to diverge from the trend, but even there an interest in the past is apparent: see Mil. 4.33, a discussion of the liburnae used at Actium, and the declaration at Mil. 4.46 that modern lusoriae are superior to ancient practice so no description is needed.
65. Vegetius also makes clear his use of libri as a source for the antiqui at Mil. 1.11, 2.praef., and 3.9. On his use of sources, see Dankfrid Schenk, Flavius Vegetius Renatus, Die Quellen der Epitoma rei militaris (Leipzig: Dieterich, 1930) and Milner, Vegetius: Epitome of Military Science, xvi-xxv.
a vatic mode, he then predicts a Prince who will reform his army on the Roman model (to be provided by Lipsius). De militia Romana closes with a chapter that compares Roman practice with modern in favor of the former, even over objections regarding the superiority of firearms. Lipsius thus elucidates the relevance of the whole book to his audience: European generals should return to the model of the Roman Republic.

A similar attitude towards the value of the past for the present is legible in Vegetius’ Epitoma. In the first book, for example, the author opens the text by claiming that he writes for the sake of Romana utilitas and closes it with a suggestion that imitation of the ancient practice set out in the book would easily strengthen the army (facile corroborare posit exercitum). Similarly, in the second book, he promises that if someone persuades the emperor to restore (reparare) the legions in accordance with his book, they will soon match the veteres who conquered the world. Indeed, it is precisely this aspect of the text that has led scholars to be hesitant to call the book “antiquarian,” apparently under the assumption that contemporary or political relevance—so obvious in Lipsius’ book—is somehow extrinsic to the concept. This is the advantage of a comparative approach: rather than work from a generalized antiquarianism, Lipsius’ avowedly antiquarian fax historica provides a specific standard to support reading the Epitoma rei militaris as an antiquarian text.

67. Lipsius, De militia Romana, 11–12.
69. Remarkably, the actual reception of Lipsius’ book validates his point: Maurits of Nassau used Lipsius’ ideas in his reform of the Protestant Dutch army, a key event in the so-called Military Revolution and integral to the development of modern European state capacity. This reception is a key topic of Schwager, Militärtheorie im Späthumanismus, especially 187–239. For a less positive reception, see Anthony Grafton, “Rhetoric, Philology and Egyptomania in the 1570s: J. J. Scaliger’s Invective against M. Guilandinus’s Papyrus,” Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes 42 (1979): 167–94 at 193–194 on Scaliger’s critical marginalia in his copy.
71. Veg. Mil. 1,18: Si quis igitur pugna publica superari barbaros cupit, ut Divinitatis nutu, dispositione imperatoris invicti reparentur ex tribunibus legiones votis omnibus petat. Intra breve autem spatium temporis iuniores diligentius electi et exercitati cotidie non solum mane sed etiam post meridiem omni armorum disciplina vel arte bellandi veteres illos milites qui orbem terrarum integram subegerunt facile coaequabunt.
72. This assumption apparently stems from the modern image of the politically disinterested antiquarian: see the following paragraphs.
A final example involves the image of the antiquarian rather than antiquarian scholarly practice. From the seventeenth century, the early modern European antiquarian had a social profile as a man with profound affection for the distant past. This image gave rise to innumerable satires, though none as pithy as John Donne’s epigram, *The Antiquary*: “If in his study Hammon hath such care/ To hang all old, strange things, let his wife beware.” Following John Earle’s neo-Theophrastan sketch of “The Antiquary” (1628) and Shackerly Marmion’s play, *The Antiquary* (1641), the excessive lover of antiquity became a stock character on the seventeenth- and eighteenth-century European comedic stage. In the nineteenth century, Walter Scott’s rather more sympathetic Jonathan Oldbuck, the eponymous character of *The Antiquary* (1816), embodied this social image of the antiquarian as lover of the past. Although not central to the romantic plot, Oldbuck’s emotional connection to his Scottish past—in dramatized in a scene where the antiquary shows another character the supposed site on his land of a Roman fort constructed by the famous governor of Britannia, Gaius Agricola—makes him one of the most memorable characters in Scott’s Waverley novels.

Oldbuck is a caricature, but Rosemary Sweet’s recent work on local antiquarians in England confirms that this mix of sentiment for the material past and parochialism was present beyond the pages of Scott’s novel. She quotes one such eighteenth-century antiquary who opened his work with the declaration that “a Natural Propension to the Study of Antiquities inclining my Thoughts

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76. Walter Scott, *The Antiquary* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), 40–44. Elsewhere in novel, Scott connects Oldbuck with antiquities in sentimental terms: it is a love affair (17), the cause of violent arguments (63–67) and his interest in the past is a “fever” (85).

that Way, an innate Affection to the Place of my Nativity did more particularly fix upon the present Subject.” Later in the nineteenth century, Friedrich Nietzsche elevated this type into one of three modes of relating to the past in his “On the Uses and Disadvantages of History for Life” in 1874. As part of his argument about the ambivalence of history for modern societies, he understood the positive and negative effects of antiquarianism in terms of emotion. Connection with antiquities could be a suffocating devotion to the past but also provided local identity and self-recognition: “the history of his city becomes for [the antiquarian] the history of himself.”

Although this literary type may be somewhat overstated, the idea of antiquarian feeling for a specifically local past has had a tangible impact in shaping the modern conception of the antiquarian and provides a useful heuristic for re-reading late antique texts for expressions of such affect. One such example might be the attachments to the past expressed in a pair of letters between Augustine and Maximus, an elderly pagan of Madauros, which are dateable to the early 390s CE (Ep. 16 and 17). Modern readers have focused on the rhetoric of the letters, the information they give about late antique North Africa, and the argument that Maximus seems to make for a pagan monotheism. I suggest that we can use a comparison with the modern idea of antiquarian emotion to find another thread in the epistolary exchange.

Maximus, who is often identified as one of Augustine’s early teachers, opens his letter (Ep. 16) with a famous defense of the traditions of Madauros: “Greece tells

78. The quote is from Ralph Thoresby’s Ducatus Leodiensis (1715), a work on the antiquities of Leeds, quoted by Sweet, “‘Mere Dull Description’: Antiquarianism and Local History in the Eighteenth Century,” 247.

79. Friedrich Wilhelm Nietzsche, Untimely Meditations, Trans. R. J. Hollingdale. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 73. Elsewhere (75), he writes more critically that the antiquarian “is encased in the stench of must and mould; through the antiquarian approach he succeeds in reducing even a more creative disposition, a nobler desire, to an insatiable thirst for novelty, or rather antiquity and for all and everything.”

an unreliable myth ("fabula") that Mount Olympus is the home of the gods. But we see and approve ("nos cernimus et probamus") that the forum of our city is the estate of a crowd of salutary deities.\textsuperscript{81} Like Jonathan Oldbuck or Nietzsche’s antiquarian, Maximus connects his civic identity with the remains of the past—the statues were almost certainly old by the time of Maximus.\textsuperscript{82} This now is under threat, he says, from the new Christian cult of the martyrs:

Who would bear that Miggo should be preferred to Jupiter brandishing his thunderbolts or that Saname should be preferred to Juno, Minerva, to Venus, to Vesta, or—sacrilege!—the chief martyr, Namfamo, to all the immortal gods? Among them Lucitas is esteemed worthy of hardly less worship, as well as innumerable others—names hateful to the gods and to men.\textsuperscript{83}

Maximus goes on to claim that the contest between the gods and the martyrs replays the Virgilian theomachy of Actium, “in which the Egyptian monsters, who will not last, dare to shake their spears at the gods of Rome.”\textsuperscript{84} In place of the positive expression of approval ("probamus") at sight of the statues, the contrast between the old (underlined by the reference to the \textit{Aeneid}) and the new is framed in terms of passionate negative emotional response.\textsuperscript{85} Through old material culture—Jupiter is described in terms of a statue’s iconography—and an old text, Maximus attaches himself to the local past.

Augustine’s reply (\textit{Ep.} 17) denies the possibility of accepting Maximus’ pagan perspective, initially asking whether it is a joke ("iocari libet") and then by attacking the connections between Maximus’ declared identity and his antiquarian feeling for the material culture of Madauros: "In your forum I remember that there are two statues, one of Mars naked, the other of him in armor—demons, most hostile to the citizens, which a human statue, which was placed opposite

\textsuperscript{81} \textit{Ep.} 16.1 (\textit{Corpus Christianorum Series Latina} 31.4.1, ed. Daur): \textit{Olympum montem deorum esse habitaculum sub incerta fide Graecia fabulatur. At vero nostrae urbis forum salutarium numinum frequentia possessum nos cernimus et probamus.}

\textsuperscript{82} The \textit{Last Statues of Antiquity} project has now documented the statue habit in late antique North Africa. Very few new dedications were made to deities after the reign of Constantine; from Madauros itself, inscriptions attest to honorary statues only for emperors and city patrons (\textit{LSA} 1878, 1879, 1438, 1446, 1447).

\textsuperscript{83} \textit{Ep.} 16.2: \textit{Quis enim ferat Iovi fulmina vibranti praefertur Migginem; Iunoni Minervae Veneri Vestaque Sanamem, et cunctis — pro nefas! — diis immortalius archimartyrem Namfamonem? inter quos Lucitas etiam haud minore cultu suscitur, atque aliis interminato numero, diis hominibusque odiosa nomina . . .}

\textsuperscript{84} \textit{Ep.} 16.2: \textit{quod Aegyptia monstra in Romanorum deos audeant tela vibrare minime duratura.}

\textsuperscript{85} For \textit{probare} in this sense, used for things and people, see \textit{TLL} s.v. "probo", 10.2.146.4.5–72 (Sploth).
with three fingers extended, holds in check.”

Augustine rewrites the meaning of the statues in the forum, not as appropriate objects of civic sentiment but as a demonic drama. The lithic gesture of an orator becomes, in Augustine’s reading, a magical device to protect the town. His letter, though, is not a refutation of the very idea of connecting with the past. Instead, he adds another specious reason why Maximus must have been joking:

You could not forget yourself to the point that, as an African writing to Africans, when we both live in Africa, you reckoned that Punic names should be criticized . . . If you disapprove (improbatur) of that language, deny that much wisdom has been handed down in Punic books, as is pointed out by very learned men. You should certainly regret that you were born in the place where the cradle of that tongue is still warm.

Augustine shows himself as a master polemicist. In place of Maximus’ Madauran-Roman antiquarian identity, he offers a Punic-African one, founded not on old statues, but on old books, presumably including the famous agricultural writings of Mago. It is Maximus now who risks forgetting (te ipsum oblivisci) and abstracting himself from his parochial identity. His approval of the statues of the gods becomes disapproval of the Punic language (probamus ~ improbatur). We might justly wonder about Augustine’s sincerity in this part of the letter—he has already decried Maximus’ argument as unserious—but his decision to counter with an alternative configuration of identity in terms of old culture suggests its significance for his interlocutor. Feeling for the local past, in a way that is comparable with the modern image of antiquarian attachment

86. *Ep.* 17.1: *et in isto foro recordaver ese in duobus simulacris unum Martem nudum alterum armatum, quorum daemonium infestisimun civilis porrectis tribus digitis contra collocata statua humana comprimeret.*

87. *Ep.* 17.2: *Neque enim usque adeo te ipsum oblivisci potuisse, ut homo Afer scribens Afris, cum simus utrique in Africa constituti, Punica nomina exagitanda existimares . . . Quae lingua si improbatur abs te, nega Punicis libris, ut a viris doctissimis proditur, multa sapienter esse mandata memoriae! Paeniteat te certe ibi natum, ubi huius linguae canabula recalent.*


89. See Mastandrea, *Maximo di Madauros*, 68 for this identification; note that Augustine knows these texts only at a remove and through (Latin-writing) *viri doctissimi*. This move from material to textual may have been “in the air”: Cillian O’Hogan, *Prudentius and the Landscapes of Late Antiquity* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016), 165–166, argues for a similar displacement in the poetics of the contemporary Prudentius.

90. Ebbeler, *Disciplining Christians*, 68–69 points out that Augustine’s complaint about the jocular tone is part of his corrective discourse in the letter; this does not stop him from engaging with Maximus’ arguments.
to the old and the local, shapes both sides of this particular late antique corres-
pondence alongside more salient religious and social factors.

All three of these examples point towards how we might see the forms of late
Roman interest in their own antiquity as antiquarian. Without doubt, Roman
Late Antiquity and European modernity are worlds apart: the particular per-
sonalities, social institutions, and texts that have appeared in the second half of
this article are all products of their respective societies. Nevertheless, within
these differences, we can find points of sufficient resemblance to allow us to
speak of Late Antiquity and the antiquarian.

LATE ANTIQUITY AND THE ANTIQUARIAN

This article has argued that writing the history of antiquarian activity—and, by
extension, of historical culture—in Late Antiquity should be an explicitly com-
parative exercise. In fact, histories of antiquarianism have often been implicitly
comparativist, as historians, including Momigliano, generalized some element
of modern European learned engagement with the past as antiquarianism tout
court. Instead, by offering more precise analogies between modern practices un-
derstood as antiquarian at the time and the late antique evidence, we both find
justification for calling the latter antiquarian and avoid reductive generalization
of the former. This approach, then, can be the basis for a more critical study of
antiquarianism in societies outside the modern West.91

Roman Late Antiquity should be one of these societies; the historical culture
of Late Antiquity need no longer stand alone. Instead, in at least the three ways
adumbrated here, modes of relating to the past in the late Roman world had
much in common with antiquarian practices, texts, and sentiment found in
modern Europe, especially among those who identified themselves in this way.
From the anonymous villa-owners of Spain, to the inhabitants of Caesarea and
Madauros, and to the imperial official Vegetius, we can see evidence for how
individuals made traces of the past—acknowledged as such—into decoration,
reformist treatises, and sources of identity, just as antiquarians did a millennium
later. Indeed, this comparison may also help us raise a question about periodi-
zation that underlies this journal and, more generally, modern study of western

91. On this point, I find myself in concord with a very recent essay by Peter Miller, “Coda: Not for
Lumpers Only,” in Antiquarianisms: Contact, Conflict, Comparison, eds. Benjamin Anderson and Felipe
between modern European antiquarianism, in all its historical contingency, and engagements with the
past outside this time and space.
Eurasia between 150 and 750 CE: what is “late” about Late Antiquity? 92 Through the comparison with early modern antiquarianism, the belatedness written into the term can be reclaimed as commensurable with the belatedness of modernity and so not stand as a remnant of the ideas of decline and decadence that “Late Antiquity” was intended to contest. 93


93. Note Giardina, “Esplosione di tardoantico,” 162–163 for a warning about seeing “roots” of modernity in Late Antiquity; phenomenologically-oriented comparison is intended to avoid such claims.