

*Stefano Bardini "Principe degli Antiquari": Prolegomenon to a Biography.*

Anita Fiderer Moskowitz.

Florence: Centro Di, 2015. 176 pp. €25.

In art historiography, important roles have been played in the creation of international museums and private collections by dealers, gallerists, and advisors, who until now have been rarely studied despite the considerable impact that they have had. This monograph on Stefano Bardini (1836–1922), a legendary Florentine figure whose name appears in the provenances of countless objects, is one of the first biographies about such a person. The photograph on the cover announces an elegant and refined personality, a distinguished and haughty man. The author somewhat overestimates Bardini's originality as there are similar figures elsewhere in Italy, for example, Giuseppe Baslini, described by Wilhelm von Bode as the true creator of the Poldi Pezzoli Museum, Milan, and Giuseppe Molteni, a restorer and director of the Brera, in Milan, who had a lot to do with the formation of the National Gallery, London. Why such personalities have not received the attention they deserve is an interesting point. Did the directors of galleries think they were not worth mentioning? Do the papers not survive because families wished to cover up the fact that their ancestors were "dealers"?

Bardini's formation took place in the Italian Risorgimento, when he was a patriotic follower of Garibaldi in the last push of the Risorgimento in 1866 and trained as a romantic history painter at the Florentine Accademia di Belle Arti with distinguished artists. His paintings reveal an ability as an artist, but like others he eventually turned to a profitable career in restoration. Two chapters of the book describe conservation practice in the Italian nineteenth century and outline Bardini's role as a restorer. Moskowitz takes the high moral ground with restoration in the past. Her view of conservation in nineteenth-century Italy is based on many amusing anecdotes about artist/restorers, but is reticent about recounting anything about their positive achievements, which may have led to developing modern conservation practices, unlike, say, Giorgio Bonsanti's overview "From Guizzardi to Cavenaghi: Nineteenth-Century Italian Conservators" (*Burlington Magazine* 158 [2016]: 968–78). It is unclear whether there is enough evidence to pronounce on Bardini's treatments as a restorer. He is credited in this book with having created the "mediaeval" Florence that we see today, which, despite the conspicuous presence of the museum that bears his name, is an unbelievable assertion. Generations of well-intentioned museum directors, officials, and conservators have done much to preserve Florence. Moskowitz considers (inconclusively) whether Bardini may have knowingly sold fakes, and suggests that he was ahead of his time in the use he made of photographs to document treatments, although this seems already customary earlier in Milan with Molteni and other conservators. There is a very interesting section on how Bardini reconstituted Florentine Renaissance furniture. I have always found it significant that Schubring's authoritative study of Florentine cassoni is dedicated to Bardini. Here there is evidence that he assembled many hundreds of cassoni. Furniture is one of the most

fragile arts to have survived and it is hardly surprising that this happened. If someone had not acted in this way, would they have survived at all? The final chapter concerns the impact that Bardini had on display, installation, and the use of colored backgrounds, especially the Bardini blues.

Unsure of the personality that she writes about, Moskowitz fails to convey a firm point of view as to his achievements. Was Bardini merely a manipulative villain without intellectual ambition who cared only for making money? Or was he a Garibaldino who took patriotic pride in the survival of the Renaissance in the Risorgimento, who practiced conservation as a means of preserving the past, and who saw the values of the Risorgimento as worth promoting even in foreign countries? Hence the hesitation in the title, i.e., “Prologomenon,” which is justified by the fact that one archive of his papers was not properly consultable, although in the public domain. Sometimes it is unwise to place too much emphasis on the documents that you do not have or are unknown. What has emerged is an engaging personality, who within the limits of his age played a role in conserving objects and making the Florentine Renaissance fashionable and ever worthy of study.

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*Savant Relics: Brains and Remains of Scientists.* Marco Beretta, Maria Conforti, and Paolo Mazzarello, eds.  
Sagamore Beach, MA: Science History Publications, 2016. xi + 236 pp. \$56.

*Savant Relics* explores the ways that the bodies and other remnants (portraits, papers, etc.) of scientists have been preserved, used, and celebrated postmortem—that is, turned into relics—particularly in the Italian and British contexts. The result of a 2015 workshop at the University of Pavia, the essays within the book traverse a range of such historical relics: from Aristotle’s tomb to Galileo’s finger, Scarpa’s head to Einstein’s brain, Netwon’s papers to Edison’s last breath, the latter displayed in a test tube at the Henry Ford Museum. The topic is a fascinating one, and it calls out for an analysis that engages with some of the central categories of the history of science: the porous boundary between science and religion; the relationship between knowledge, power, and bodies; the varying forms of collection (what is the difference between a relic and a specimen?); and the ways in which scientific communities are constituted. Some of the essays offer just such analyses in insightful and illuminating ways; others are more preliminary, focusing on description of the objects and their historical geneses, but not formulating strong arguments or engaging the relevant scholarly literature. The writing as well is highly variable—some essays are lucid and engaging, while others, clearly translations into English, lack basic editing that would have made them more readable. As such, the book overall is unbalanced, but still merits attention for the ques-