The study of inscriptions, i.e., epigraphy, is critical for anyone seeking to understand the Roman world, whether they are studying history, archaeology, literature, religion, or are working in a field that intersects with the Roman world from c. 500 BCE to 500 CE and beyond. The Oxford Handbook of Roman Epigraphy is the most comprehensive collection of scholarship available on the study and history of Roman epigraphy. A major goal of this volume is to show why inscriptions matter, as well as to demonstrate to students and scholars how to utilize epigraphic sources in their research. Thus, rather than comprise simply a collection of inscriptions, the thirty-five chapters in this volume, written by an international team of distinguished scholars in Roman history, classics, and epigraphy, cover the history of the discipline, Roman epigraphic culture, and the value of inscriptions for understanding disparate aspects of Roman culture, such as Roman public life, religion in its many forms, public spectacle, slavery, the lives of women, law and legal institutions, the military, linguistic and cultural issues, and life in the provinces. Students and scholars alike will find the Handbook an essential tool for expanding their knowledge of the Roman world.
THE OXFORD HANDBOOK OF

ROMAN EPIGRAPHY
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ROMAN EPIGRAPHY

Edited by
CHRISTER BRUUN
and
JONATHAN EDMONDSON

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CHAPTER 3

FORGERIES AND FAKEs

SILVIA ORLANDI, MARIA LETIZIA CALDELLI, AND GIAN LUCA GREGORI

The issue of epigraphic forgeries is closely connected not only to the history of epigraphy, but also to the rediscovery and reuse of antiquity in the Middle Ages. Forgery is a field of study still in its infancy. For example, we lack an electronic database of all forged texts. Forgeries were already produced in the Roman period, as were copies of genuine texts made long after the original had been inscribed: for example, the so-called *elogium* of Gaius Duilius (CIL I 25 = VI 1300 = ILS 65 = ILLRP 319; see p. 345–348 and Fig. 19.1) or the dedicatory inscription on the Pantheon by Agrippa, re-inscribed during the restoration of the temple under Hadrian (CIL VI 896 = ILS 129). A good example of forgery is provided by the fake inscriptions in Latin carved during the Renaissance on the bases of the statues of the Dioscuri (Castor and Pollux) in the Piazza del Quirinale (CIL VI 10038 = 33821: *opus Praxitelis // opus Fidiae*) that attribute them to the famous Greek sculptors Phidias and Praxiteles.

In the great epigraphic corpora begun in the nineteenth century those inscriptions considered as fakes were given their separate section, usually at the beginning of each CIL volume. An asterisk was added to the entry number: for example, CIL VI 1200*. Rome was a special case, in that an entire fascicle (CIL VI, fasc. 5), containing 3,643 items, was dedicated to the fake inscriptions attributed to the city. The material is arranged chronologically according to the date when the text originated and, wherever possible, the texts are grouped by author.

Fake inscriptions do not form a homogeneous category. One needs to make distinctions based on a series of considerations:

- modes of transmission: forgeries on paper or stone, the latter inscribed on ancient or only partially ancient materials, but also on more recent objects;

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2 Simpson 2009.
4 Mayer 1998; Carbonell Manils, Gimeno Pascual, and Moralejo Álvarez 2011; Solin 2012.
• motivations: unintentional forgeries (the carving of epigraphic texts from Latin literature onto durable materials; scholarly exercises by humanists as a learned pastime; completions of fragmentary inscriptions) and intentional forgeries (fabrications of documents with the intention of validating an otherwise untenable hypothesis or a statement otherwise not provable, sometimes with commercial intent);
• methods of production: forgeries invented from scratch and complete, partial, or interpolated copies of ancient inscriptions.

In what follows the main focus will be on the modes of transmission. However, given their importance, we shall deal with historical and documentary forgeries in the final section. This chapter focuses almost exclusively on Italy, and especially Rome, because it is the most fertile area of study, the issue has been so well investigated here, and a detailed focus on one particular region allows us to analyze the phenomenon in some depth.

**Forgeries Transmitted in Manuscripts or in Printed Works (Silvia Orlandi)**

The proliferation of forgeries during the Middle Ages primarily involves literary texts falsely attributed to ancient authors or false legal and ecclesiastical documents invented to support various types of legal claims. Epigraphic texts were largely excluded from this process, since there was a progressive loss of the capacity to understand and interpret ancient inscriptions in the period from the eighth to the thirteenth centuries. This means that the anomalies in the copies of Latin inscriptions contained in the descriptions of Rome for the use of pilgrims are due to errors of reading or fanciful interpretations more than to deliberate interpolations (Ch. 2). It was only the revival of the study of classical literature by the first humanists and the rediscovery of Roman archaeological remains in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries that brought about a renewed interest in epigraphy. This manifested itself in a growing number of collections of texts—both in manuscript and in printed form—and in a progressive refinement of the tools necessary for their understanding. The whole process took place in a period when there was general enthusiasm for the classical past, which was being rediscovered at that time. This enthusiasm stimulated a desire among scholars to gain knowledge about that world, among artists to re-create it, and among collectors to own classical artefacts. The phenomenon of epigraphic forgeries can only be fully understood by taking several factors into account: (a) the re-evaluation during the Renaissance of the historical significance of ancient documents; (b) the prestige that a particular site,

institution, or family derived from its ability to trace its origins back to classical antiquity; and (c) the pride that nobles and cardinals took in their archaeological collections.

Some forgeries were produced for commercial gain, at least a number of the forgeries on stone. Others were manufactured on stone or bronze with the intention of replacing authentic documents as historical sources. The large majority of forgeries, however, were produced only in manuscript or printed works. They were disseminated in epigraphic collections, especially from the start of the sixteenth century, and arose mostly from the sincere and understandable, although philologically unjustified, desire to restore classical antiquity to its original splendour rather than to rely simply on the ruins uncovered through excavation. This meant carrying out restorations and filling lacunae in the documentation. There was perhaps also the more malicious intent to corroborate through the use of inscriptions, which by this date had an acknowledged value as historical sources, hypotheses and theories on the exact location of a monument, on the identification of a site, or on the origins and ancient pedigree of a family or place. Such issues were often the subject of fiery disputes among scholars.

The title of “supreme producer of epigraphic forgeries” unquestionably belongs to Pirro Ligorio (c. 1512–83). Born in Naples, he first moved to Rome and later, from 1568 onwards, lived in Ferrara, where he served Duke Alfonso II until his death. His immense work, which for the most part remains in manuscript form, primarily consists of forty books of “Antiquities of Rome” (Delle Antichità di Roma), written in Rome and sold to Cardinal Alessandro Farnese before the work had been completed; these books are currently preserved at the National Library in Naples (Biblioteca Nazionale di Napoli, Cod. Neap. XIII.B.1–10). During the years he spent in Ferrara, Ligorio also composed his Enciclopedia del mondo antico (“Encyclopaedia of the Ancient World”), now preserved in the State Archive in Turin (Archivio di Stato di Torino), where the same material is arranged in alphabetical order rather than thematically. These works, as well as other codices preserved in various European libraries, contain a great number of inscriptions skilfully invented by the author alongside accurate copies of existing monuments. These texts are reproduced with much information about the materials, state of preservation, and place of discovery, to lend more credibility to Ligorio’s creations.

Often these fanciful details were not recognized as such by later scholars and were incorporated into many epigraphic collections of the sixteenth to eighteenth centuries. The drastic work of purging carried out by the editors of the CIL has systematically marked as fake many hundreds of inscriptions known to us only through Ligorio, following Theodor Mommsen’s principle “probato dolo totum testem infirmari” (CIL X, p. xi: “once his deceitful intent has been proven, his entire credibility as a source is invalidated”). This has resulted in the creation of a specific section of Ligorianae among the falsae in all the volumes of the Corpus, some of which have now been rehabilitated.

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7 So Guarducci 1967: 492 (“sovrano creatore dei falsi epigrafici”).
by more recent CIL editors, as well as by numerous studies on Ligorio in the past few years.\textsuperscript{9} Except for the few texts carved on stone, produced mainly for commercial purposes, his forgeries stemmed from the idea, widespread among Ligorio’s contemporaries, that the task of the antiquarian was to present the ancient world in its most complete and “correct” form.

This involved restoring them to the form that they had—or might have had—in the minds of those who created them. Moved by the desire to “give the dead their souls back” (“restituire l’anima agli estinti”), when attempting to fill lacunae in the sources, Ligorio in part gave voice to his own imagination, but he also used all the data drawn from ancient sources that a network of scholars had put at his disposal, working in a variety of ways:

(a) he presented most of the texts as if they were intact, even when in reality they contained conspicuous lacunae. An example is provided by the inscription from Rome recording the early fifth-century restorations supervised by the urban prefect Anicius Acilius Glabrio Faustus (\textit{CIL VI 1676}). The architrave was broken both on the left and right sides, but Ligorio (\textit{Cod. Neap. XIII.B.7, p. 142}) drew it as if its text was completely preserved.\textsuperscript{10}

(b) Ligorio falsely claimed that in addition to the original fragmentary specimen of an inscription there existed another intact copy, which is reproduced along with the former as if both were really extant. This is the case, for instance, with the dedication to Fortuna Primigenia from Praeneste (\textit{CIL XIV 2865}), which is reproduced twice on p. 211 of \textit{Cod. Neap. XIII.B.7}. It is shown once with the damage and loss of text down the right side and once in the form of a completely preserved pedestal with its inscription intact (Fig. 3.1).\textsuperscript{11}

(c) Ligorio created fake but (at least in part) plausible epigraphic texts, reconstructed on the basis of information from literary sources, coin legends, or authentic inscriptions, and he presented them alongside authentic texts to corroborate various arguments. Apart from the many texts concerning famous monuments in Rome, the exact locations of which were at that time the subject of learned dispute,\textsuperscript{12} the case of \textit{CIL X 1008*}, allegedly from South Italy, is of particular interest:


\textsuperscript{10} Orlandi 2008: 120.
\textsuperscript{11} Vagenheim 1994: 96–102; Orlandi 2008: 197.
This fake inscription is based on a fragment of the Greek historian Antiochus of Syracuse—quoted by Dionysius of Halicarnassus (Ant. Rom. 1.35.1)—mentioning the gulf “Napetinon” (a corruption of “Lametikon,” the modern Gulf of Sant’Eufemia) to demonstrate the alleged existence of the people known as the “Napetinei.”

The case of inscribed domestic objects (instrumentum, such as fistulae aquariae, brick-stamps, and quarry marks) is more complex, especially because it has been less studied. Although here too many fakes are encountered, it is often unclear whether a text is wholly invented or contains elements interpolated from genuine inscriptions that have since disappeared.

Ligorio’s forgeries are frequently found in the epigraphic codices of Onofrio Panvinio (1530–68). In his work on the consular and triumphal fasti, Fasti et triumphi Romanorum a Romulo rege usque ad Carolum V Caes. Aug., published in Venice

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in 1557, Panvinio inserted scattered references to inscriptions with consular dates, which sometimes are forgeries taken over from manuscripts or printed works (CIL VI 3094*-3123*). Similarly, Jean-Jacques Boissard appended fake inscriptions to some of the monuments that he elegantly reproduced both in the codices written in his own hand preserved in Paris and Stockholm and in the printed edition of the Antiquitates urbaneae Romanae (Frankfurt, c. 1600). Boissard attributed the false inscription Soli / sacrum (CIL VI 3152*) to the (actually anepigraphic) obelisk in front of the church of Trinità dei Monti, relying on the conviction of sixteenth-century topographers such as Bartolomeo Marliani, Lucio Fauno, and Gesualdo Bufalini that the Temple of Sol was located there.

The progress of epigraphy as a scholarly discipline, as well as the refinement of analytical techniques for the identification of fakes—of which Scipione Maffei’s Ars critica lapidarina (published posthumously in 1765) is a milestone—did not prevent the phenomenon of forgeries in written form from continuing in the following centuries. In the seventeenth century we find the forgeries of the otherwise unknown amanuensis Claudius Franciscus Grata, whose inventions (CIL VI 3298*-3333*) appear in a manuscript copy of Giovanni Battista Doni’s epigraphic collection commissioned by Cardinal Francesco Barberini, currently preserved in the Vatican Library (Cod. Barb. lat. 2556). In the eighteenth century the notes and letters of Pier Luigi Galletti contain forgeries (CIL VI 3334*-3389*), and he also produced further inventions on stone (p. 53). Finally, the apographs (i.e., drawings with transcripts) of Count Girolamo Asquini from Udine (1762–1837) concern inscriptions from NE Italy, but they were considered untrustworthy by Mommsen, unless confirmed by the originals or by a different manuscript tradition. In spite of Mommsen’s censure, they may deserve at least partial rehabilitation, or the forgeries should be attributed to others, as more recent discoveries and studies have shown. There is also, however, a remarkable group of forged inscriptions created by Asquini out of his own excessive civic pride. He wanted to boost the importance of Iulium Carnicum (modern Zuglio) in Roman times by attributing to it a series of texts providing interesting information on the cults, institutions, and inhabitants of the city (CIL V 58*-61*, 63*, 65*, 66*, 69*). These forgeries arise from a dispute that set Asquini against another local historian Michele della Torre Valsassina. The latter, insisting on the greater importance of Forum Iulium (modern Cividale), went so far as to transport some inscribed monuments from Zuglio to Cividale, with the intention of elevating the status of Cividale in the Roman period. Similarly, some antiquarians from Fondi tried to connect to this town the Roman inscription erected

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15 CIL VI, Index auctorum, p. lix; Callmer 1962.
16 Buonopane 1998.
18 CIL V p. 81 no. XXIV; Rebaudo 2007: 129–133.
in honour of Sulla by the vicus laci Fundani (CIL VI 1297). This behaviour confirms that the over-zealous patriotic interest inherent in such operations not only led to the creation of inscriptions today relegated to the ranks of falsae, but is also to blame for the phenomenon of inscriptions labelled as alienae (i.e., displaced from their original municipality).

Forgeries Carved in Stone
(Maria Letizia Caldelli)

This category consists of inscriptions on stone and other durable materials that were produced in post-classical times in an effort to imitate Roman epigraphic texts. Forgeries on stone are a complex phenomenon emerging in parallel with the rediscovery of the classical world and with the growing interest in Roman epigraphy among the humanists in Padua in the late thirteenth and fourteenth centuries. The earliest example is perhaps CIL VI 6*, already extant in 1303. Over time this activity took on different forms, characteristics, and aims. The question is made thornier by the lack of a precise definition of what exactly is meant by epigraphic forgery today and what was meant by it in the past, since “forgery” is a cultural concept.

A marble slab, formerly in the Villa Altieri in Rome, now in the Museo Nazionale Romano, is a clear example of the difficulties one faces in establishing an unequivocal definition. The inscription (CIL VI 3477*) reads:

_D(is) M(anibus) s(acrum) / Iulio Pomponio qui vixit / donicum fata permiserunt / M. Antonius Alterius et / C. Antonius Septumuleius / devoti / b(ene) m(erenti) via Appia posuerunt._

In reality this is a text created by Marco Antonio Altieri and Giannantonio Settimuleio Campano for their master, the famous humanist Giulio Pomponio Leto (1435–98), who on many occasions expressed the wish to be buried in an ancient tomb along the Appian Way. The inscription dates back to before 1471—the likely year of death of young Settimuleio—and was produced as an erudite exercise within the first Accademia Romana; later, it ended up in the house of Altieri, one of the authors of the text. Although this document was included by the editors of the CIL in the fascicle devoted to the falsae, recent studies have rightly pointed out that it ought to be regarded not as a forgery, but as an example of neo-Latin epigraphy produced in a

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From this perspective, some inscriptions contained in the collection of Ciriaco d’Ancona (Ch. 2) are difficult to classify. Even the stern critic Mommsen recanted his original scepticism about the reliability of texts collected by Ciriaco: “sed fides eius iam non tam incorrupta mihi creditur quam olim iudicabam” (CIL IX, p. xxxviii).

An interesting case is an inscription from Ricina, carved on a limestone slab comprising six fragments, now displayed in the Palazzo Comunale, Macerata (CIL IX 5747). Mommsen realized that two of the fragments were not ancient, based on the text’s palaeography, the preparation of the inscribed surface, and the partly inauthentic Latin. The inscription—first copied by Ciriaco—was in his version arranged on eight lines and did not have any gaps (Cod. Vat. lat. 218, f. 1):

Imp(eratori) Caesari L. Veri Aug(usti) fil(io) divi Pii nep(oti) divi Ha/driani pron(epoti) divi Traiani Parth(ici) abnep(oti) divi Nervae / adnepoti L. Septimio Severo Pio Pertinaci / Augusto Arabico Adiabenico Parthico / Maximo p(ontifici) m(aximo) tribunici(a) potest(ate) XIII imp(eratori) XI / co(n)s(uli) III p(atri) p(atriae) / colonia Helvia Ricina / conditori suo

What immediately strikes the eye is the incorrect filiation of Septimius Severus, who was normally styled divi M. Antonini Pii Germ(anici) Sarm(atici) filius, divi Commodi frater and not L. Veri Aug(usti) fil(ius), as here. While the extant inscription, in which the first lines are no longer preserved, essentially confirms Ciriaco’s version, it is laid out on twelve lines rather than eight and obviously has a different distribution of the text. Mommsen, supported in his judgement by Giovanni Battista de Rossi, identified Ciriaco as the author of the later supplements and as the (perhaps unintentional) accomplice in the resulting forgery on stone (CIL IX, p. xxxviii; cf. ICUR II 1, p. 380). Whether Ciriaco was indeed the original author must remain an open question, but in any case an attempt has recently been made to exonerate him. Arguably, the humanist was at most responsible for the false restoration of the text and he only operated on a less central part of the inscription—the emperor’s genealogy—without actually compromising the overall historical value of the document. If anything, he showed the limits of his own antiquarian culture. The inclusion of fakes or texts deriving from literary sources in Ciriaco’s manuscripts should be seen either as an ingenious game by a man of letters or the result of a lack of critical judgement rather than as an act of bad faith. The inscription at issue ought not to be placed among the falsae.

In parallel with the growing interest in Latin epigraphy at the beginning of the fifteenth century and with the spread of the first collections of actual inscriptions and anthologies of epigraphic texts, there was also a substantial increase in the number of forgeries (especially in manuscripts and in printed works). These should be considered

26 Marengo 1998.
separately from inscriptions produced by humanists, as we have seen. Some motives for this activity were highlighted earlier in this chapter, and already in the fifteenth century purportedly ancient inscriptions on stone must have been composed in the same humanist circles for reasons of political opportunism.28

The motives that led Pirro Ligorio to create forgeries are complex and defy precise definition. Although his forgeries are mostly found in his written works, there are numerous cases in which he carved or, more probably, had someone else carve inscriptions that are now considered inauthentic.29 In Rome, for example, out of the 2,993 epigraphic texts included among the falsae ligorianae, about seventy were produced on stone (i.e., a little over 2 percent of the total). About one-fifth of these have now been rehabilitated as genuine (for example, ILMN I 86, 359).30 Certainly false, however, is an inscription reported by Ligorio (CIL VI 937*) and inscribed on a carefully cut marble slab, now in the Museo Nazionale Romano (Fig. 3.2):

Lucinae Iucundae / P. Lucrinus P. l. Thalamus / a corinthis faber / loc(us) enp(tus) (!) est ((denariis)) ((decem milibus)) m(onetae) argent(eae) / sibi et su(is) pos(terisque)

For Lucrina Iucunda. P. Lucrinus Thalamus, freedman of Publius, smith producing Corinthian vessels, set this up for himself, his family, and descendants. The burial site was bought for 10,000 denarii of silver coin.

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29 Henzen 1877; Hülsen 1895, 1901.
While the slab and the writing stand out for their high quality that imitates ancient models, the text itself reveals the forgery, despite the correct phrasing, for a variety of reasons. There is the otherwise unattested family name *Lucrinus/-a* and the expression *a corinthis faber*, perhaps intended by the author as a reference to a craftsman-producer of Corinthian bronze vessels. There is also the exaggerated sum of money for the purchase of a funerary *locus*, and the very formulation of the sum in question, *((denariis))…m(onetae) argent(eae)*, is unparalleled. That part was perhaps inspired by the office of *flaturarius auri et argenti monetae* mentioned in *CIL VI* 8456 or of *officinator monetae aurariae argentariae* in *CIL VI* 43, both of which were transcribed by Ligorio himself. After all, interpolations are one of the methods that he used to create his forgeries, as we have seen. Other forgeries on stone by Ligorio, which passed from the collection of Cardinal Rodolfo Pio da Carpi to that of the House of Este in Ferrara, are currently preserved in the Museo Lapidario Estense in Modena.

Surveying the sections devoted to epigraphic fakes in *CIL*, it appears that in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries forgeries in written works were preferred to forgeries on stone, although there was an increase in the number of the latter as well. Forgeries on stone no longer seem to arise from a desire to compete with the past or reconstruct the past in an ideal form. Rather, we seem to be dealing with the then current phenomenon of historical forgery, i.e., a forgery that was relevant to local history or to the fortunes of some illustrious family. Forgery for commercial purposes represented another variety.

It is only in the eighteenth century that the tide appears to turn, when the industry of forgeries on stone gained the upper hand, in parallel with the increase in public and private collections of antiquities. Rome became the production centre par excellence: in the workshops of sculptors and restorers, texts of ancient inscriptions (copied in full or in part) or texts invented along the lines of ancient inscriptions were carved on to ancient objects that were originally anepigraphic. Such objects were unearthed in copious numbers in the numerous excavations undertaken in the city and its surroundings. If no ancient objects were available, inscriptions were carved on a modern artefact produced in one of the ateliers that specialized in creating supposed antiquities.

Several of these epigraphic forgeries were manufactured in some of the most renowned workshops of the time, such as those of Bartolomeo Cavaceppi and Giovanni Battista Piranesi. Along with other genuine products, they entered important collections in Russia, Sweden, and above all Great Britain, as well as in Italy. In these cases the quality of the forgery is high, reflecting the status of the client or

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31 It does not appear in the list of *nomina* at Solin and Salomies 1994: 107.
32 Crea 2004.
35 Capoferro 2008: esp. 1400.
37 Davies 2000.
recipient, who may or may not have been aware that they were acquiring fakes. One of the above-mentioned workshops or a similar one must have produced the richly decorated urn, formerly in the collection of Cardinal de Zelada at Rome, now in the Rectorate (Palazzo del Rettorato) of the University of Rome “La Sapienza” (Fig. 3.3):38

D(is) M(anibus) / Lesbiâe suâe / quam unice ama/vit Q. Catullus me/rens posuit vix(it) / an(nis) XVII obiit q(uinto die) / calendas Iulii (!)

To the Departed Spirits of his very own Lesbia, which Q. Catullus loved in a unique way. He deservedly set this up. She lived seventeen years and died on 27 June.

It is a fictitious text, inspired by Catullus (Carm. 58.2–3). The names of the dedicatee and the dedicator are those of two major figures of Latin literature: Lesbia, who here appears dying as a seventeen-year-old, and Q. (Valerius) Catullus. On the basis of the formulae used, the text is anachronistic. The consecration to the Manes was not used until at least a century after Catullus’ time, nor is the indication of the date of death authentic. (The term obit, the day expressed with the first letter of the ordinal, calendae written in full, and the month-name in the genitive case Iulii instead of the accusative

38 Caldelli 2008.
Iulias are all inauthentic features.) Other copies of the same text existed, but on different objects (cf. *CIL X 344* = *ILMN I 657*).

The pressing demand for inscriptions to bolster more modest private collections must have led some antiquarians to become procurers or even creators of fakes. The case of Pier Luigi Galletti, a Benedictine friar from the Monte Cassino monastery, is typical. From 1754 onwards, when he settled in Rome in the monastery of San Paolo fuori le Mura, he organized a complex system of production and distribution of fake inscriptions. Galletti would transcribe published and sometimes unpublished inscriptions from the collections he happened to visit. He then had them carved on stone by skilled craftsmen. Sometimes several copies were made of one original, generally with minor variations, so as to obscure the fact that they were mass produced or to distinguish the forgery from the original. These products ended up in various collections, especially in Sicily, thanks to the fortuitous meeting of Galletti and the two Sicilians, Placido Maria Scammacca and Gabriele Di Blasi. Thus entire lots of fake inscriptions made their way into the Abbey of San Martino delle Scale in Palermo, where the librarian Salvatore Maria Di Blasi (Gabriele’s brother) set up a museum to enhance the glory of the monastery. From Palermo, part of the material was sent on to Catania, to satisfy requests from among others Ignazio Paternò Castello, the Prince of Biscari, who was in the process of forming a museum in his own palace. Some of the materials also arrived in Messina, where the antiquarian Andrea Gallo was creating a small museum with the help of his friends Salvatore and Gabriele Di Blasi. The latter, as well as being a resident in Rome in San Paolo fuori le Mura, was also a member of the Benedictine monastery of San Placido Calonerò in Messina. Later on a few of the fakes from Messina reached France.

Two examples, both now in the Museo Civico in Catania, give a good impression of the products of this “forgery factory.” The first is a marble slab, formerly in the Benedictine monastery of San Nicolò l’Arena:

*I. OM. Soli Sarapidi / Scipio Oreitus (?) v(ir) c(larissimus) / augur / voti compos reditus*

The second is also a slab, entirely reassembled from two fragments, formerly in the museum of the Prince of Biscari:

*C. O. M. Soli Sarapidi / Scipio Oreitus (?) / aucur (?) / voti com[p]os redius (?)*

Both texts are copies of an original found along the Via Appia in 1745, now in the Capitoline Museum in Rome. The original is a marble altar; on its sides and back it has complex relief scenes, while on the front an oak crown frames the epigraphic field (*CIL VI 402 = 30755 = ILS 4396*):

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42 *CIL X 1089*; 6; Korhonen 2004: 352 nos. 369–370.
43 Gregori and Mattei 1999: no. 18 (photograph).
I(ovi) O(ptimo) M(aximo) Soli Sarapidi / Scipio Orfitus v(ir) c(larissimus) / aucur (?) / voti compos redditus

The altar was replaced with simple slabs, but the text was preserved in full, preserving the line divisions and abbreviations. *Oreitus* for *Orfitus*, which appears on both copies, is possibly due to a misunderstanding. Some intentional variants were, however, also introduced: the different initial abbreviation (*I. OM.* vs *C. O. M.*), the different forms *reditus* / *redius*, the omission in the second copy of the indication of rank *v(ir) c(larissimus)*, and the correction *augur* for *aucur* in the first text.

The production of forgeries on stone did not end with the eighteenth century. It continued into the nineteenth century, and Rome remained its principal centre. Collectors, scholars, antiquarians, and forgers were behind this activity, and sometimes all of these functions coalesced in a single individual, as in the well-known cases of Wolfgang Helbig, the Marquis Giovanni Pietro Campana, and Duke Michelangelo Caetani. Their motivations were manifold, as were their methods and techniques, which must be examined case by case. The same phenomenon continued in the twentieth century. A sarcophagus from the Via Ostiense bears the false epitaph of Albius Graptus, cut in the early twentieth century. The inscription that inspired the forgery was found in excavations in 1897–98 and published only in 1938. Copies of authentic military diplomas were produced for commercial purposes and ended up on the antiquities market, while other diplomas (equally authentic) inspired actual forgeries which contain some variants and have even ended up in museums. The most spectacular recent example of epigraphic forgery comes from Spain and concerns about 270 graffiti related to different aspects of Roman everyday life.

**HISTORICAL AND DOCUMENTARY FORGERIES**

**(Gian Luca Gregori)**

An important number of forgeries took their inspiration from various characters in Roman history known from literary sources. One of the earliest examples is the alleged epitaph of the poet Lucan, copied by the Paduan humanist Rolando da Piazzola in 1303 in Rome near San Paolo fuori le Mura (*CIL VI 6*):

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46 Ahrens, Pomeroy, and Deuling 2008.
To M. Annaeus Lucanus, from Corduba, poet, whose reputation was preserved thanks to the good offices of the emperor Nero.

The Dominican Giovanni Nanni, better known as Annio da Viterbo (1432–1502), is certainly among the best known forgers of the fifteenth century, and he was recognized as such shortly after his death because of the unusual nature of his creations. In an effort to ennoble his own city, he filled his Commentaria with invented classical quotations and fanciful epigraphic texts, such as the one in which Janus and his son appear as the founders of Viterbo, or a decree of the Lombard king Desiderius, inscribed on stone, which is preserved in the Museo Civico in Viterbo (CIL XI 339*).

His work enjoyed a certain success and his forgeries circulated, so much so that in 1540 Jean Matal (better known as Metellus) still felt bound to reaffirm that such texts were fraudulent. Historical and documentary forgeries were also transmitted by learned antiquarians, who in the humanistic and Renaissance periods compiled collections in which authentic texts stood next to others that are clearly fictitious, whether they realized it or even cared. In some cases, the inspiration came from the events connected to the founding of Rome and the regal period. Thus one finds references to Romulus and Numa Pompilius: for the former, a relief of the she-wolf with the twins and the corresponding inscription (CIL VI 48*, from M. F. Ferrarini, who died c. 1488) and a set of laws attributed to him (CIL VI 3036*, from Ligorio); for the latter, an elegium praising his actions as legislator and creator of key Roman institutions (CIL VI 93*, “found on a bronze chest” according to Jan Gruter, who died in 1627) and a dedication by him to the nymph Egeria, referred to in Ovidian terms as Numae coniunx (CIL VI 3455*, seen by Bernard de Montfaucon, who died in 1741; cf. Ovid Fasti 3.275–276). However, the great generals and politicians of the early Republic were more popular. Their names appear in texts that enjoyed a wide circulation: the dedication of the Temple of Jupiter Capitolinus by M. Horatius Pulvillus (CIL VI 1a*, from F. Feliciano, who died in 1480; cf. Liv. 73.8), the establishment of the cult of Dis Pater at Tarentum by P. Valerius Publicola (CIL VI 1b*, from O. Panvinio, who died 1658; cf. Zos. 2.3), the deeds of Siccius Dentatus (CIL VI 1c*, from F. Feliciano; cf. Plin. NH 7.28.101), the elogia of the dictator Cincinnatus (CIL VI 1d*, from Fra Giocondo, who died 1515; cf. Liv. 6.29) and P. Decius Mus, commemorating his triumph over the Samnites and consecration of the enemy spoils to Ceres (CIL VI 1e*, from G. Marcanova, who died 1406/7; cf. De Vir. Ill. 27).

The spurious epitaph composed in honour of Lucretia by her husband L. Tarquinius Collatinus (CIL VI 13* = X 197*) falls into this second group. Handed down by Ciriaco d’Ancona and Feliciano, it has been in turn attributed to Crete, Rome, Viterbo, and

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Fiesole. It is also known from a copy on stone, allegedly from Cumae, now in the Museo Archeologico Nazionale in Naples (Fig. 3.4; the letters once seen, but now lost are here underlined):

Colatinius Tar(quinius) / dulcissim(a)e / coniugi et inco/mparabili Lucre/ti(a)e / pudoris et / mulierum glori(a)e / qu(a)e vixit annis / XXII m(ensibus) V d(iebus) XVI

Tarquinius Colatinus to my sweetest and incomparable spouse, Lucretia, glory of chastity and of women, who lived 22 years, 5 months, and 16 days.

Thanks to Livy (1.57–59) and Ovid (Fasti 2.741–852), the story of Lucretia was extremely well-known. This episode caused the overthrow of the monarchy and the establishment of the Republic. Based on the linguistic aspects (the recurrent monophthongs) and the formulas used—typical, if anything, of a text of the imperial period—it was already easy for Fra Giovanni Giocondo in the early sixteenth century to recognize this as a forgery (Cod. Veron. f. 153: “epigramma istud ubi sit ignoro et fictum puto.”). Lucretia is only one of the cases of Roman mulierum gloria inspiring forgeries; others include the epitaph for Marcia, the wife of Cato the Younger (CIL VI 1*l, from Marcanova, created along the lines of Lucan’s Pharsalia 2.343), and that for Tullia, Cicero’s daughter (CIL VI 3593*, an epitaph discovered in Rome in 1485, copied by Giorgio Spalatino, the chaplain of the elector of Saxony, who died in 1545).

FIG. 3.4 Invented epitaph of Lucretia allegedly set up by her husband L. Tarquinius Collatinus (CIL VI 13* = X 197*), probably from Cumae. Museo Archeologico Nazionale, Naples.
Figures from the distant past were also used to boost the prestige of ruling houses and to satisfy a number of noble families in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. They desired to demonstrate that they traced their origins back to individual ancient Romans, especially of the Republican period, if not to mythological heroes.\textsuperscript{50} There is an interesting continuity here; for already in the Roman period gentes boasted of mythical or legendary ancestors.\textsuperscript{51} This phenomenon was quite widespread in the early modern era, fuelling both the forging and collecting of epigraphic items.\textsuperscript{52} For example, the inscription \textit{Valer(io) Publicolae consuli} (\textit{CIL} VI 1776 = 31928), incised on the plinth of a togate statue in the palace of the Santacroce family in Rome (today the Palazzo Pasolini dell’Onda), is most likely to be dated to the fifteenth century rather than to Late Antiquity, as was long believed. The inscription was meant to validate the claim of the family who were patrons of the church of Santa Maria in Publicolis that they were descended from the illustrious \textit{gens Valeria}, to whom the great Publicola also belonged.\textsuperscript{53}

A case only recently discovered is that of the sixteenth-century forgeries, both in written works and on stone, which can be attributed to the antiquarian Girolamo Falletti. They mention members of the \textit{gens Atia} as alleged ancestors of the House of Este, in which the name Azzo had been recurrent.\textsuperscript{54} In a similar way, during the sixteenth century the Cesi family collected forgeries referring to members of the \textit{gens Caesia}, copied by Martin Smet, Pirro Ligorio, and Giovanni Battista Fontei (\textit{CIL} VI 3440*–3442*, 3612*). Furthermore, Fontei authored, among other things, a work \textit{de gente Caesia}.\textsuperscript{55} The Orsini behaved similarly: in their palace in the Campo de’ Fiori they exhibited the long funerary inscription, in large letters, of \textit{Ursus Aulus}, commander and saviour of his country (a completely fictitious character), and his spouse \textit{Vituria, Augusti Caesaris neptis (!)}, who had composed a poem on chastity (\textit{CIL} VI 4*d, from Ferrarini).\textsuperscript{56} The Roman family of the Porcari had the following distich above the door of their house, copied by Antonio Belloni around the middle of the sixteenth century (\textit{CIL} VI 3*g):

\begin{quote}
\textit{ille ego sum nostrae sobolis Cato Porcius auctor / nobile qui nomen os dedit arma toga}
\end{quote}

I am that famous Porcius Cato, originator of our line; my physical appearance, military accomplishments, and political career gave me my noble name.

The learned connection between the surname Porcari and the Roman family name \textit{Porcius} was cleverly devised, and no doubt the alleged descent from Cato must have

\textsuperscript{52} On the Gonzaga of Sabbioneta, Gregori 2008.
\textsuperscript{53} Bombardi 1994.
\textsuperscript{56} Bizzocchi 1991: 390.
brought great lustre to the family, who in the second half of the fifteenth century had a prominent figure in Francesco Porcari, a friend of Feliciano, who was his guest in Rome. For the epitaph of this Roman noble, who was buried in 1482 in the Basilica of Santa Maria sopra Minerva, the medieval form of the family surname (de Porcaris) was abandoned in favour of Portius, which was better suited to trace the family’s origins to the ancient gens Porcia. The fame that Cato the Elder continued to enjoy is confirmed by the dedication, known since the early eighteenth century, on the base of a statue of him, which celebrated his restoration of decaying Roman morals through his customs, laws, and precepts (CIL VI 3428*, copied by Lodovico Antonio Muratori from the work of D.B. Mattei).

Finally, the princely family of the Massimo claimed to be descended from the gens Fabia, in particular from the celebrated Q. Fabius Maximus Cunctator. In addition to adopting Ennius’ famous phrase cunctando restituit rem (Ann. 363 Skutsch: “by delaying he restored the state”, quoted by Livy 30.26.9) as the family’s motto, in the first half of the sixteenth century the Palazzo Massimo di Pirro was decorated with painted scenes of the life of their alleged distinguished ancestor. Meanwhile, in 1556 Onofrio Panvinio composed the de gente Maxima, in which he gave an official stamp to a view that was then widespread, listing as many as eighteen generations of ancient members of the family of that name.

Famous historical or legendary figures inspired the production of other forgeries, which were used to ennoble the origins of some cities, often in the context of heated local rivalries such as among Catania, Messina, and Palermo in the seventeenth century. Mantua attributed the construction of its fortifications to Mantes, daughter of the Theban seer Tiresias (CIL V 432*). Fermo claimed to have received from Augustus himself the imperial eagle, which was then incorporated into the municipal coat of arms (CIL IX 540*). In the eighteenth century Francesco Antonio Zaccaria attributed to the territory between Alba and Lavinio (in the Alban hills near Rome) the epitaph of Pallas, son of Evander, killed by Turnus’ spear (Verg. Aen. 10.479–489), but this was in fact a Renaissance forgery (CIL XI 90*, first copied by G. Choler, who died in 1534). In the eighteenth century the epitaph of the Numidian king Syphax was carved on an ancient funerary altar and displayed in Tivoli, where according to Livy (30.45.4) and Valerius Maximus (5.1.1b) he had lived as a prisoner until his death (CIL XIV 405* = Inscr.It. IV.1 33*). Similar cases of excessive civic pride can also be found outside Italy. For example, in Austria Wolfgang Lazius (1546) forged a text to support the municipal rights of Vindobona (Vienna); it was mistaken for an authentic text by Mommsen (CIL III 4557).

Prominent personalities linked to places and historic events of particular significance prompted other forgeries. One example is the so-called suggestum Caesaris, still on

57 Modigliani 1994 (esp. 445–477 on the genealogical memoirs); Minasi 2007.
60 Ferracuti 2005.
display in Rimini, a monument erected to commemorate the spot where Caesar, after crossing the Rubicon, in 49 BCE allegedly harangued his troops (CIL XI 34⁴; Fig. 3.5):

C. Caesar / dict(ator) / Rubicone / superato / civili bel(lo) / commilit(ones) / svos hic / in foro Ar(iminensi) / adlocut(us)

Gaius Caesar, dictator, after crossing the Rubicon during the civil war, addressed his fellow soldiers here in the forum of Ariminum.

Caesar’s deed also inspired another better known forgery, the so-called Rubicon decree, which began circulating in texts from 1475 and which was later also carved on the back of an authentic funerary stele of a Roman soldier (CIL XI 30⁴, deriving from
Marcanova, Ciriaco, and Giocondo). The text prohibited anyone from crossing the river under arms and military standards, at the risk of being considered an enemy of the state. It was seen and already deemed false by Antonio Agustín (1517–86), who composed a work in which he, following Matal, illustrated the criteria for recognizing a forgery and drew up a list of noted forgers. The list included, among others, Ciriaco d’Ancona, but surprisingly omitted Pirro Ligorio. Agustín thought he could identify a forgery based on language, formulas, and literary comparisons, and he was especially suspicious of documents containing references to famous episodes. For this reason he was unable to recognize Ligorio’s forgeries, since they would often take their inspiration from authentic inscriptions, which did not deal with important historical figures or events.

Legal forgeries appear among the earliest examples of epigraphic falsae. In addition to the Rubicon decree and the already mentioned decree of King Desiderius, some other examples may be mentioned. Ligorio’s lex Romuli (CIL VI 3036*) contains a whole range of measures. There is also the plebiscite concerning the name of the month of August (CIL VI 1*n, derived from Macrobius, *Sat.* 1.12). Ligorio forged the text of a senatus consultum on the establishment of the curatores aquarum (CIL VI 1043*), deriving its content from Frontinus (Aqu. 99–101). One can also find the text of passages of the acta diurna purporting to be excerpts from the libri lintei of the pontifices (CIL VI 3403*). A brief passage regarding the events of 62 BCE is in reality a sort of epigraphic summary of Cicero’s *Pro Sulla*, with which there are several points of contact:

IX. a(nte) d(iem) V kal(endas) Septemb(res) M. Tullius causam dicit pro Corn(elio) Sylla apud iudices de coniuratione. accusante Torquato filio quinque sententiiis optinuit. trib(unu) aerari(i) condemnarunt: fasces penes Syllanum. trib(unu) pl(ebis) intercesserunt…

IX. On August 28, M. Tullius defended Cornelius Sulla before a jury on the charge of conspiracy. The younger Torquatus was the prosecutor. Cicero won the verdict by five votes. The *tribuni aerarii* (i.e., who provided a third of the jurors) condemned him. The *fasces* were held by Sullanus (i.e., he presided over the court). The tribunes of the plebs interposed their veto…

At other times one gets the impression that one is dealing with a playful composition of a learned forger. This seems to be the case with the so-called lex ex tabellis divum de re futuaria (“the law deriving from the tablets of the gods on the business of sexual intercourse”), a complex and absurd piece containing a series of authorizations and prohibitions about love, opposed in spirit to Augustus’ *lex Iulia de adulteriis*. Allegedly it was once displayed in the Temple of Venus (CIL VI 17*). This text, possibly a cento inspired by Ovid’s *Ars amatoria*, was included in the collections of Ciriaco, Feliciano, Marcanova, Alciato, and others, enjoying an undeserved, although perhaps understandable, popularity.

62 On this and the previous text, Campana 1933.
Legal or at any rate official documents were still invented during the nineteenth century and certainly also later. Suffice it to mention the modern replica of a fragment containing lines 1–10 of chapter 66 of the *lex coloniae Iulieae Genetivae* (*RS* 25), which was purchased by Johns Hopkins University for its archaeological collection several decades ago.  

**CONCLUSION**

It is difficult to identify a common type of behaviour among the various forgers. While in some cases their products appear rather sloppy and easy to detect, in other instances they managed to deceive even experts, though palaeography, onomastics, and the formulas used should have raised at least some doubts. As seen above, some alleged fakes have, on the other hand, recently been rehabilitated, since it has become clear that in reality they derive from the simple misunderstanding of an authentic text. For other documents, however, the debate continues between scholars taking opposing views, some favouring authenticity, and further research is needed. The most famous case is certainly the so-called fibula Praenestina (see n. 45).

This fascinating and still largely under-investigated chapter in the history of epigraphy would be worth a much more extensive survey. In particular, for several reasons this contribution has focused on Italy, but the phenomenon of forgeries and fakes was widespread in other places too. Some work has been done, but more is needed.

**BIBLIOGRAPHY**


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64 D’Ors 1972: 60.

65 For example, *CIL* XI 848 (Modena); cf. Gregori 1995: 155–178.

66 Fabre and Mayer 1984: 184–188 (Hispania); Buonopane 2006–7: 317–322 (Grumentum); Korhonen 2007 (Syracuse).

67 Weber 2001: 463–465 (on *CLE* 52, 427); Solin 2008 (on *CIL* VI 3623*).


