

entangled into some sort of Orientalist topos, the factual accuracy of which historians should therefore handle with a certain degree of skepticism.

That this black legend, as chapter 9 asserts, still influences current scholarly interpretations of Southern Italy is an interesting insight that will certainly be useful for future historical investigation into this often-neglected area of Renaissance Italy. As Musto contends, the tendency to rely on histories penned by Flavio Biondo and other humanistically trained historians might have indeed induced scholars of Naples and the south to reiterate a black legend rooted in Petrarca's letters but not confirmed by the other evidence discussed in this useful study.

Matteo Soranzo, *McGill University*
doi:10.1017/rqx.2020.355

Natural desiderio di sapere: Roma barocca fra vecchi e nuovi mondi.

Sabina Brevaglieri.

La corte dei papi 31. Rome: Viella, 2019. 472 pp. €49.

Sabina Brevaglieri's book aims to enrich our understanding of how Roman intellectual and cultural life facilitated the collocation of knowledge of the natural history of the Americas. Brevaglieri explores the intellectual, naturalist, humanist, patronage, political, and even missionary networks that connected New Spain with Spanish Naples and, ultimately, papal Rome, and facilitated the production of knowledge pertaining to the natural history of the Americas. To this end, Brevaglieri writes an insightful biography of the *Tesoro messicano*, a compendium of knowledge relating to Mexican plants, many of which were believed to hold medicinal properties, which was compiled by Federico Cesi in Rome in 1651.

But this book is so much more than that. In fact, the *Tesoro messicano* only appears as a cohesive text toward the end of the book. The majority of the book sheds light on the *Tesoro*'s intellectual lineage, unpacking more than what one could glean from the *Tesoro* itself. Brevaglieri argues that the growth of natural history that gave birth to the *Tesoro* was not just about plants and animals; rather, she focuses on the creation of a space of communication for Spaniards, Germans, Italians (especially Romans and Neapolitans), missionaries, naturalists, and others who brought New World knowledge to Italy, compiled it, studied it, and circulated it. These networks stretched across Europe but, as Brevaglieri argues, centered on the unique nexus of interaction taking place in papal Rome.

At the center was the Accademia dei Lincei. Founded by Cesi in 1603, it became the lifeblood of natural history in Baroque Rome. With members both obscure and famous, above all Galileo, the Accademia dei Lincei functioned as an informal, personal, social, and communicative space. The book explores the ways in which the Accademia dei

Lincei allowed for the intersection, overlapping, and dialogic exchange of a diverse array of practices and productions. Brevaglieri's goal is to unpack exactly what drove the desire for the knowledge of nature, hence the book's title. The movement toward collecting, cataloging, understanding, and manipulating knowledge of the New World was driven by a "fluid intertwinement of collaboration, conflict, and asymmetrical negotiations" (133) that stimulated creation, epistemological explorations, and restructuring of social interactions. Cardinal-nephews, Roman nobles, Galileo, and even the painter Caravaggio and the Dominican philosopher and astrologer Tommaso Campanella all appear as contributors to what Brevaglieri called a "mutable prism" of exchanges and dialogues driven by mutual desire to know and mutual desire to know more. By focusing not on what was discovered, but on how those discoveries operated in the local and global patronage networks of papal Rome, this book compels us to see the history of early modern science as cultural history.

But Rome itself must not be forgotten. To this end, Brevaglieri recasts Counter-Reformation Rome as a vibrant city fostering knowledge exchange that permitted close contact with the antique and dialogues across different institutions, rather than censoring learning, as has long been assumed. Brevaglieri also depicts Baroque Rome not simply as an urban space, but as one in which natural history was a part of a larger dialogue between art and nature as well as urbanity and rurality. For example, by exploring the ways in which New World plants found their way into the urban *orti* and peri-urban villas of the Farnese, Borghese, and others, Brevaglieri puts Baroque naturalism and the work of the Lincei at the center of urban and court life rather than marginalize it as obscure esotericism. This convergence of art, nature, urban, and rural created a landscape for understanding natural history that put naturalists like Cesi and Johannes Faber and their patrons like Scipione Borghese and Odoardo Farnese in dialogue with each other.

This book thus presents Baroque Rome as a laboratory of knowledge production on par with Venice, Florence, and cities further afield such as Amsterdam, Antwerp, and Paris. And it is here that Brevaglieri successfully globalizes Rome and Italy: by rejecting the notion that Baroque Rome was just the decadent center of a culturally moribund papacy, Brevaglieri moves the Accademia dei Lincei and the intellectual culture of Rome that produced the *Tesoro messicano* from the fringes to the center of an increasingly global early modern interest in natural history.

Robert John Clines, *Western Carolina University*
doi:10.1017/rqx.2020.356