

Intorno a Batoni

Convegno
internazionale
Roma, 3 e 4 marzo 2009

Atti

Comitato Nazionale
del III Centenario
della nascita
di Pompeo Batoni



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Atti
a cura di Liliana Barroero

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Know Thy Time: Batoni and Pius VI

JEFFREY COLLINS

ΚΑΙΡΟΝ ΓΝΩΘΙ: Know Thy Time; Seize the Opportunity; *Carpe Diem*. The advice is as apt as when first pronounced by Pittacus, the Greek sage whose acephalous herm, inscribed with his signature motto, was unearthed in Tivoli in 1775 and acquired for the papal museum.¹ Long a tenet of good government, the phrase has now penetrated the world of management as a chapter in Peter F. Drucker's *The Effective Executive*, vademecum of aspiring CEOs. But despite the gulf in date and medium, I believe Pittacus's axiom bore far more immediate fruit in Pompeo Batoni's portrait of the Pio-Clementino's patron (fig. 1), painted just months after the Tivoli bust came to light.² The textbook image of Giovanni Angelo Braschi, who ruled for nearly 25 years as Pope Pius VI, it too invokes time to characterize its prototype. Yet this deceptively straightforward picture continues to pose questions, not least about the colorful chronometer that gives this sacred likeness such a strikingly and perhaps unexpectedly secular character. What does Batoni's arresting image say about its sitter, and how is it an index of his time? To explore these themes, this essay seizes the moment of the artist's tercentenary to reopen questions raised in my 2004 book on Pius's art patronage, mindful of how recent exhibitions in Houston, London, and Lucca have heightened our awareness of Batoni's power as a portraitist.³ Most of all, I hope to pursue the implications of archival discoveries by Peter Björn Kerber that allow me to correct earlier mistakes and bring greater precision to the question of how Batoni's portraits conveyed meaning in late eighteenth-century Europe.

The Commission: Towards a Modern Papal Image

Batoni's portrait of Pius VI is not immediately prepossessing. As in many such likenesses, the pontiff is posed before a curtain in a velvet armchair carved with his family *stemma* and turned at a three-quarter angle to the viewer. The sitter's arms are at rest, his right hand displaying the fisherman's ring and his left unfolding a petition inscribed in finished versions with Batoni's signature and 1775, the year of Pius's election. He wears the robes of his new office, including the white cassock and *rocchetto*, the red fur cape or *mozzetta*, and an embroidered stole that falls between his knees. These vestments are barely sketched out in the Vatican version exhibited in Lucca, an unfinished canvas whose uneven level of de-

I would like to thank Christopher Johns for first sharing his ideas about the portrait at the Vatican Pinacoteca in 1996, Peter Björn Kerber for generously providing archival notices, Maureen Cassidy-Geiger for illumination about Meissen, and Liliana Barroero for inviting me to participate in the 2009 symposium "Intorno a Batoni."

¹ Unearthed at the "Villa of Cassius" and sequestered for the museum five days before Braschi's election, the bust helped anchor the newly created room of Apollo and the Muses; see Collins 2008-2009, pp. 35-63.

² For the Vatican canvas see Clark, Bowron 1985, cat. 392 (see also cat. 391 for finished versions of the composition); Barroero, Mazzocca 2008, cat. 69 (text by Carla Mazzarelli).

³ Collins 2004, pp. 32-36.



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tail, handling, and condition has generated some confusion among previous commentators. Close inspection of the picture, together with further archival notices, has clarified its status as an autograph studio model or template offering a rare glimpse into Batoni's procedures as a portraitist. In contrast to the replicas' uniform facture, here the densely painted face and surrounding halo of preparatory ground attest to a live sitting, while the cursory but bravura treatment of the drapery, curtain, and objects on the pope's writing table suggest details to be worked up from props back in the studio. The Vatican canvas should thus be understood, much as Giovanni Incisa della Rocchetta originally proposed, as an original or prime version retained by the artist for the purpose of generating replicas, much like

1 Pompeo Batoni, *Portrait of Pius VI*, 1775-1776, oil on canvas, 137.7 x 98 cm. (inv. 40455), Città del Vaticano, Pinacoteca Vaticana

a similar template Batoni kept in his studio at the request of Emperor Joseph II.⁴ In the case of Pius VI, those official copies elaborated the richly embroidered pontifical robes, the gallooned and gilded throne, the enclosing damask curtain, and the accoutrements on the pope's desk, including a writing set with quills, several books topped with the fur-lined *camauero*, and a decorative table clock that is alone in having been elaborated with great care on the original canvas.

Simple as it seems, Batoni's image occupies a strategic place within Pius's image campaign. It was not his first official likeness, which was commissioned from Giovanni Domenico Porta, an efficient functionary favored by Braschi's predecessor Clement XIV. Porta's image, which was immediately engraved, is almost over determined in its search for legibility. The new pope is posed in the traditional gesture of blessing, with the tiara on the table and Bernini's *Cathedra Petri*, guarantor of his apostolic authority, in the background. Pius continued to employ Porta for specialized images such as the "Jubilee" portrait of 1775, which presents Rome's high priest in ceremonial regalia, or an ambitious standing portrait of 1776, in which the pope inspects the plans and site of the new Vatican sacristy.⁵ But for his enduring "state" portrait Pius turned to Batoni, whom he must have known from his decades in the Curia and evidently admired for his grand manner and grand portraits. Braschi was presumably familiar with Batoni's image of his patron and mentor Clement XIII (Rezzonico) of 1760, an inventive if not commercially successful portrait that used a standing pose to blend pontifical majesty with a new sense of character and intimacy. Rezzonico had appointed Braschi as the Church's general treasurer, one step away from a cardinal's hat, and it was in this capacity that he co-supervised the costly mosaic copy of Batoni's portrait of Emperor Joseph II and his brother Peter Leopold, intended as a papal gift to Vienna. The two men must have met, and in April 1772 the painter wrote to Treasurer Braschi in respectful but familiar tones asking for emergency funds to tide the stuccoists modeling the gilt-bronze frame over the Easter holiday, a request that was immediately granted.⁶ Batoni was elated by Braschi's surprise

⁴ Whereas recent writers have tended to see the Vatican canvas as an unfinished, partly autograph copy, inspection of the Vatican canvas in Lucca with Pete Bowron, Peter Björn Kerber, and conservator Paola Sannucci revalidated proposals first aired by Incisa della Rocchetta 1957, pp. 1-4; for the analogous *Joseph II and Grand Duke Peter Leopold* see Bowron, Kerber 2007, p. 98. Besides the evident quality, significant details include a visible "halo" consistent with partial preparatory ground laid for a live sitting; important differences in paint density; alterations to the chair and vestments (the *mozzetta's* fur edge, for instance, overlaps the red fabric); variations in the quills with respect to completed versions; and visible compass marks to establish the location and size of the clock face. The clock's comparatively high finish and bright colors (which Clark read as the sign of another hand but Bowron suggests as autograph; see discussion below) also suggests a master template created in stages and retained by the artist to generate the highest-quality replicas. If correct, this makes it unlikely that this was the canvas Canova saw and criticized at the Quirinal Palace in 1780 ("la Draperia non mi fini di piacere"; cf. Mazzarelli 2008 b, p. 332, and Clark, Bowron 1985, p. 340). Canova would surely have recognized the Vatican canvas as unfinished, nor would Batoni have delivered such a patchwork product; it seems more likely that Canova was inspecting an official version delivered to the pontiff in the summer of 1776 (see below) but currently untraced.

⁵ For a discussion of Pius's early iconography, including Porta, see Collins 2004, ch. 2 ("Images of Sovereignty"), esp. pp. 30-36. Porta also supplied a full-length portrait of Pius's uncle Gian Carlo Bandi, whom Pius made cardinal in 1775; see Tittoni, Petrucci 2006.

⁶ Batoni's letter is preserved in the Archivio di Stato di Roma, Fondo Camerale II, Antichità e Belle Arti, b. 16, "Giustificaz[i]oni / Diverse d'ordini spediti al Sagro Monte di Pietà per acquisti di Statue, Monumenti antichi, ed'altro per il nuovo Museo Clementino formato al Vaticano dal pmo Genro 1770, a tt.o li 18. Maggio 1773 chè terminò la carica di Tesoriere in Persona dell'Emo, e Rmo Sig.re Card.e Gio. Angelo Braschi," item 78: "Eccellmo— Sig.re / Pompeo Batoni con il piu profondo rispetto si inchina a la Eccellza Vostra, e le notifica come Giacinto Ferrari et altri al numero di tre stuccatori, anno finalmente doppo 3 mesi finito il modello, de la consaputa cornice / averei desiderato, che vostra Eccellza fosse venuto a vederla da potere discorre in sieme su la faccia de loro, mà sicome capisco che si rende impossibile in questi giorni, et alli incontro questi omini, hanno di bisogno di denaro, essendo sotto le feste, e pero sono a supplicare p[er] loro a volervi degniare di avvanporli la soma di scudi cento in conto di detta opera, e poi doppo passate le feste si agusteranno p[er] il prezo. condoni di grazia se non vengo in persona, per le molte occupazioni mi ritrovo, impossibile di sortire di casa, e pero me avera p[er] scusato, e pieno di alta stima mi inchino dichiarandomi suo servitore con baciarli profondamente le mani di Vostra Eccellenza." Braschi authorized the payment in his own hand on 16 April 1772. As treasurer, Braschi also oversaw the elaborate wooden frame carved for Batoni's original canvas by Pasquale Marini at a cost of 300 scudi; see b. 16, item 161, "Lavori fatti ad uso d'Intagliare in una Cornice di Legno per la tela originale del ritratto di Sua M: Cesarea, per ordine dell'Ilmo—, e

election to the papal throne on February 15, 1775, and just one month later Father John Thorpe reported that he would be called to the palace “as soon as the hurry of business is lessened.” By April 1 Johann Gottlieb Puhlmann noted that his happy teacher had already been to the pope three times, kissed his foot, and been asked for a portrait. Puhlmann added that “Batoni thinks pope might honor his house with a visit” to inspect Frederick II’s *Alexander and the Family of Darius*, about to leave for Potsdam.⁷ The wish did not materialize, but for a busy new pontiff even to think of visiting a painter so soon was a mark of intimacy and esteem.

Since Porta took care of the immediate needs, Pius was willing to wait until October 12 to begin sitting to Batoni. Given their acquaintance (and perhaps mindful of *faux pas* between Mengs and Clement XIII), Puhlmann reported that the first task was to establish the new protocols under which pope and painter would interact. Subsequent letters makes clear that sittings took place in the mornings and that he would lend his “master” all his painterly industry [Malwirtschaft].⁸ As the Vatican canvas testifies, Batoni used these sessions to concentrate on the face, arranging for subsidiary objects to be forwarded to his studio. But the notoriously overcommitted painter was only slightly speedier for popes than for milordi, and it was not until late May of 1776 that Thorpe reported that Pius’s portrait was completed. It was duly delivered to the Vatican Floreria and presented to the pope, who authorized a payment of 500 scudi on July 5, well over the artist’s going rate. Braschi was evidently so keen on the picture that he took it with him on summer holiday: the very next day Batoni’s canvas was duly carried from the Vatican to the Quirinal, where the pontiff was in residence.⁹ The portrait’s success was immediate, and Chracas, the Roman newspaper, noted the following week that Batoni’s startlingly lifelike image had earned him full the approval of the pope and cardinals, not to mention a gold crown, a medal, the lucrative prospect of replicas, and the promise of future support.¹⁰

Yet despite its evident prestige, Batoni’s longed-for papal commission offered none of the artistic freedom or expressive scope of his grandest Grand Tour or princely portraits; as Liliana Barroero points out, the image is deliberately anti-theatrical.¹¹ Compared to the full-length *Don Abbondio Rezzonico* of

Rmo—Sig.re Monsig.r Braschi Tesoriere Gnle di Nro-Sig.re PP. Clemente XIV. nel 1773,” which the future pope authorized for payment on 31 march 1773.

⁷ Thorpe, cited in Bowron, Kerber 2007, pp. 116 and 198, n. 149; Puhlmann 1979, p. 47: “Batoni ist den ganzen Tag aufgeräumt, wenn er dem Papst den Fuss geküst, welches schon 3mal geschen. Er wird sich von ihm malen lassen. Er glaubt, dass der Papst sein Haus mit einem Besuch beehren wird, um das Bild des Königs zu sehn, ehe es abgeht. Dann wird seine ganze Familie, und auch wir mitgerechnet, das Glück haben, dem Heiligen Vater den Schuh zu küssen und seinen Segen empfangen”; cf. Clark, Bowron 1985, p. 339; Bowron, Kerber 2007, pp. 116, 198, n. 149.

⁸ Puhlmann first reported the commission in a letter to his parents written the morning of 14 October, when he explained (*Briefe*, 78) that he would deliver his cousin’s greetings to Batoni in the afternoon, “denn jetzt ist er beim Papst und malt dessen Porträt”; he later reiterated (79) that “Jetzt malt er das Porträt vom Papst, auch kommen schon viele Engländer, die sich malen lassen. Er ist recht aufgeräumt, und wir sind ein paar recht vertraute Freunde. Wenn er nachmittags vom Papst kommt, so erzählt er mir von Wort zu Wort, was sie zusammen gesprochen.” A second letter of 20 January 1776 recounted his activity the previous fall (85): “Am 12. [October] fing Batoni das Porträt vom Papst an, wozu ich ihm meine ganze Malwirtschaft leihen musste. Ehe her hinging, wurden erst die Zeremonien festgesetzt, wie sich einer genen den andern verhalten sollte.” For complaints that Mengs whistled rudely during his sessions with Clement XIII, see *Clement XIII Rezzonico*, cat. 69.

⁹ ASV, Fondo Palazzo Apostolico, serie Computisteria [henceforth PA, Comp.], vol. 912 [formerly serie Dispensiere, vol. 97], “Pagamenti fatti d’Andrea Bergondi Dep[ositorio], del Sag. Pal.o Aplico—in conto della R.a C.a da Gen.o a tt.o xbre 1776,” *ristretto* for 1-26 August (f. 190 ff), bill #6 from Giovanni Battista Fornari, “Nota di spese fatte, è denari pagati da me sottoscritto Prò Floriere del Sagro Palazzo per servizio della Floreria”: “A di 6. d.o [Luglio 1776]. Pagato ad un Facchino che fece un viaggio da S: Pietro à Monte Cavallo co’ un ritratto di Nostro Signore — sc. — :20.” The chronology makes clear that the picture was Batoni’s, which was presumably delivered to the Floreria before Pius’s departure. The delay in delivery may also have been caused by Pius’s desire to remake key papal vestments, since bills attest that his elaborately embroidered stole was being refashioned during these early months.

¹⁰ Chracas, *Diario Ordinario* no. 160 (13 July 1776), p. 13, found the picture “sì espresso al vivo, sembrando non esser dipinto, mà di rilievo”; the crown was of lapis lazulis mounted with gold. For the payment records see Clark, Bowron 1985, cat. 391, p. 339. Comparison with Batoni’s normal prices (see Bowron, Kerber 2007, p. 176) shows that the pope visibly overpaid; still, Kerber points out that the real return on investment for such official images came in the steady trade in replicas.

¹¹ Barroero 2008 a, p. 87.



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2 Agostino Masucci, *Portrait of Clement XII*, 1731, oil on canvas, 111 x 81 cm., Cantalupo, Camuccini Collection



3

3 Anton Raphael Mengs, *Portrait of Clement XIII*, 1758, oil on canvas, 155 x 111.5 cm. (inv. 196), Bologna, Pinacoteca Nazionale

1766, we see how little Batoni had to work with: no multicolored robes, no palace setting or architectural backgrounds, much less allegorical figures alluding to the sitter's rank and virtues. The portrait's reticence is particularly evident in contrast to the symbol-laden *Electeur Karl Theodor*, commissioned during the conclave and on Batoni's easel during the gestation of the *Pius VI*. Batoni's portrait is almost meager in comparison, embracing the conscious modesty and conventionality of ecclesiastical portraiture. Hemmed in by tradition, Batoni eschewed the experiments of his own *Clement XIII* and returned to the three-quarter seated pose canonized by Raphael and perpetuated in his own day by Agostino Masucci's *Clement XII* (Corsini; fig. 2) or Pierre Subleyras's *Benedict XIV* (Lambertini). Apart from the costume and props Batoni followed these models almost to the letter, adopting the pose and hand gesture from Masucci and the sense of conversational immediacy from Subleyras. Mengs had offered a virtuoso performance in this seated genre with his own *Clement XIII* of 1758 (fig. 3), an icon of relaxed but courtly dignity that had gained critical success and clearly inspired Batoni's efforts. Although he dispensed with the "lordly" column, Batoni acknowledged Mengs's example by copying almost verbatim the distinctive rectilinear armchair featured in all three of Meng's known images of Rezzonico and included in Batoni's own effort.¹² Palace records show that this was not just any armchair, but a carefully selected "sedia da baldacchino" that was carried from St. Peter's to the painter's studio on December 7, 1775, and picked up again on April 22 of the following year.¹³ In the politicized world of the Curia, even this

¹² For the Rezzonico canvases, recently reunited in Padova, see Clark, Bowron 1985, cat. 227 (suggesting that the standing format gave Batoni trouble reconciling pose and costume); Tittoni et al. 2004, p. 108 (entry by Rossella Leone); and Nante et al. 2008, cats. 68-71.

¹³ ASV, PA, Comp., vol. 912, "Pagamenti fatti d'Andrea Bergondi Dep[ositario]. del Sag. Pal.o Aplico-in conto della R.a C.a da Gen.o a tt.o xbre 1776," ristretto for 1-9 Jan 1776 (f. 1 ff), bill #22, "Nota di spese fatte, e denari pagati da me [Giovanni Battista Fornari] sotto- Prò Floriere del Sag.o Pal.o p. Servizio della Floreria": "Adi 7. do [December 1775] Pagato ad un Fachino che portò da Monte Cavallo una sedia da Baldacchino in Casa del Sig.e Battoni Pittore — sc. — :20"; ristretto for 24 april-6 may 1776 (f. 107 ff), bill #12, "Nota di spese fatte" by Pro-Floriere, "Adi 22 d.o [April 1776] Pagato ad un Fachino che andiede à riprendere una Sedia da Baldacchino in Casa del Sig.r Battoni Pittore, è la riportò à S. — sc. — :20."

seemingly minor choice carried meaning. Just as Braschi had prevailed in the conclave by triangulating between the pro- and anti-Jesuit forces represented by his two precursors, Batoni's return to this upright throne – a recognizable Rezzonico heirloom unlike the props in the painter's studio or the curved models favored by Clement XIV – was a way for the new pope to proclaim sympathies and allegiances he could not announce directly.¹⁴

How, then, to create a papal image that was both traditional yet up-to-date? Batoni's solution was to introduce subtle but significant innovations that expressed his sitter's evolving persona. Like Porta, Batoni dispensed with the old-fashioned, floppy *camauro* to expose the crisp, white-satin skullcap or *zucchetto* that has since become the standard papal headgear. The impulse was clearly the pontiff's, who sought to capitalize on his relative youth and good looks; like President Kennedy, or President Obama, he wished to strike a fresh and modern note from his first days in office. That new vigor extended to the altar, where Braschi became famous for his poise and agility. As Jean-François de Bourgoing put it,

The Romans, accustomed to see their pontiffs bending under the weight of years, and labouring in the performance of their public functions, which were often long and fatiguing, admired the address and grace with which the new pope acquitted himself of his task. The church seemed to grow young again, and to have a right, as well as Pius VI, to expect prosperous days.¹⁵

Batoni's student Puhlmann was among those who thronged to St. Peter's to glimpse the new pope, reporting to his parents that Braschi had been the youngest of the cardinals, "a tall, handsome, jovial man" who excelled at public appearances. Pasquino was more caustic: "Rome, look at Pius. Pious! Hardly. Look at the actor, delighting in his hair, delighting in his leg."¹⁶ Although Batoni could not show Pius at the altar, he did his best to capture this exuberant physicality within the format's limitations. The dark background drew attention to the pope's expressive features, while the traditional red-and-white palette flattered his sitter's "florid complexion, which the hand of time itself seemed to spare."¹⁷ Batoni, in sum, sought to animate a static genre with narrative elements – the discarded *camauro*, the raised eyebrows, the parted lips – that suggest that his vigorous and youthful sitter has been disturbed in his private study and is turning to address us.

The Clock: Precedents and Presents

It is in this context that the extravagant table clock on the pope's writing desk assumes such visual and symbolic relief. Although at least one commentator has characterized it as traditional, as far as I know it is unique in papal portraiture.¹⁸ Present in all but one of the portrait's fourteen known versions (where it was replaced with a seated *Roma* to reflect a program designed by Stanislaus II of Poland), Pius's clock supplements the conventional papal desk set and recalls the tabletop antiquities Batoni used in his Grand Tour portraits as tokens of the taste and wisdom acquired in the Eternal City.¹⁹ As a unique

¹⁴ On the conclave, see [Bourgoing] 1799, vol. 1, ch. 2. The Jesuits were the key source of deadlock, and Bourgoing suggests that Braschi, a "minor canon" of the *zelante* (1:7-8), gained crown support only after promising to uphold the ban, while cherishing his party's hopes of someday seeing the Society restored. Pius thus seemed the creature of both parties (1:28-31), his wish to please both sides proving a source of weakness and frustration.

¹⁵ *Ibidem*, 1, p. 106.

¹⁶ *Ibidem*, 1, p. 92: "Aspice, Roma, Pium. Pius! Haud est: aspice mimum / Luxuriante comâ, luxuriante pede"; see also Collins 2004, p. 13, and Puhlmann 1979, p. 37, to his parents on 1 April 1775: "Er ist ein grosser, schöner, freundlicher Mann."

¹⁷ [Bourgoing] 1799, 1:91, pp. 105-106: "He was already near sixty years of age; but his complexion still retained somewhat of the brilliant colouring of youth." Pius's coloring and expression are enhanced in replicas like Pietro Angeletti's enlarged copy of the head from the Lemme collection; see Casale, Petrucci, 2007, cat. 128.

¹⁸ Susinno 2000, contrasts Mengs's innovation with Batoni's conservatism: "Di nuovo ricompare un normale ritratto di stato: il pontefice sul tronetto, il tradizionale orologio sullo sfondo."

¹⁹ Clark, Bowron 1985, cat. 422; Jaroszewski 1966, demonstrates that the large Warsaw variant substituted for Ponia-towski's initial wish for an *Apotheosis of Pius VI* from Mengs, in which *Roma* crowned the pope in the presence of the kneeling

attribute, it evokes the “Etruscan” vase in his 1767 portrait of Karl Wilhelm Ferdinand, the future duke of Braunschweig and Lüneburg and a pupil of Winckelmann; in this case the ancient red-figure krater, borrowed specially from Mengs, highlights the prince’s prescient awareness of its Greek origin.²⁰ The pope’s striking timepiece is clearly along these lines, and if not an outright mystery it is at the least an unorthodox choice that demands investigation.

Clocks, of course, had an established role in European portraiture that reflected their potency as political and moral metaphors.²¹ First popularized by Titian, the “portrait-with-clock” became a standard way to allegorize a wise prince’s dignity and well-regulated judgment. As the English dramatist John Webster announced in 1612,

The lives of Princes should like dyals move,
Whose regular example is so strong,
They make the times by them go right or wrong.²²

By the seventeenth century clocks increasingly served as signs of government, expressing both the sovereign’s personal rule and the more abstract “machine of state.” In Bourbon France clocks came to symbolize centralized royal authority as administered by trusted advisors. Philippe de Champaigne’s seated portrait of Louis XIII’s chief minister Cardinal Richelieu with a table clock of 1636 (compositionally close to Batoni’s *Pius VI*) evokes a contemporary emblem by Don Diego de Saavedra Fajardo, who proposed that “in the clockwork of government the prince should be not only a hand but also the escapement that tells all other wheels the time to move.”²³ Claude Lefèvre made the point even more boldly with the sculptural timepiece in his 1666 portrait of Jean-Baptiste Colbert (fig. 4), where a muscular Atlas sustaining the celestial sphere embodies the finance minister’s heroic efforts on behalf of Louis XIV, who guides the national economy with the sureness and precision of the clock’s interlocking dials.²⁴ Eighteenth-century artists modified the tone, but not the substance, of this monarchic message. Hyacinthe Rigaud included an elegant desk clock in his 1723 portrait of Louis XV’s tutor Cardinal Guillaume Dubois. The timepiece is again a surrogate for the king, and the letter Dubois holds immediately beneath it – addressed “Au Roy” – announces that his ward had gained majority and would now govern on his own.

This French tradition came south as Bourbon heirs spread of notions of enlightened absolutism throughout eighteenth-century Europe. Giuseppe Baldrygh included an elaborate ormolu clock in his portrait of Don Ferdinando di Borbone, Duke of Parma, of ca. 1772 (fig. 5), probably painted to celebrate the duke’s own wresting of power from his father’s minister Guillaume du Tillot.²⁵ Although it may

painter, with St. Peter’s and Pius’s new Vatican Sacristy in the background. Mengs objected that it was Batoni who should be depicted, since it was he who had immortalized the pope; after further discussion Mengs agreed to substitute the seated pontiff with a bust portrait copied from Batoni and presented by the Genius of Art, and to move his own self-portrait to the side. This scheme too came to nothing, and upon Mengs’s death in 1779 the king commissioned the existing canvas from Batoni as an echo of the original conception.

²⁰ Clark, Bowron 1985, p. 308 (cat. 309); Barroero 2008 b, p. 65.

²¹ For a recent overview see Pancheri 2005, pp. 51-85, and the section on “ritratti con orologio,” 629 ff. See also Chapuis 1954; Mayr 1980, pp. 1-8.

²² John Webster, *The White Devil*, act 1, sc. ii, in *The Complete Works*, ed. F. L. Lucas, 4 vols. (New York 1959), cited in Mayr 1980, p. 5.

²³ Chantilly, Musée Condé; The emblem, published in Diego de Saavedra Faxardo Cavallero’s *Idea de un príncipe político cristiano, representada en cien empresas* (Munich, 1640, with many subsequent editions) illustrates a table clock with the motto “Uni reddatur” (let all authority revert to one) to symbolize the desired harmony between the prince and his counselors, their silent and hidden government visible only from its external effects. See Mayr 1980 (“Mechanical Symbol,” p. 6), citing the 1659 Amsterdam edition, and del Prà 2005, p. 47.

²⁴ Bajou 1998, p. 104. The clock is inscribed “Par oneri cervix” and parallels an example made for Chancellor Pierre Séguier about 1645, where the dial is supported by Hercules.

²⁵ Brusa 2005, cat. R24 (662-63, formerly attributed to Pietro Melchiorre Ferrari). The clock, whose dial reads “A PARIS,” recalls products of Jean André Furet; Ferdinand, born in Parma in 1751, assumed the reigns of government on Tillot’s death in 1772.



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still have been meant to express the young duke's virtues, with its matching *cartonnier*, *bureau plat*, and globe, this evident Parisian import signals the Duke's wide horizons and completes the tool kit of a modern monarch. Spain soon joined the fold: Mengs included a timepiece in his portrait, also from the 1770s, of Infante Don Luis de Borbon bedecked with orders standing at a table before a rich clock of gilt bronze – an honorary attribute, in this case, since Don Luis's bid for the Spanish crown had been decisively checked by his older brother.²⁶ Charles III was invoked in turn in Goya's 1783 portrait of his reformist minister the Count of Floridablanca, where a clock sits on a desk just below a framed portrait of the sovereign and amid maps and plans for rationalist improvements to the kingdom. Both Braschi and Batoni must have observed this trend, which offered a useful symbolic shorthand for expressing larger ideas.

Helpfully for Rome, clocks were equally popular in portraits of high-ranking clerics, where they sometimes suggested mortality but more often served as signs of temperance and moderation. Ripa made timepieces an attribute of the prelature "to signify that prelates are the clocks that measure all the motions of the world, and must be absolutely regular and just in their own habits and customs"; just as clocks are made to chime the hours correctly, prelates are elevated to their dignity so that they can be seen and heard by all.²⁷ Some clerics' clocks, with their hidden but miraculous workings, may even have evoked new notions of God as architect of the universe as suggested by Descartes, Robert Boyle, or Christian Wolff, who argued in his 1731 *Cosmologia Generalis* that "the world behaves like a clockwork automaton."²⁸ Clocks were particularly favored by sitters who combined secular and sacred

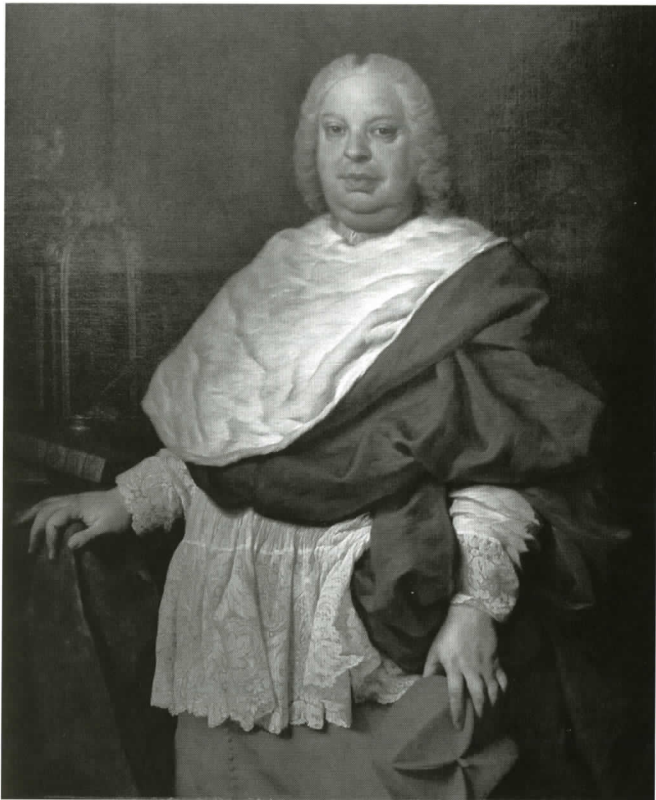
4 Claude Lefèvre, *Portrait of Jean-Baptiste Colbert*, 1666, oil on canvas, 138 x 113 cm., Versailles, Musée du Château

5 Giuseppe Baldrighi, *Portrait of Don Ferdinando I di Borbone, Duke of Parma and Piacenza*, ca. 1772, oil on canvas, 157 x 123 cm. (inv. 308), Parma, Galleria Nazionale

²⁶ Don Luis, created a cardinal at age eight, renounced the dignity before seeking the Spanish throne on the death of his half-brother Ferdinand VI in 1759. Steffi Roettgen dates the unfinished picture to 1774-1779 and interprets the clock as a sign of the infante's interest in mechanics; see Roettgen 1999, vol. 1, cat. 142-143, and 2001, cat. 93.

²⁷ "Per significare che i Prelati sono horologij del mondo, che servono per misura de tutti i moti, e però bisogna che siano regolatissimi e giustissimi nei loro propri moti, e costumi"; cited in del Prà 2005, p. 48.

²⁸ Mayr 1980, p. 3.



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6 Pierre Subleyras, *Portrait of Cardinal Silvio Valenti Gonzaga*, ca. 1740, oil on canvas, 128x98 cm. (inv. PC 402), Rome, Pinacoteca Capitolina

7 Pompeo Batoni, *Portrait of Count Nicola Soderini*, 1765, oil on canvas, 134x97 cm., Rome, Galleria Nazionale d'Arte Antica

rank, like Philipp Wilhelm, son of the duke of Bavaria and prince-bishop of Regensburg, portrayed about 1597 by Engelhard de Pee in his cardinal's robes at a desk with a table clock.²⁹ Such models must have appealed to a Curia increasingly compelled to defend its dual authority. Cardinal Nicolò Maria Lercari, for instance, had himself portrayed by Giovanni Odazzi about 1730 with a sumptuous gilded table clock whose flying putto is close to that of Pius VI.³⁰ But the most influential example was presumably Subleyras's 1745 portrait of cardinal Silvio Valenti Gonzaga (1690-1756), Benedict XIV's trusted secretary of state and supporter of the Pinacoteca Capitolina (fig. 6). Here the clock, complete with Petrine rooster, conveys not only the cardinal's personal virtues but his place in the apostolic succession, his leading role in Lambertini's government, and his protection of the arts and letters. Braschi must have known and remembered the picture, since he received the dedication of Claudio Todeschi's eulogy of Valenti the very year his own portrait was delivered. Likening Valenti to Richelieu and Colbert (whose portraits the cardinal kept "in his private study"), Todeschi praised his unflinching support of manufactures, the true source of national prosperity and a central plank of Pius's government.³¹

Batoni's own use of clocks exemplifies this dual iconographic stream. In 1765 he portrayed Count Nicola Soderini, scion of an old Florentine family who held a series of important offices including Roman Conservator and Tuscan Consul (fig. 7). The Soderini had just been confirmed as a Roman patricians by Clement XIII, and the rather old-fashioned clock confirms the count's new station while

²⁹ Munich, Residenzmuseum (attributed); Mayr 1980, fig. 1.

³⁰ Crema, Collezione Vailati Passeri; see Tittoni, Petrucci 2006, p. 30 (fig. 35) and p. 122 (cat. 35).

³¹ [Todeschi] 1776, stresses in his introduction (p. 5) that Braschi too owed his career to Benedict XIV and would have observed the cardinal's virtues firsthand, especially "gli stabilimenti di nuove manifatture, vere sorgenti della prosperità di uno Stato"; Valenti's portrait collection included a wax bust of Peter the Great purchased from the heirs of Cardinal Ottoboni (p. 54). For the portrait (but not the clock) see Rosenberg, Michel 1987, p. 93, and p. 128 (cat. 38, text by Sergio Guarino); Guarino, Masini 2006, cat. 222.



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suggesting an august lineage.³² Thirteen years later Batoni portrayed the Rt. Reverend the Honorable Frederick Augustus Hervey, Anglican Bishop of Derry, seated at his desk. Hervey too is at work, caught in the act of dipping his quill, while the juxtaposition of clock and Derry's newly completed spire speaks to his taste for art and architecture. Batoni's picture anticipates Hervey's twin spheres of authority: just one year after the portrait was completed, his sitter became the 4th Earl of Bristol on the death of his elder brother. Although a dandy and a self-confessed agnostic, the "Earl-Bishop's" staunch defense of religious equality and Catholic emancipation may have prompted Pius's particular interest in this picture, which Batoni and Puhlmann showed him at the Quirinal during a long and affectionate visit in August 1778.³³ His own portrait-with-clock has already been delivered, but the inspection suggests the pope's wish to stay abreast of evolving European conventions.

Clocks, then, were favored in portraits of both secular and sacred leaders as signs of dignified moderation and well-regulated sovereignty. It remains to explore why Pius became first pope to join this tradition with the specific example he chose. The key comes in two archival notices recently published

8 Giuseppe Vasi, *Palazzo Ruspoli on the Corso*, from *Delle magnificenze di Roma antica e moderna, libro quarto, che contiene i palazzi e le vie più celebri di essa*, Rome, Niccolò e Marco Pagliarini, 1754, pl. 68

³² Viewers from Giuseppe Cades on have noted the portrait's official, even "pompous" character; see Clark, Bowron 1985, cat. 286; Brusa 2005, cat. R22, noting that the clock (*a pendola da tavola or da soppramobile*) is Italian, with a wooden case, and could probably ring the hours. Its style would seem to place it early in the century, although similar clocks were made after 1750; see Pancheri 2005, p. 82.

³³ Puhlmann (1979, pp. 151-152) explained to his parents that "der Papst ein Verlangen hatte, das Porträt eines englischen Bischofs zu sehn," and that he jumped at the chance to accompany his teacher, reporting with pride how the pope joked familiarly about Batoni's weight, patted his belly, clapped him on the back, and boxed him on the ears, "eine sonderliche Gnade." Hervey's portrait seems to have led to a discussion of the schismatic English church and the resulting loss of revenue to the Apostolic chamber, which Batoni skillfully steered to a discussion of Pius's favorite topic, his building projects; for a moment, swollen from praise and proudly listing how many columns the new Sacristy contained, "er vergass, dass er Papst." Clark, Bowron 1985, cat. 402 (p. 344), mistakenly reports this as a visit by the pope to Batoni's studio.

by Peter Björn Kerber. The first is a report by Father John Thorpe on May 11, 1776, that Batoni had almost finished the pope's portrait, having only to insert at Pius's request the "fine Table Clock" he had received from Prince Rospigliosi.³⁴ The second, dated just two days later, is a receipt discovered by Olivier Michel to the effect that Giuseppe Ravaglia, clockmaker of the Sacred Apostolic Palaces, had been paid a day's wage to shine the clock up and carry it from the Vatican to Batoni's studio, then to his workshop for repair or maintenance, and from there back to the Vatican.³⁵ These valuable testimonies confirm my hunch that the clock was a favored gift, while leaving open the questions of its origin, its donor's motivations, and significance in Batoni's portrait.

We can approach an answer by adding two new pieces to the puzzle, beginning with a report published in Chracas on September 2, 1775, that not Prince Rospigliosi but Prince Ruspoli had presented to the pope "an extremely valuable desk clock, of unusual workmanship, with three rows of diamonds set elegantly around the dial and with both the hour and minute hands similarly embellished with diamonds, in a case of Saxon porcelain, with other finely-executed decorations."³⁶ This identifies the donor as Alessandro Ruspoli (1708-1779), 2nd prince of Cerveteri. Alessandro's father Francesco Maria Ruspoli Marescotti Capizucchi (1672-1731), who had gained the title from Clement XI and Benedict XIII for helping to evict the Austrians from Ferrara in 1708, confirmed the family's rise by acquiring the impressive Palazzo Caetani in 1713 (fig. 8), reputedly blessed with Rome's finest staircase. A music lover and patron of Arcadia, the upwardly mobile 1st prince was also the owner of the famous Ruspoli Sapphire sold to Louis XIV for the French crown jewels.³⁷ Francesco Maria's son Alessandro, who definitively purchased the palace in 1773, was an equally shrewd businessman who leased his prime sidewalk on the Corso during carnival to an entrepreneur who made a handsome profit by renting out chairs on sunny days.³⁸ In May of 1775 Prince Alessandro was chosen to attend the visiting Archduke Maximilian Franz of Austria, younger brother of Joseph II, sent to attend the festivities of the Holy Year as the emperor's representative. Ruspoli shared this honor with Prince Rospigliosi, and perhaps it was that, not just the similarity of names, that confused Father Thorpe.

The second new piece of evidence is of a more material nature: namely, the clock itself (fig. 9). Although it has lost its flower-basket finial and diamond-studded hands, there is little doubt that the elaborate porcelain timepiece collected by Count Francesco Cini in the mid nineteenth century and later given to the Capitoline is the one Pius received from Prince Ruspoli and had copied by Batoni or a talented assistant.³⁹ The two correspond in every detail, from the asymmetrical outline to the numerals

³⁴ Thorpe (cited in Bowron, Kerber 2007, p. 198, n. 151) reported to Arundell that Batoni "has nothing more to do in the picture than to put the fine Table Clock in it, which Prince Rospigliosi presented to his Holiness, who will now have it painted there."

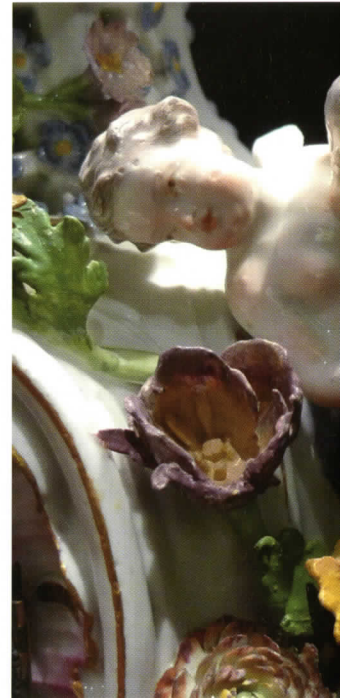
³⁵ ASV, PA, Comp., vol. 912, *ristretto* for 12-15 July 1776, bill #3 ("Lista di spese fatte dà Francesco Forte facchino di Camera"): "A di do: [13 Maggio] Pagato al Sig.re Giuseppe Orloggiaro per aver fatto portare l'Orologgio Brillantato dal Vaticano al Sig.re Battoni Pittore, e dalli alla sua Bottega, e riportato al Vaticano [...] sc. - :45" (first cited in Bowron, Kerber 2007, p. 198, n. 151). Since Batoni must have kept the clock for several days, May 13 evidently marks its safe return.

³⁶ Chracas, *Diario Ordinario*, no. 70 (2 Sept. 1775), p. 2 (for 2 Sept.): "Nei passati giorni, Sua Ecc. il Sig. Principe Ruspoli, fece umiliare in dono alla Santità di N. Sig. un pregievolissimo Orologio da Tavolino, di particolare lavoro, avendo nel quadrante tre contorni di brillanti posti con bellissima simetria, come pure ornate sono di brillanti le due sfere dell'ore, e dei minuti, avendo la cassa di porcellana di Sassonia, con altri ben'intesi lavori; essendosi degnata Sua B[eatitudi]ne di sommarmente gradirlo."

³⁷ See Pietrangeli 1992, esp. pp. 91-136 (L. Fiorani).

³⁸ Puhlmann (1979, p. 102) described the carnival festivities in an entry dated Sat. 11 Feb. 1776: masked revelers flooded onto the streets each afternoon, finding the Corso lined with chairs rentable for ¼ ducat. "Die Bedienten des Fürst Ruspoli erhalten vor den Platz, der vors Palais, wo 3 Reihen Stühle stehn können, 100 Zechinen, und wenn's halbwegs gut Wetter, so hat der Pächter um 100 Zechinen Profit. Um 23 ½ ist alle Tage Pferderennen, und dann gehn die Masken in Theater." On Prince Alessandro's acquisition of the palace see Fiorani in Pietrangeli 1992, p. 107.

³⁹ Although apparently unknown to Batoni scholars, the connection seems first to have been made by Birgit Stegbauer 1999, pp. 107-111, interpreting the clock as a symbol of papal art patronage; see also Guarino, d'Agliano 2007, cat. 344, which dates the clock to 1765-1770. The clock's provenance is unknown before Cini acquired it in the mid nineteenth century.





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9 Table clock, ca. 1765-1770, Meissen hard paste, polychrome porcelain, after a model by Johann Joachim Kaendler ca. 1765, 55x28x21 cm. (inv. Cini 467), Rome, Pinacoteca Capitolina

10 Table clock, detail of embracing cupids

11 Table clock, detail of Watteau-inspired scene

and winding holes in its enamel dial, and including distinctive features like the trellis-shaped dome, the figure of Flora perched to the left of the clock face, and the painted scene showing an elegantly-dressed woman seated in a garden and attended by a standing couple. Clearly relishing the departure from monochrome antiquities, Batoni captured the clock's sinuous contours, saturated colors, and lustrous sheen. He enlarging the central vignette for legibility and suppressed only the embracing cupids (fig. 10) that may have seemed *de trop* even for a pope who once enjoyed female society and whose former fiancée resided in a nearby convent. The Meissen mark confirms that Ruspoli's gift was indeed "Saxon porcelain," which resolves a lingering puzzle over its origin. It invalidates my prior speculation that the clock might be a Sèvres product implying Bourbon sympathies, as well as Roberto Pancheri's idea that it was of Roman manufacture. Ceramic specialists at the Victoria and Albert Museum concluded only that it was not Italian, possibly an unknown Meissen model or perhaps of painted wood.⁴⁰ Either way, the design retains distinct Gallic overtones, its painted conversation (fig. 11) invoking the

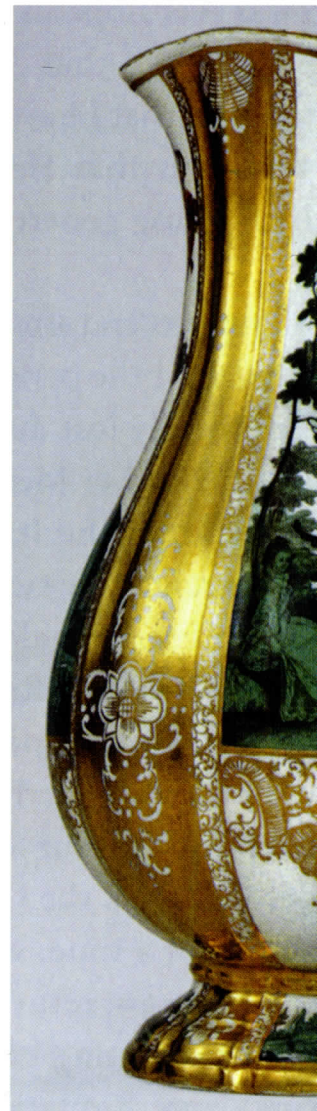
⁴⁰ I regret that my error misled later commentators (cf. Bowron, Kerber 2007, p. 116; Mazzarelli 2008 b, p. 332); cf. Pancheri 2005, p. 82, and Wynne, 1986, pp. 4-5 (cat. 109), reporting the suggestions of Michael Archer and his V&A colleagues based on a black-and-white photograph. Bourgoing (1:107) notes that at early in his career Braschi frequented madame Falconieri, "a lady of high rank, and of a very intriguing disposition," but denied Gorani's claim that they were lovers or that Pius fathered Costanza Falconieri, later Duchess Braschi-Onesti. On Braschi's engagement see Puhlmann, 37, noting that the lady's parents prevented the match and that she was still at S. Maria in Campo Marzio, steps from Braschi's palace as cardinal.

fête galante much the manner of Meissen's "Green Watteau" toilet service, gifted to Queen Maria Amalia of Naples in 1747 on the birth of her first son and heir (fig. 12).⁴¹

French or Saxon, this clock would have stood out in eighteenth-century Rome, where newspapers recorded occasional gifts of porcelain watches, but nothing approaching this size or complexity.⁴² Modeled by the virtuoso ceramist Johann Joachim Kändler in the early 1760s, it was over half a meter high and priced at fifty thalers in a Meissen catalogue of 1765, among the factory's most expensive models and well suited for a sovereign. The Saxon court had commissioned one for itself in 1766, and the handful of surviving variants confirms that this was a bespoke luxury item.⁴³ How Ruspoli acquired it is not yet clear; the amorous iconography seems to preclude a commission specifically for the pope, and it may have been a present the prince received from a visiting dignitary or ordered from Meissen's expanding dealerships, adorned with diamonds, and "re-gifted" to the pope. What is evident is that Ruspoli targeted Braschi's tastes to the letter; as Machiavelli advised, "those who strive to obtain the good graces of a prince are accustomed to come before him with such things as they hold most precious, or in which they see him take most delight." Pius was well known to like costly presents, and by not just accepting but immortalizing Ruspoli's gift, Braschi sent a powerful signal both about his sense of decorum and aesthetics and about what kind of pontiff he intended to be.⁴⁴

Pomp, Porcelain, and the Jubilee

With this new evidence in hand, we can now reassess Batoni's portrait in its specific historical context. For all the gathering clouds, February 1775 was a time of new beginnings: the coming spring marked not just the dawn of the longest pontificate to date, but of the shortest Jubilee or Holy Year, a public extravaganza that offered Rome a chance to shine. Although he predicted it would be history's last, Bourgoing admitted the Holy Year of 1775 "was celebrated with a degree of magnificence, surpassing that of all preceding ones."⁴⁵ Opening the Jubilee – delayed during the conclave – had been Braschi's first duty as pontiff, and his determination to maximize its prestige may help explain his portrait's strongly secular character. Himself a minor nobleman from Cesena, Braschi had aristocratic (some said vainglorious) tastes and a firm belief in the utility of splendor. Pius encouraged Rome's aristocrats to duel for social capital with his full official blessing, which included a special dispensation to allow dance parties even during the Holy Year.⁴⁶ With his longstanding ties to Vienna, Prince Ruspoli took the lead in *fête* Archduke Maximilian, one of the Jubilee's most prominent visitors. His lavish entertainments were chronicled not just by Chracas but by Batoni's student Puhmann, who described wandering through painted rooms filled with musicians and illuminated gardens transformed into Mt. Parnassus with plaster Muses.⁴⁷ The prince's expenditures were the talk of Roman society in the summer of 1775; Gior-



12 Ewer, ca. 1745-1747, Meissen porcelain, decorated by G. S. Birckner, from the toilet service delivered to the queen of Naples in 1748 (ES 169), Munich, Bayerisches Nationalmuseum, Ernst Schneider Collection

⁴¹ For the Italian taste for porcelain see Cassidy-Geiger 2007, ch. 10 ("Princes and Porcelain on the Grand Tour of Italy"). On the Watteau service and the use of French prints see pp. 237-238; Jeffrey Munger notes (161-162) that a related set was sent to the French dauphin and dauphine in 1747.

⁴² Giuliana Santucci, whose extensive study was published in seven parts (1995-1997), turned up no other published notice of porcelain clocks in eighteenth-century Rome.

⁴³ Stegbauer 1999, cites variants in the Syz collection at the Smithsonian (with four figures and a dog in the vignette) and formerly in the Raab and Knapp collection (with a flower basket instead of the Watteau scene), and a copy from the 1760s by the Fürstenburg factory; for the 1766 Saxon commission, see Guarino, d'Agliano 2007, cat. 344.

⁴⁴ [Bourgoing] 1799, 1:182, contrasting Pius's "particular affection for presents of intrinsic value" with the disinterestedness of his predecessor, who accepted "nothing but articles calculated to enrich his [new Vatican] museum."

⁴⁵ *Ibidem*, 1:104.

⁴⁶ The Milanese abate Giorgio d'Adda Salvaterra provides a vivid account of this competition in letters to his brother Marchese Paolo Camillo d'Adda in Milan, published by Felice Calvi 1878, d'Adda 1878, pp. 305-415; see esp. 384 ff, and below.

⁴⁷ Puhmann 1979, p. 73 (in a letter to his parents dated 16 August 1775, describing events of 12 July): "Jetzt ist auf 8 Tage die Zubereitung von dem Fest zu sehn, was der Fürst Ruspoli für den Erzherzog gemacht. Erst ging man durch alle Zimmer, die mit Landschaften von Poussin und Pferden bemalt, in einem waren di 3 Grazien antik in Marmor, halb Lebensgrösse, ausserordentlich schön [...]. Im Saal war ein Orchester vor Musici erricht, und vom Saal ging man in den Garten, der ganz mit Girlanden von gemachten Blumen behängt. Alle Blumen in den Beeten und Gefässen, auch Weinreben waren alle



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gio d'Adda estimated that Ruspoli's cantata, ball, and sit-down supper for 120 guests, at 15-20,000 scudi, was topped only by Prince Chigi, whose fireworks display of the Forge of Vulcan in Piazza Colonna "came off magnificently in every detail."⁴⁸

Pius was fully invested in the Jubilee's proud display and seemed anxious to make up for lost time; to his critics this was early evidence of his "ruinous taste for magnificence and show" and a tendency to favor style over substance.⁴⁹ The emperor's relatives were prestigious guests, and the pontiff was so keen to make a good impression that the Vatican even hired a special chair for his audiences with the archduke and his sister.⁵⁰ No occasion was spared: in addition to funding a horse race in front of Palazzo Ruspoli for Maximilian's benefit, the pope staged his own full-dress parade from the Vatican to the Quirinal, "having commanded the entire prelature to accompany him there, to show the Archduke the whole papal court at its finest."⁵¹ But Pius had also served for seven years as the Church's general treasurer and was acutely aware of the need to jump-start Rome's economy. Luxury had tangible benefits: commenting on the social season, d'Adda noted that "all these parties will put more than 100,000 scudi into circulation, almost entirely new money that hadn't previously been part of the economy."⁵² Partnership with the nobility was essential, especially to counter detractors who saw the Holy Year festivities as pandering to the mob and unbecoming to the Church. Gift-giving cemented this symbiosis, and Pius was careful to continue the practice of sending holiday favors to Rome's secular and clerical nobility, gift baskets full of fruit, fish, fowl, truffles, cheeses, salami, chocolate, or cakes according to the recipients' tastes and order in the hierarchy. In the Christmas list for 1775, Princess Ruspoli (who favored *cedrati*) was listed fourth, preceded only by Princess Pallavicini, the Minister of Spain, and the Venetian Ambassador.⁵³ In this context, Prince Ruspoli's own much more significant gift, coming the

gemacht von Leinwand. Die Orangenbäume waren natürlich und hingen voll ausgehöhlter Zitronen, in deren jede eine Lampe brannte. Die Zitronenschalen waren so gemacht, dass das Licht durchscheint. Grad gegen den Saal war der Berg Parnassus mit den Musen schön gemachte. Hände, Köpfe un Füße waren von Gips und die Gewänder von natürlicher Leinwand, mit Leim und Kalk bestrichen. So waren auch die übrigen Figuren, einige Meergötter lagen an Fontänen. Bei Abend, wie es ist illuminiert gewesen, muss es schön ausgesehn haben." Compare Chracas, *Diario Ordinario*, no. 56 (15 July 1775), for 10 July, which also describes the "superba Loggia" erected on the Corso.

⁴⁸ D'Adda first reported on the festivities in a letter of 24 June 1775 (d'Adda 1878, 384): "Per il giorno 27 del corrente aspettiamo di ritorno da Napoli l'Arciduca Massimiliano, per il quale si preparano gran feste, avendo il Papa permesso per quest'occasione anche il Ballo, tuttoché nell'Anno Santo. Oltre le solite feste per S. Pietro, à di lui contemplazione ha il Papa ordinata una Corsa di Barbari. Il Principe Ruspoli fa una Cantata in giardino trasmutato nel Monte Parnasso con grande illuminazione, un Ambigu per 120. Persone, ed una gran Festa di Ballo, calcolando la spesa circa 20 mila scudi Romani. Il Principe Ghigi fa una gran foco artificiale in Piazza Colonna reppresentante la Fucina di Vulcano, ed in Casa una gran Festa di Ballo. Il Duca di Bracciano una Cantata, e poi Festa di Ballo, e giardino illuminato. Il Cardinale Alessandro Albani una Festa di Ballo alla Villa con grand'illuminazione. Il Cardinale di Bernis una Cantata, l'Ambasciatore di Venezia una Festa di Ballo, ed il Principe Giustiniani una Cantata. Queste feste metteranno in giro più di 100 mila scudi, e quasi tutto danaro che non stava in commercio." On 8 July 1775 (p. 385) he added: "Qui abbiamo quest'Arciduca che balla con gran piacere, e questi Principi fanno à gara per divertirlo facendo spese esorbitanti. Il Principe Ruspoli si dice spendi 15 mila scudi, il Principe Ghigi 40 mila, il Duca di Bracciano 8 mila, altrettanto il Principe Rospigliosi, ed hora si dice che per Novembre possa venire anche il nostro Arciduca Ferdinando con la Moglie, e questo darebbe occasione ad altre spese grandiose [...]." On 28 July (p. 386) he reported that "La Festa del Principe Ghigi è riuscita magnifica all'ultimo segno, ed è andata bene senza alcun inconveniente, come si temeva attesa la gran quantità del Popolo." D'Adda nonetheless defined the prince's expenditure as "bestiale" and a form of madness perhaps spawned by the death of his first wife.

⁴⁹ [Bourgoing] 1799, 1:128; see also 104, noting his "taste for pompous ceremonies."

⁵⁰ ASV, PA, Comp., vol. 912, *ristretto* for 27 August to 13 sept 1776, bill #13, "Nota di spese fatte" by Pro-Floriere Fornari: "A di 29. ditto [Agosto 1776]. Pagato à Nicola Gualdi Regatiere per Nolo di una sedia data dal Medesimo à Palazzo in occasione del Udienza che diede Nostro Signore all'Arciduca Massimiliano al Vaticano, ed altra Udienza all'Arciduchessa sua sorella — sc. 1:02 1/2."

⁵¹ D'Adda 1878, 385 (8 July 1775): "Domani il Papa v` in pubblico dal Palazzo di S. Pietro à Monte Cavallo, essendo stata intimata tutta la Prelatura per accompagnarcelo, per far vedere all'Arciduca tutta la Corte Pontificia in figura."

⁵² D'Adda, *Lettere*, 384 (24 June 1775): "Queste feste metteranno in giro più di 100 mila scudi, e quasi tutto danaro che non stava in commercio."

⁵³ See, for instance, the list of delivery expenses "fatte dà Gio. Battista Massarotti Decano di N. S." in ASV, PA, Comp., v. 912, *ristretti* for 6-15 march (f. 64 ff), bill #6 (Christmas 1775) and for 14-31 (f. 285 ff), bill #35 (Christmas 1776).



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month after the Archduke's departure, may have been a way to thank the pope for his recent social triumph and to curry future favor. He would need it the following year when his daughter, already twenty-three and "not pretty," took refuge in a convent rather than marry a scandalously freethinking Milanese count.⁵⁴ By the same token, Pius's very public exhibition of Prince Ruspoli's gift in his official portrait must have helped him both to capture the hard-won glamour of the Holy Year and to remind Rome's elite that more spending, not less, was the way to favor and prosperity.

Strange as it may seem today, a piece of luxury china was both a logical and even a traditional way to communicate this message. Popes had long presented themselves as connoisseurs of *objets d'art* in a city renowned for good living and *buon gusto*. Braschi, who was celebrated as a new Leo X since the dawn of his pontificate, surely knew Raphael's portrait of his Medici precursor inspecting a sumptuous illuminated manuscript; Leo's magnifying glass actually contained a small clock, although it does not show in Raphael's depiction.⁵⁵ Pius too was a consummate collector, a bibliophile and antiquarian who maintained the "magnificently furnished" palace in the Campo Marzio he had once occupied as a cardinal and would soon use to launch his adopted nephews.⁵⁶ Some saw Pius's embrace of luxury (as of

⁵⁴ D'Adda 1878, 389 (29 November 1775): "Il Contino Trotti figlio del Conte Luigi, giunto qui con Monsignor Beretta, ha concluso il Matrimonio con la Figlia del Principe Ruspoli con 40 mila di scudi Romani di dote"; the following February 14 (p. 393) he informed his brother that "Questo Contino Trotti colla poca savia sua condotta si è reso qui la favola della Città. La Ragazza Ruspoli si è dichiarata di non volerlo, e già è entrata in Monastero dicendo che le ha inteso in bocca proposizioni scandalose, e da Ateo, come fra l'altre che il digiuno è una ipocrasia, e che in Milano non si digiuna, ed altri simili spropositi. Esso è deriso da tutti vedendolo ricusato da questa giovane, che non è bella, ed ha 23 anni: onde nelle Conversazioni non si parla d'altro, ed esso poco si vede fra li galantuomini trattando volentieri la canaglia."

⁵⁵ Brusa 2005, p. 103. On Pius and Leo, routinely paired in poetic encomia, see Collins, 2004, pp. 65-73 ("Il Secol de Leon" and "The Enlightened Connoisseur").

⁵⁶ D'Adda 1878, 401 (9 May 1778): "È giunto il Signor Conte [Romulato, later Cardinal] Oneste, Nipote di N.S., il quale ha avuti un'infinità di regali sontuosissimi [...] sin'ora però stà nel Palazzo, che abitava il Papa da Cardinale, e che sempre



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13 Antonio Capellan after Pompeo Batoni, *Pius VI with Views of his Construction Projects*, ca. 1780, etching (inv. FE120228), Rome, Istituto Nazionale per la Grafica

14 Coffeepot, sugar bowl, teacup and saucer, and teapot stand with the arms of Benedict XIV, ca. 1741-1743, Meissen porcelain, from the service presented to the pope in 1743, Bamberg, Historisches Museum, Ludwig Collection, no. 147



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nepotism) as a conscious rebuke of his predecessor: whereas the Franciscan Clement XIV “seemed desirous of distinguishing himself only by his simplicity,” Braschi, “on the contrary, possessed in his manners, in his taste, and in his exterior, every thing that was capable of impressing mankind with respect.” His rare Meissen clock announced the princely pretensions that would doom subsequent attempts at frugality to ridicule. Pius was trapped by his own image: to quote Bourgoing, “the sovereign pontiff, the vicar of Jesus Christ, was, as one of our modern poets say, *condemned to magnificence*.”⁵⁷

What is more, Pius made patronage of the arts and industries a pillar of his public image and public policy. Despite its modest scale, Braschi’s porcelain timepiece encoded this strategy as effectively as the new museum, sacristy, or re-erected obelisks that soon became his visual signature and sometimes replaced the clock in derivative prints (fig. 13). Ruspoli’s gift had other useful overtones: as a foreign import, it signaled Pius’s awareness of ultramontane innovations, while as a recent technological discovery that blended science with aesthetics, Saxony’s “white gold” signified modernity as well as refined sociability. And although Rome could not produce Meissen-style porcelain (despite Pius’s support of other ceramic media, including a biscuit-porcelain factory founded by Giovanni Volpato in the 1780s), it could and did consume it. Lists of wedding presents published in Rome’s weekly gazette make clear that porcelain watches, tobacco jars, beverage sets, snuff boxes, cane caps, inkstands, and occasional statuettes were favored gifts to mark noble unions, both to and from the couple.⁵⁸ Cardinal Neri Corsini displayed both porcelain and an imported French clock in his Roman *studiolo*, with more porcelain (and French furniture) in his personal library in Florence.⁵⁹ The Albani family, to whom Pius was culturally and politically linked, had longstanding ties to Dresden and received some of its more ambitious porcelain products. The factory’s first altar garniture was sent to Cardinal Annibale in 1736 in gratitude for brokering a concordat with Rome, and in 1743 the cardinal commissioned an extensive series of sacred busts, perhaps intended for St. Peter’s.⁶⁰

Popes were not immune from the porcelain bug, as exemplified by the lavish beverage service sent from Dresden to Benedict XIV for his new Quirinal coffee house in 1743 (fig. 14). Politically, the gift celebrated the Saxon court’s embrace of Catholicism, its tall coffeepot featuring the rising Hofkirche that marked a triumph of papal diplomacy.⁶¹ But as Christopher Johns has demonstrated, the very idea of a papal *caffeaus* was itself a concession to the times, a way for the pope to participate in this new secular ritual to the extent allowed by his office. Like the Meissen service, the *caffeaus* itself blended secular and sacred: women were often present to enliven the conversations, and even when not in use the pavilion displayed its porcelain on shelves below Batoni’s own *Christ Consigning the Keys to Peter*.⁶² Braschi came of age in Benedict XIV’s Rome, and his Meissen clock evokes a similar material culture of moderate enlightenment. Porcelain’s versatility was confirmed in the Saxon Elector’s 1774 gift to Pius’s predecessor of six candlesticks, six statues of saints, and a crucifix for Clement XIV’s private chapel, together with “a refined service” including bouillon cup, coffeepot, and accessories for chocolate for his sitting room – worthy thanks for the prized Levantine coffee, fifty *butirri*, and a hundred wheels of Parmesan the pope

ha ritenuto per suo conto magnificamente mobigliato.” See also [Bourgoing] 1799, 1:177, describing the pope’s tearful visit to the palace “to see the pictures, the furniture, and the rich tapestry of which he had deprived himself, in order to add to the luxury of his nephew.” Romualdo’s older brother Luigi arrived later that year to begin a rise that culminated with the dukedom on Nemi and Rome’s last, grandiose papal family palace wedged between piazza Navona and the *strada papalis*.

⁵⁷ [Bourgoing] 1799, 1:101, p. 125, referring especially to the pope’s 1781 trip to Vienna.

⁵⁸ For a helpful digest and overview see Santucci, esp. pt. 6, (1997), pp. 99-122, and pt. 7, (1997), pp. 273-300.

⁵⁹ Hyde Minor 2002, pp. 226-227, citing inventories of Palazzo Corsini and Corsini correspondence in the Archivio di Stato di Firenze.

⁶⁰ On the Albani gifts see Cassidy-Geiger 2007, esp. pp. 212-213, 218-222, 231-237.

⁶¹ Cassidy-Geiger 2007 pp. 230-231

⁶² For a full discussion see Johns’s forthcoming book *The Visual Culture of the Catholic Enlightenment: Papal Art in Eighteenth-Century Rome*. Compare Giovanni Paolo Panini’s festive image of the Coffee House in use in 1746, where the King of Naples approaches the pontiff seated in an inner room.

had sent to the Electress the previous year.⁶³ Pius himself received an innovative Meissen service that reflected his evolving neoclassical tastes, featuring “several candlesticks in the antique style, with two matching perfume burners that seem more like Greek than modern work.”⁶⁴ In 1777 Monsignor Spinelli honored the pope’s second anniversary with two gilded Meissen vases filled with the Neapolitan candies known as “big devils,” in a personalized tortoiseshell box. Even the pope’s relatives received Saxon porcelain appropriate for their stations: Pius’s uncle, the Bishop of Imola, received a Meissen coffee and chocolate service from Cardinal Paracciani and three Meissen vases from Monsignor Salvati; the pontiff’s sister, a nun, received a Meissen crucifix.⁶⁵

Porcelain was thus a favored medium of exchange in late eighteenth-century Rome, rich enough for a sovereign and capable of carrying multiple meanings. Pius VI’s Meissen showpiece functioned within this rarified arena, conveying in both its provenance and design Braschi’s vision of an enlightened, aristocratic, even royal papacy. The clock’s gesticulating Flora evokes at once a trumpeting Fame and a palm-bearing angel, while the painted *fête galante*, seemingly so at odds with pontifical imagery, captures the brilliant sociality of the Jubilee. It was precisely Meissen’s blend of cosmopolitan style, technical mastery, and a courtly sense of occasion that captivated Italians and made its products the ideal vehicle for what Maureen Cassidy-Geiger has termed Europe’s “fragile diplomacy.”

Telling the Time

Pius’s taste for splendor still does not explain why Ruspoli chose to give him a clock – perhaps a first in papal gifts – and why he had Batoni feature it for posterity. Vatican account books show that Braschi was serious about his timepieces, appointing an official palace clockmaker just months after his election to keep the entire collection in good repair. The new pope even went so far as to take every one of his clocks with him – including the favored gift from Ruspoli – during the annual summer move from the Vatican to the Quirinal.⁶⁶ Pius apparently kept collecting, and a later notice from his sojourn at the Quirinal in 1792 shows that he kept an “Orologgio Grande di Parigi di otto giorni” in the room where he wrote, another “Orologgio Grande da Tavolino nella stanza vicino al letto,” and a third “Orologgio Grande da Tavolino à ora è quarto che sta nel pasetto.(?)” A fourth “orologio sonante in

⁶³ Chracas, *Diario Ordinario*, no. 8570, 16 april 1774, pp. 15 ff (cited in Santucci 1995-1997, pt. 7, pp. 288-289): “Il sign. Co: Bianconi Ministro in questa Corte della Ser[enissima]ma Elettoral Casa di Sassonia,” presented Clement XIV in the name of the Elector with “un nobile regalo, per servizio della sua Cappella privata, consistente in sei Candelieri, con suoi contro lumi, Croce, e sei statue rappresentanti i Santi Apostoli Pietro, e Paolo, San Lorenzo Martire, S. Francesco d’Assisi, S. Antonio di Padova, e S. Giseppe da Cupertino, il tutto lavorato a bella posta per Sua Santità solamente, con ottimo gusto di fina porcellana di Sassonia, con suoi piedistalli dorati, parmenti di porcellana, con lo Stemma Pontificio. Inoltre un compito servizio, per la medesima Sant. Sua, pure di fina porcellana di Sassonia dorata in molte parti, consistente in tazza da brodo, Caffettiera con sue chicchere, anche per la cioccolata, ed altro, stato il tutto sommamente gradito da Nost. Sig. [...]” As with Benedict’s beverage set, the Elector sent an assistant in the person Johann Friedrich Otto, “Commissario della Fabrica,” who came to unpack and install the gift. For Clement’s gift to Saxony, see ASV, PA, Comp., vol. 910, *ristretto* for 24 March-4 April 1775, recording purchases made in 1772 and 1773.

⁶⁴ Chracas, *Diario Ordinario*, no. 132, 6 april 1776, p. 7 (cited in Santucci, pt. 7, p. 292), notes that on 30 march “Gio. Lodovico Bianconi Ministro presso la S. Sede di Sua A.S. Elettorale di Sassonia presentò a N. Sig. un completo servizio da tavola di porcellana filettata d’oro, a nome della Reale Elettrice Vedova, il quale ebbe la sorte di essere sommamente gradito da Sua Santità. Fra gli altri pezzi spiccano particolarmente alcuni Candelieri fatti all’antica, e due Profumiere simili, che sembrano opera piuttosto Greca, che moderna.”

⁶⁵ For the presents to the pope see Chracas, *Diario Ordinario*, no. 224, 22 February 1777, p. 4, cited in Santucci, pt. 7, p. 293; for those to Pius’s uncle Giancarlo Bandi, newly appointed cardinal, see Chracas, *Diario Ordinario*, no. 92 of 18 November 1775, p. 24, cited in Santucci, pt. 7, p. 292; for the crucifix see Santucci, pt. 6 (as above, for 1781), 116.

⁶⁶ Ravaglia had been appointed on August 15, 1775 to repair and maintain all the clocks in the papal apartments at a salary of 80 scudi per year (ASV, PA, Comp., vol. 912, *ristretto* of 27 August-13 September 1776, f. 214 ff, bill #2). On June 30, 1776, six weeks after the clock returned from Batoni, “Sig.re Giuseppe Orloggiaro di Palazzo” was paid an extra 1:60 to transport “tutti li Orloggi di N. S. dal Vaticano à Montecavallo” (Computisteria, vol. 912, *ristretto* 12-15 July 1776, bill #3, “Lista di spese fatte dà Francesco Forti facchin di Cammera di N. S. per servizio del Sagro Palazzo Apostolico, e di Sua Santità, dal Primo Gennaro 1776 à tutto Giugno detto Anno”).



15

15 Guidubaldo Abbatini (attr.), *Portrait of Alexander VII*, ca. 1655-56, oil on canvas, 134 x 95 cm., Rome, private collection

una porcellana che non voleva suonare né camminare” – quite possibly the Meissen model fallen on hard times – was thoroughly dismantled and repaired to perfect order.⁶⁷ In horological enthusiasm Pius seemed to rival Alexander VII, an insomniac who first commissioned the silent, nocturnal model with a novel mercury mechanism and hidden lamp that became the rage in seventeenth-century Rome. But when it came to invoking Time in Guidubaldo Abbatini’s arresting portrait (fig. 15), apparently begun like Batoni’s in the year of his election, Chigi preferred to clutch a skull much like the marble *memento mori* Bernini carved for the pope’s desk as a reminder of human vanity.⁶⁸ Pius’s clock,

⁶⁷ ASV, PA, Comp., v. 437 [*mandati* from the maggiordomo to the treasurer, Sept.-Dec. 1792], bill #326 from Giuseppe Ravaglia for “Lavori fatti ad uso di Orologgiaro Per Servizio delli Sacri Palazzi Apostolici.”

⁶⁸ Walker, Hammond 1999, cat. 62; *Misura*, 201 ff. For the portrait (Rome, private collection), attributed to Abbatini by Francesco Petrucci, see Petrucci 2005, pp. 84-85.

by contrast, seems a celebration of statecraft, part of his bid to be seen as a serious sovereign on a par with his Bourbon and Habsburg peers. As a token of monarchy it joins not just the royal portraits-with-timepiece but the lavish chinoiserie clock made at Meissen for Augustus II's birthday in 1727 and redirected to Russia the following year, or the costly hardstone-mounted clock in the form of Trajan's column that Pius himself presented in 1782 to the visiting Russian Grand Duke and Duchess.⁶⁹ To understand its place in Braschi's state portrait we must revisit both the context of his election and the type of new beginning the pontiff wished to mark.

In some ways time was not on Pius's side in 1775, as the Church was increasingly threatened with hostility from without and the threat of schism from within. Clement XIV's unexpected death (perhaps by poisoning) after dissolving the Jesuit order had left a system in crisis. One inside observer wrote upon Ganganelli's death that so many posts were vacant that "the Sacred College had to elect a temporary governor so that someone would be in charge of Rome while they were in the Conclave. For ages we've been without a governor, without a secretary of the Consulta, without a secretary of bishops, without a secretary of the council, without a secretary of indulgences [...]."⁷⁰ Braschi understood the problem and immediately set about to bring order to scrambled finances, filling vacant posts and prosecuting the former prefect of the Annona for embezzlement. Access was a key issue. Clement had been virtually unreachable in his final days, whereas Pius determined to be available both to his ministers and his subjects. Again breaking with the past, he promised to consult his cardinals

in all affairs of state. This was recommending himself at the expense of his predecessor, who had been singularly sparing of his confidence. His whole conduct bespoke him humane, easy of access, laborious, and temperate. In a word, his *début* gained him almost every heart.⁷¹

For all the reasons we have seen, Prince Ruspoli's clock encapsulated the blend of industry and innovation key to Braschi's new persona. Even critical observers admitted that as treasurer "he was remarkable for his constant application to business, for his contempt of worldly pleasures, and for the regularity of his his conduct; which procured him general esteem." Pius redoubled that dedication as pope, to the point of confirming fears that he was "too enterprising" for his own good.⁷² As Todeschi had written of Valenti Gonzaga, "In executing his high duties he recognized neither night nor day, allowing only the business of public administration any claim on his time."⁷³ The new pontiff was, in modern terms, a workaholic.

Several years ago I proposed that Batoni's clock be read more specifically in light of reports about the pope's late hours, an interpretation seconded by Bowron and Kerber.⁷⁴ I can now add a virtual

⁶⁹ Liachkova 2007, pp. 66-67 and fig. 4.8, with chinoiserie painting and sculptured putti. On the column-clock see [Bourgoing] 1799, 1:54; Collins 2004, pp. 55-56, with further bibliography.

⁷⁰ D'Adda 1878, 373 (8 October 1774): "Qui siamo con tutte le Cariche vacanti, di modo che il Sagro Collegio ha dovuto elegere un Pro-Governatore, acciò andando in Conclave li Cardinali ci fosse chi presiedesse à Roma, giacchè siamo da tanto tempo senza Governatore, senza Segretario di Consulta, senza Segretario de' Vescovi, senza Segretario del Concilio, senza Segretario dell'Indulgenze, e molti Governi dello Stato senza Governatore, e molti Vescovati senza Vescovo, di modo che il Papa novo dal primo giorno può fare una Promozione piena, e può provvedere anche di piatto li Cardinali che farà colli beni di Chiesa vacanti." For an overview of the historical situation see Collins 2004, ch. 1 ("Politics and Possibilities").

⁷¹ [Bourgoing] 1799, 1:28.

⁷² *Ibidem*, 1:107 and 10, citing a generally favorable assessment by Cardinal Berni written before Braschi's election. Compare 109, where Bourgoing (by no means a sympathetic observer) noted that as pope "Pius VI. divided all his time between his religious duties, his closet, and the library of the Vatican. He went out very seldom, and never without company. He had no taste for a country residence, nor even for those innocent amusements which the gravest men allow themselves as a relaxation after their labours [...]. Constantly taken up with serious occupations, or the duties of his office, he avoided, instead of seeking, the society of women."

⁷³ [Todeschi], *Elogio*, 55: "Egli non conosceva già punto a riguardo dell'alte sue cure la distinzione della notte, e del giorno, e gli affari soli della pubblica amministrazione avevano il dritto di dispor del suo tempo." Although Todeschi lauds Valenti's diligence, he feared that overwork hastened his death.

⁷⁴ Collins 2004, pp. 32-36; Bowron, Kerber 2007, p. 116.

smoking gun to the scene in the form of a letter from Giorgio d'Adda to his brother in Milan just three weeks after Braschi's election:

The Holy Father holds his audience from 8 in the morning until 3:30 in the afternoon, and again from 6:30 in the evening until 1:30 in the morning, after which he goes to bed at 3. Thus it happened that one night at 2 a.m. he sat down with his Breviary to recite the Divine Office, but was so exhausted that he fell asleep in his chair, where a servant found him sleeping two hours later, Breviary fallen to the floor. He's tireless, and keeps everyone on their toes. Several new fiscal measures have already been instituted [...].⁷⁵

When we turn back to the portrait, we understand that it's not just the clock but the hour that is significant. Although I've modernized the times in this citation, in eighteenth-century Rome the day began at the Ave Maria just after sunset and varied with the seasons. Batoni's 8:00 was equivalent to 2:00 a.m. in March when d'Adda was writing, and again in October when the picture was begun.⁷⁶ Thus, according to d'Adda's report of the pope's timetable, "8:00" was precisely the early-morning hour at which Pius was finally ending his second shift.

What is more, Braschi's punishing schedule was the immediate talk of Rome and remained a mark of distinction; Francesco Milizia confirmed in early April that the pontiff did not cease work until 8:00 or 9:00, by then equivalent to 3 or 4:00 a.m. With this single detail Batoni thus gives a new slant to his inherited and rather stultified papal portrait type: it's late at night, and we have spotted the tireless but cheerful young pontiff in his study, either still hearing petitions, saying matins, or preparing for the next day's work. In this sense the portrait is an exact precursor of Jacques-Louis David's famous image of Napoleon in his study, toiling while his subjects sleep (fig. 16). As David explained. "I captured him at the most habitual moment of his life, that is, at work; he is in his study, having spent the night drafting his Napoleonic Code. He only realizes it is dawn from the dying candles and from the clock that has just rung 4:00 a.m. He then rises from his desk to strap on his sword and go review the troops." The emperor appreciated this homage: "You have understood me, my dear David; in the night I am occupied with the happiness of my subjects and during the day I work for their glory."⁷⁷ Pius did not go quite so far, but he did weigh in with an unpublished sonnet lamenting his busy life. Entitled "Why I have not replied to the Poetess's Rhymes," it goes something like this:

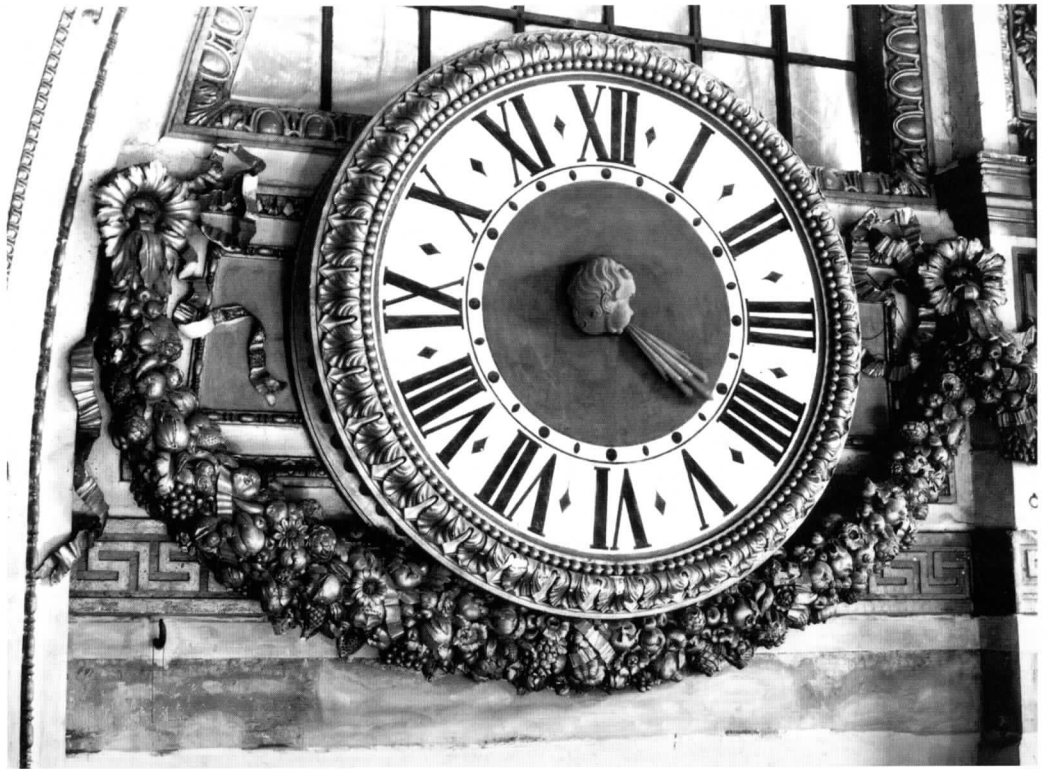
If I had time for verses, as I wished,
By instinct or by art, I would have called
Melpomene, Thalia, or beloved
Clio for inspiration. As it is
Tedious papers partly mark my hours:
Many I devote to thoughts of God,
Others to shepherding affairs of state,
While others melt away in interruptions.
You see that I'm not fit for writing rhymes,
Yet still, deep in my heart, I nourish thoughts
Both more profitable and more sublime:

⁷⁵ D'Adda 1878, 379: "Fratello Carissimo / Roma, li 8 Marzo 1775. / Seguita il Santo Padre le sue Udienze la mattina dalle 14 alle 21 e mezza, e la sera dalla mezz'ora di notte sino alle 7 e mezza, e va à letto alle 9; essendo seguito una notte che per dire l'offizio per il giorno dopo si pose alle 8 hore con il Breviario in mano, mà dalla stanchezza si addormentò sopra la Sedia, e dopo 2 hore entrando un Cameriere lo trovò dormendo, e col Breviario caduto per terra. Esso è indefesso, e tien tutti in esercizio. Già si sono dati varii provvedimenti [...]."

⁷⁶ Talbot 1985, pp. 51-62, notes that sunset was traditionally timed at 23:30 so that the new day began with the *Ave Maria* or *Angelus*, when one could no longer read without illumination. The challenge was to determine the moment of sunset, not always easy, and to agree how often clocks would be reset, an interval that ranged from four days in Venice to two weeks in other areas.

⁷⁷ *Jacques-Louis David, 1748-1825* (Réunion des musées nationaux, Paris 1989), 476 (cat. 206), citing the artist's letter of 8 May 1812; Roberts 1989, p. 172.





17

16 Jacques-Louis David, *Portrait of Napoleon in His Study*, 1812, oil on canvas, 204 x 125 cm. (inv. 1374), Washington, D.C., National Gallery of Art

17 Orologio "alla francese," designed by Luigi and Giuseppe Valadier for the counterfaçade of St. Peter's, executed 1787-1790 by stuccoists Antonio Galli and Giovanni Rusca, with mechanism by Raffaele Fiorilli

Thus, this once, I'll happily lose an hour
 Answering your song with my low strains,
 And hoping you'll forgive my long delay.⁷⁸

To summarize, in portraying Pius VI Batoni knew his time in more ways than one. While honoring convention and invoking an attribute of both princes and bishops, the painter helped a papal night-owl showcase his modern taste and demonstrate his public spirit. The gesture is not unlike the four huge clocks his sitter would add to St. Peter's itself: two outside so visitors could mark the time till Mass, and two inside (fig. 17), their hands artfully replaced with the Braschi Boreas puffing on the hours, so priests and worshippers could keep one eye on the clock. In each pair one showed *l'ora italiana* and the other *l'ora francese*, for the convenience of tourists. But Pius's motivation was not just solicitude for foreigners. Time itself was politicized in eighteenth-century Italy, and by 1780 Rome was among the last polities to resist the French system that astronomers like Antonio Cagnoli defended as an eminently practical innovation, but which Jesuits like Giulio Cesare Cordara opposed as a violation of tradition, a foreign imposition, an obstacle to crepuscular meditation, and a disruption of god's natural order.⁷⁹ In this polemical context, the pontiff's choice to signal Italian hours on a French-style Saxon clock

⁷⁸ Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana, Autografi Ferraioli, Raccolta Ferraioli #1945, catalogued as autograph of Pius VI: "La causa, p[er] cui non si è / risposto alle Rime / della Poetessa // Sonetto // Se il tempo avessi, o p[er] natura od arte / # ~~tempo avessi~~ / a far versi; come era il mio desio: / Melpomene, Talia, o l'Alma Clío / avrei chiamato in mio aiuto in parte / Misuran l'ore le noiose carte / molte ne desto col pensiero a Dio / altre a pensare sullo stato mio; / altre p[er] Altri son diffuse e sparte / Sicchè vedete, che a comporre rime / atto non sono; ma nutrisco ancora [below: ~~e non avessi~~] / pensiero più proficuo, e più sublime: / Questa sol volta p[er]dero quest'ora; / rispondo a vostri versi a [above: con] voci ime; / e p[er]donate la mia lunga mora."

⁷⁹ Talbot 1985. Attempts to shift systems often encountered resistance: Tuscany converted by 1750, despite popular discontent, while Genoa's change in 1772 was fiercely resisted by the clergy. In Piedmont the court adopted the French system before 1780, although the people refused; Lombardy changed smoothly in 1786, but Bologna resisted until the French invasion of 1796.

was akin to the basilica's dual timezones – at once progressive and reassuring. Knowing his time and his audience, Pius VI preferred to temporize.

For his part, Batoni knew his hour had come with accession of a pope who esteemed his art so highly. Although his thoroughly successful portrait did not produce further papal commissions, Pius offered Batoni something just as precious: his visible seal of approval. Besides slapped backs and boxed ears, Braschi made a point of commanding his friend to bring important pictures brought to his palace for inspection, and of visiting the painter in person when the canvases were too large to move. On more than one occasion the pope “heaped him with praise and honor” during long, intimate conversations that left the painter overjoyed.⁸⁰ Thus, we learn from Puhlmann that a happy and talkative Pius VI came on foot to Batoni's studio on the afternoon of October 15, 1781, to see Lisbon's huge altarpiece of the Sacred Heart, a cult he himself had sanctioned.⁸¹ After allowing the aging and overweight artist to kiss his hand rather than his foot in full public view, the pontiff stayed a full hour studying every one of his paintings and laughing with the servants over the antics of diapered children. On his way out, the streets were so crowded with onlookers that the pope's private guard had to clear a path. In Rome's competitive art market, such favor was as good as gold. Batoni had given Pius his official image; now it was Pius's time to do the same.

⁸⁰ Puhlmann (1979, p. 146, describing a trip to the Vatican on 13 February 1778 to show Pius a *Holy Family* and the *Peace and War*): “Batoni habe ich niemal vergnügter gesehn als er vom Papst zurückkam, der ihn mit Lob und Ehre überhäuft und sich 5 Viertelstunden mit ihm unterhalten.”

⁸¹ Puhlmann (1979, p. 168) described the visit in a letter to his parents of 31 October, noting his hope to sell some of his work to the Russian grand duke and duchess, expected in Rome early the next year. “Hätte ich die beiden Stücke hier gehabt, so hätte ich sie dem Papst auch zeigen können, denn er kam den 15. dieses Monats bei Batoni, um das grosse Altarblatt vor Portugal zu besehn, 2 Stunden nachmittags. Er hielt sich eine ganze Stunde auf, hat alle Gemälde von Batoni gesehn und auch die meinigen. Batoni sagte ihm, wie er meine Skizzen von der grossen Bildern besah, dass ich sie in Lebensgrösse gemalt. “So” sagte er, “ich hätte sie wohl sehen mögen.” Er war sehr aufgeräumt und gesprächig, liess alle Weibslente von Batoni zum Fusskuss. Er kam zu Fuss (er liess es in der Früh Batoni sagen), von seinem Vetter und 3 Cavalier gegleitet un seiner Garde du Corps zu Fuss. Batoni ging ihm auf der Strasse entgegen und wollte ihm den Fuss küssen, er erlaubte es aber nicht, sondern gab ihm die Hand zu küssen. Wie er wegging, so war die Strasse voller Menschen, seine Garde machte ihm Platz. Wie er aber aus dem Hause trat, so wurf sich ihm eine Frau zu Füssen, um ihr Kind, was sie in Windeln trug, ihm den Fuss küssen zu lassen. Der Papst lachte und gab ihr obendrauf noch seinen Segen.” Compare Chracas, *Diario Ordinario*, no. 710, 20 Oct. 1781 (cited in Bowron, Kerber 2007, p. 199, n. 15), reporting that the pope “andò allo studio di Pittura del celebre s. cav. Pompeo de Battoni ove si trattenne circa un'ora in osservare minutamente l'eccellente pitture fatte dal detto cavaliere ma più in particolare volle osservare il quadro rappresentante il SS.mo Cuore di Gesù ordinato da S. Maestà Fedelissima per esser posto nel Monastero che la M. S. ha fatto erigere a proprie spese nella città di Lisbona.”