Pompeii and its places of segregation — an early tourist attraction?

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Every year, hundreds of thousands of tourists flood Italy. Even if they are not primarily interested in cultural history or archaeology, they cannot escape the manifold testimonies of the ancient world, which had its heyday here 2000 years ago. These testimonies are not hidden in museums but, as Bob Dylan observed when he walked the streets of Rome in the sixties of the 20th century: "Ancient footprints are everywhere".[1] This is not only true of Rome. Exciting archaeological sites show up everywhere in the countryside, such as Pompeii and Herculaneum, two of the most impressive excavations in Italy to the present day. The immense fund of artefacts that are provided by these ancient cities will be the material for some observations and short considerations on the different roles that ancient artefacts play for owners, scientists, exhibition designers, and visitors through the centuries.[2]

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1 "Oh, the streets of Rome are filled with rubble / Ancient footprints are everywhere" are the opening lines of the song "When I Paint My Masterpiece", written by Bob Dylan, first released on the album "Cahoots" (1971) by The Band. A lot has been written on Dylan and the classics, e.g. Richard 2011.

2 The following remarks focus on travellers who left travel descriptions in German.

The Ancient World

Interest in the ancient Greek and Roman world had been sparked by its philosophical, artistic, and literary heritage during the Renaissance and solidified in subsequent centuries (Furlotti 2019). Antiquarian pleasure of collecting and exhibiting ancient works of art and the intensive occupation with ancient texts were developed into scientific studies at universities, which are still integral part of curricula today, such as History, Classical Philology, and Archaeology. In many ways, antiquity provided an imaginary space for the formation of a then contemporary identity. This was a pan-European phenomenon, centred at but not confined to universities. This interest in antiquity was primarily focused on Greek and Roman culture, respectively their philosophical, literary, and archaeological heritage. Although Greece played an important role in antiquity, it was Italy that became the central point of interest for travellers, especially for those who made the Grand Tour.[3] The main attractions there were Venice, Florence and Rome. And at the end of the 18th and in the 19th century a new destination in the south was added: *Napoli e dintorni*.

Making the Grand Tour was considered an integral part in young people's education, and when heading for Italy, travelers were searching for the 'noble' antiquity and the pure beauty associated with it there—they were influenced by the writings of Johann Joachim Winckelmann, as well as Jane Austen's Portrait of a Lady, among others.

The virtual, imagined antiquity was present in many minds, due to education in school and the lines of tradition in theology and philosophy. This idealized antiquity also served as a kind of role model, even lead to the adoption of political ideas, like democracy, as can be seen in the American Constitution.

Many travelers were in search of this antiquity, which they hoped to come close to by autopsy—a concept also inspired by ancient authors, especially historians, like Herodotus and Thucydides who critically discussed the problem of eyewitnesses, especially in terms of the possibilities and uncertainties of witness memory. However, imagination and reality diverged in many respects on the Grand Tour: What they found, often were not beautiful ancient temples and artefacts they had in mind but disappointing excavation sites, where

3 For the Grand Tour in general cf. Black 2003; Brilli 1997; for routes and destinations cf. Black 2003, 12-82, he lists France, Switzerland, Italy, the Low Countries, Germany, Balkans, Turkish Empire, Russia, Scandinavia, Poland, Spain, and Portugal. For travelling in Italy cf. Brilli 1989.

hardly anything could be seen and, furthermore, they had to experience catastrophic hygienic conditions in accommodations (Baum 2018, 30-47).

But Naples and the excavations of Pompeii and Herculaneum were interesting in many respects anyway. On the one hand, the active volcano offered a fascinating natural spectacle. There are descriptions in travel journals, and many pictures were painted and spread via different media, some of them showing visitors of both sexes observing enormous eruptions of Vesuvius (**fig. 1**).[4]

1 Night view of eruption of Mt. Vesuvius, 11th May 1771. Sir William Hamilton: *Campi Phlegraei. Observations on the Volcanoes of the Two Sicilies. As They have been communicated to the Royal Society of London. By Sir William Hamilton K. B. F. R. S. His Britannic Majesty's Envoy extraordinary, and Plenipotentiary At the Court of Naples To which, in Order to convey the most precise idea of each remark, a new and accurate Map is annexed, with 54 Plates illuminated, from Drawings taken and colour'd after Nature, under the inspection of the Author, by the Editor M. Peter Fabris.* Naples, 1776, Plate XXXVIII. https://de.wikipedia.org/wiki/Vesuv#/media/Datei:Vesuv_-_Hamilton.jpg. Public domain.

4 The Vesuvius eruptions of 1766-1767, 1773-1774 and 1779 were painted by artists like Jakob Philipp Hackert, *Vesuvausbrauch im Jahr 1774*, Museumslandschaft Hessen Kassel, Inventory number 1875/1629, https://altemeister.museum-kassel.de/28398/ or Sir William Hamilton (1776) Plate VI: Eruption on Mt. Vesuvius [20th October 1767]; Plate IX: Crater of Mt. Vesuvius [1776]; Plate XXXVIII: Night view of eruption of Mt. Vesuvius [11th May 1771]. Sir Wiliam Hamiliton descripes the picture on Plate XXXVIII with the following words: "A Night view of a current of lava, that ran from Mount Vesuvius towards Resina, the 11th of May 1771. When the Author had the honour of conducting Their Sicilian Majesties to fee that curious phenomenon".

The probably best-known eruption of the volcano was in 79 AD; after this eruption, the ancient cities on the Gulf of Naples, like Herculaneum, Stabiae, Oplontis and Pompeii were buried under the volcanic ashes and were forgotten over time but remained largely preserved. It became a topic in ancient and modern literature, it was used as the background of novels' narratives as well as an example for moralistic considerations. The source for most of the modern writings were two letters of Pliny the Younger, an eyewitness of the eruption from Misenum, a town near Pompeii; he gave a vivid description of the outbreak and the consequences for the towns and the surroundings as well as of his uncle's death who was trying to get close to the volcano, for scientific interests but also because a friend had asked for help.[5] The most famous novel on this topic, making the knowledge of this eruption a common knowledge, is *The Last Days of Pompeii*, written by Edward Bulwer-Lytton in 1834 (Clair & Bautz 2012, 52-59).

The knowledge of Pompeii thus was a conglomerate of traces that could be found in ancient literature, mixed up with contemporary art and of the remains throughout Italy that were still visible and the number of which was continuously enlarged by excavations. These sources as well as the activities concerned with them are highly influenced by imagination, and even the artefacts, often regarded as hard facts, do not speak a language that is telling just the truth.

The Excavations

At the suggestion of King Charles III of Bourbon the excavations of Herculaneum and Pompeii were started in 1738 and 1748 respectively (Parslow 1995). His primary interest was to recover ancient treasures—works of art like marble statues, bronzes and frescoes. These treasures were intended to increase his collection of antiquities on the one hand and to heighten his prestige on the other. The political significance of the excavation is expressed in the frontispiece of the first volume dedicated to the king, "La Antichità di Ercolano esposte", the first official publication by Ottavio Antonio Bayardi.[6] Here the necessary excavation equipment is shown on an equal footing with weapons

5 Pliny the Younger, *Letters* 6.16 and 6.20. For more ancient voices on the eruption and its aftermath cf. Cooley and Cooley 2014, 43-47.

6 Allroggen-Bedel 1996, 22 emphasises "dass die Entdeckungen eine zentrale Ressource für Ideologie, Prestige und später auch für die Ökonomie des Landes bildeten". Cf. Gordon 2007, 38.

and flags.[7] So, it is no surprise that the excavations were declared a state secret.[8] No one was allowed to publish, sell or draw the discoveries—it was the king who had the monopoly on the knowledge. For visiting the excavation sites a royal permission was required (Gordon 2007, 40; Reinsberg 2012, 13-14; Grant 1975, 76, 168; Blix 2009, 11; Ciardiello 2012, 47).

Reports and experiences of the first visitors

Johann Caspar Goethe, the father of the prince of poets Johann Wolfgang Goethe, reports from his trip to Herculaneum in 1740 that he and his companions had to identify themselves and were escorted through the excavation by a guard. But he also reports that he was able to view the finds in the castle of Portici (Goethe 1999, 201, 204-205). This is where the valuable pieces that came to light were brought to and kept there since 1738.[9] But they were not allowed to make drawings of the finds (Gordon 2007, 40). Johann Caspar Goethe's notes show that there were people who even doubted the excavations. However, these doubts were obviously dispelled relatively soon. There are a number of enthusiastic "exclamations" from the scholarly world (e.g. Bianconi 1749, 728; de Tubières 1756, IV) with the associated desire to learn more about these excavations and the finds.[10]

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7 Bayardi 1757a; www.accademiaercolanese.it/le-antichita-di-ercolano-esposte/. Ottavio Antonio Bayardi was commissioned to catalogue and publish the finds in 1747. In 1752, "Prodromo delle Antichità di Ercolano" appeared. The publication of the five volumes caused a scandal, as Bayardi hardly dealt with the current excavations on 2677 pages. Mattusch 2005, 65-66, Lagger 2022, 182. Bayardi's catalogue, published in 1754, contains only 6 illustrations.

8 The excavations financed by the king were an "Affare di Stato" (affair of the state). The king had declared the finds to be his personal property. Theft was severely punished. Cf. von Hase 2013, 216.

9 Horace Walpole, who made the excavations of Herculaneum kown in England, noted the following: "They have found among other things some fine statues, some human bones, some nice medals, and a few paintings extremely fine. These latter are preferred to all the ancient paintings that have ever been discoverd. We have not seen them yet, as they are kept in the King's apartment, whither all these curiosities are transplanted; and 'tis difficult to see them – but we shall […] There might certainly be collected great light from this reservoir of antiquities, if a man of learning had the inspection of it; if he directed the working, and would make a journal of the discoveries. But I believe there is no judicious choice made of directors" (Walpole 1926, 18 [To Richard West, Naples, June 14, 1740]).

10 There were official letters of congratulations (cf. Pisani 2012, 22), but people such as James Russel, for example, published also letters expressing frustration with the king's

What came to light out of lava and ash in Pompeii and Herculaneum was not the shiny white antique of statues and temples, but everyday life with all its facets. And most of it was something completely new to the audience. Besides the remains of walls, statues and frescoes even people were found—or rather the cavities of these people who had been surprised by the volcanic eruption while trying to get away. They had travel provisions, valuables, and money with them. Food like bread and fruit was found petrified—it was the testimony of an extraordinary experience on the one hand, and an insight into everyday life of the Romans in Pompeii on the other. And this was not the white, radiant antiquity that one maybe had in mind that was found but the banality of life, like graffiti on house walls—election advertisements, insults, crude sayings—, alongside with erotic motifs on everyday objects such as oil lamps or even brothels with explicit erotic motifs.[11]

The excavators were confronted not only with testimonies of "high" culture, like temples, theaters and statues in white marble, but also with an antiquity where sex—then seen as a dark and morally reprehensible power—seems to have played a major role. This other side of the ancient world was of course known to readers of Juvenal, Martial, and Petronius or Catullus in the original Latin. They were familiar with the explicit descriptions of sexual acts. But: Respective passages in the ancient authors were often erased until the 20th century. In the famous Loeb edition,[12] many epigrams of Martial or poems of Catullus were left out or not translated and printed just in the original Latin (Roberts 2015, 310-346; Broder 2015, 301 footnote 4, 302 footnote 5).[13] This was a consequence of an idealized image of antiquity, used as a role model in art, philosophy, science, and morals for a long time.

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restrictions (Gordon 2007, 42-43). Johann Joachim Winckelmann (1952, 352) also complained in a letter to Graf Bünau in 1758 that he could not take a step without an attendant beside him.

11 Pagano and Prisciandaro 2006 has compiled all the finds from Herculaneum and Pompeii chronologically.

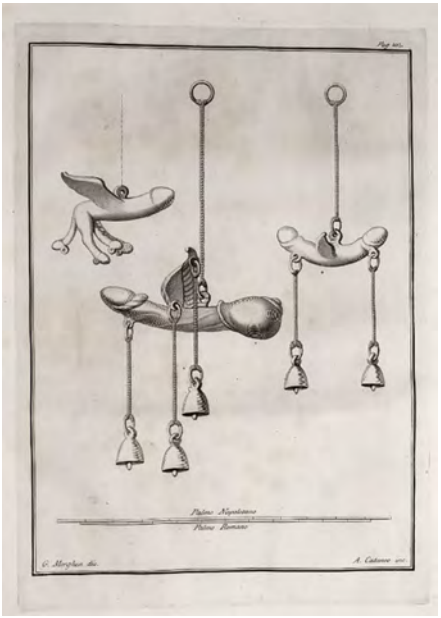
12 E.g. Catullus 1913.

13 Ugolino Pisani (1405-1445) wrote: "Juvenal, Persius, Martial, and others should not be publicly read and taught, but kept for private study—so that knowledge can be increased without contaminating young men." (quoted after Enders 2000, 323). In the English translation published several times in the second half of the 19th century in Bohn's Classical Library of Martial, relevant passages are translated into Italian: *The Epigrams of Martial Translated into English Prose*. London, 1897.

Now the excavators were facing a dilemma: Many of the finds were contradictory to the image and myth of the proverbial austere and moral greatness of the Romans.

State secret – going public

As a consequence, the discovery of Herculaneum and Pompeii lead to a spread of knowledge about Roman art and culture north of the Alps in the course of the 18th century, although not immediately after the excavations had begun. It was to be years, before a larger number of the interested professional community and travellers on the Grand Tour were given the opportunity to visit the ancient sites of Pompeii and Herculaneum and to study the finds. The royal monopoly over the finds also extended to the dissemination of the finds via prints as well as the scientific evaluation and publication. The king himself wanted the noble world to know about the amazing excavations.[14] The material was illustrated in beautiful engravings in the king's official publications *Le Antichità di Ercolano* (8 vols, 1757-1792). The eight splendid volumes—originally 40 had been planned—also contained descriptions and engravings of the explicit sexual material (**fig. 2**, Ciardiello 2012, 48-49; Mattusch 2013, 35-36; Blix 2009, 12).



2 *Delle Antichita di Ercolano. Tomo Sesto. O Sia Secondo de' Bronzi: De' bronzi di Ercolano e contorni incisi con qualche spiegazione, Tomo secondo. Statue.* Napoli: nella Regia Stamperia, *1771, 403.* Fondo Antiguo de la Biblioteca de la Universidad de Sevilla. https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Delle_antichit%C3%A0_di_Ercolano,_1757-1779_(T._I-VII)_60430_(23793901671).jpg. CC-BY-2.0.

These volumes were not available for purchase but were given away by the king himself to European courts and nobles. Due to the private gift distribution of the magnificent volumes, many

14 In 1755, under the presidency of the Minister of State, Marchese Bernardo Tanucci, the "Reale Accademia Ercolanense di Archeologia" was founded.

interested persons were excluded from the transfer of knowledge. It even was not easy for Johann Joachim Winckelmann to come into possession of the volumes.[15] This policy naturally fuelled interest, the demand for the magnificent volumes must have been enormous—thus the ambassador of the King of Naples, Abbé Galiani, complains in a letter to the minister Tanucci that he considers it the greatest punishment of God to have left for Paris without permission to buy the book. So, he asks Tanucci.[16]

The purpose of the publications was to put the king's finds in the spotlight—the primary aim was not research, but to gain prestige. It was not the text of these volumes but above all the illustrations—which also contained erotic material—that caused a sensation, especially in Germany and France.[17]

This royal monopoly did not correspond to the exchange of ideas between scholars as it was usually cultivated in the 18th century, and so there are repeated complaints and even derisive remarks about the texts in the magnificent volumes.[18]

But already from 1740 onwards, information leaked out (Gordon 2007, 44; Ciardiello 2012, 48). The great interest in the excavations and their finds in Europe was satisfied by communications in letters and unauthorised publications—what these publications did not contain was pictorial material (Gori 1748; de Venuti 1748; Fordyce 1750; Gordon 2007, 44-45). But very soon not authorised drawings were made in Pompeii and Herculaneum—despite the ban on drawing. For example, the notebook of Jérôme Charles Bellicard (**fig. 3**, Bellicard 1750-1751; Gordon 1990, 49-142).

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15 Winckelmann was able to consult the first two volumes through his good connections in Rome. On his fourth trip to Naples, he received the fifth volume from Tanucci. Cf. Moormann 2017, 170. For Horace Walpole, his friend Sir Horace Mann intervened. After 10 years, his interventions were successful.

16 See the print of the letter in Allroggen-Bedel 1990, 28.

17 In a letter to Tanucci, Abbé Galiani suggested that the volumes of *La Antichità* be translated into English and French. The craftsmen would need them as templates, cf. Allroggen-Bendl 1990, 244. On the influence of the finds from Pompeii and Herculaneum on art and decoration in the late 18th century, see for example Ciardiello 2012, 50f. with further examples; Ramage 2013, 161-176; Bologna 1990, 79-91.

18 One of the earliest critics was Camillo Paderni, cf. Roberts 2015, 68-73; Parslow 33.

3 Sketches from the Notebook. *Jérôme Charles Bellicard. 1750–1751. Notebook with Views of the Excavations at Herculaneum and of Other Italian Cities, 1750–1751*, 8. https://www.metmuseum.org/art/collection/search/343408. Public domain.

He and Charles-Nicolas Cochin obviously had access to excavation plans and the finds—perhaps they had helpers on the site—so they were able to make a lot of plans and drawings (Gordon 2007, 47-48). Their notes appeared in three English and three French editions, including descriptions and illustrations of the explicit sexual material (Bellicard 1753; Cochin & Bellicard 1757)[19]. That is, through these publications, the finds and the excavations were quickly known among Europe and the travellers to Italy.[20] Handling these erotic artifacts captured the imagination of travellers and increased their interest in ancient objects and the excavations.

Now people knew about the finds and excavations, but for visiting the museum in Portici one needed a permit. These arrangements have certainly also helped to spur interest and curiosity. Johann Joachim Winckelmann (1717-1768), the founder of scientific archaeology and art history, reports he received permission to visit the museum. But he also reports that he only was allowed to see the erotic paintings after he had acquired "die Vertraulichkeit des Aufsehers" (Winckelmann 1762, 34). He did not see *Pan with the goat*, which was discovered in 1752 in the Villa dei Papyri in Herculaneum. It was kept secret in the house of the royal restorer Giuseppe Canart: "die Figur aber wird niemanden, als auf eigenhändigen Befehl des Königs, gezeiget, und diesen hat noch niemand gesuchet, folglich wollte ich nicht der erste seyn" (*Ibidem*, 34).

19 The publications are listed in Gordon 2007, 56 footnote 55.

20 Jean Claude Richard de Saint-Non (1727-1791), who published five volumes on his travels to Sicily between 1781-1786, was even given official permission to make engravings of the "secret finds". However, readers did not see everything. Some of the pieces illustrated with engravings in the official splendid volumes were provided with a fig leaf, cf. de Saint Non 1782, 40.

Winckelmann (1762, 34) decisively points out that he simply does not believe that Englishmen have seen this figure, as they claim. In the 1760s, however, access to it must have been given to Joseph Nollekens, who then made a small terracotta statuette of it from memory, which is now in the British Museum,[21] as well as Dominique-Vivant Denon, Napoleon's Ministre des arts, who made a drawing of it.[22]

The regimentation of the visit occasionally also acted as a special incentive. The barrier of royal permission lent the exhibits with erotic content the aura of mystery. They became a special travel attraction that created a heightened sense of expectation (Lagger 2021, 238-239). The theologian and orientalist Jakob Georg Christian Adler therefore writes in his travel notes (1784):

> In einem Privathause eines der Aufseher steht noch eine Statue, die ohne besondre königliche Erlaubniß niemandem gezeigt werden darf. Wir erhielten die Erlaubniß, an der uns sehr viel gelegen war, weil das königliche Verbot unsere Neugierden nur um so mehr gereizt hatte. Allein, man verliert im Grunde nichts, wenn man sie nicht sieht, und man hätte sie gern, deucht mich, zerstören können, denn die Arbeit ist nur mittelmäßig. (Adler 1784, 269)

From 1795, a separate room—Room XVIII—is reserved for antiquities that were considered "obscene" (Lagger 2021): these include for example *tintinabuli* as well as representations of Priapi or mural paintings (Gaimster 2001, 129; Gaimster 2003-2004, 84). Even if access was not given to everyone, it was possible to visit the room at the end of the 18th century, as evidenced by notes in the travelogues. They mention printed permission forms for male visitors, on which the visit of the sculpture is mentioned separately.[23]

Plümicke printed the contents of the permit in his travel description so that future travellers would know what they had to organise before visiting the museum (Plümicke 1795, 72). With this permit, however, one could not visit the Herculean paintings, as another traveller reported (Bartels 1787, 128).

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21 A piece of paper at the base contains the following information: "COPY FROM MEMORY OF YE MARBLE GROUPE IN PORTICI MUSEUM" (quoted after Beard 2012, 69 footnote 21).

22 De Caro 2000, 10 with illustration. Dominique-Vivant Denon published a *L'Oeuvre priapique* "Priapées et sujets divers" (1793 or 1794) in which the illustration was included, Nowinski 1970, 71-73.

23 [Stegmann] 1798, 300. On access restrictions and obstacles for travellers, see the compilation by Fitzon 2004, 143-151.

Many travellers wrote travelogues. The erotic objects and frescoes they saw were completely ignored by some, others soberly noted their observations; some sought explanations for such an accumulation of erotic depictions and interpreted them as trade signs, still others indulge in open indignation.[24] G. Nicolai, e. g., even thinks that the eruption of Vesuvius and the destruction of the city were a just punishment for the moral iniquity of the Pompeians (Nicolai 1835, vol. 1, 297).

But not only travellers, also the excavators and processors partly inhibited the representations. They covered phallic representations with plaster, the penises were cut off on statues, if they were not completely smashed; erotic mural paintings were locked away, partly removed, and hidden from the public in a special room, No. XVIII, in the museum in Portici. An english traveller, N. Brook, wrote:

> At the end of one of the galleries is a small room kept locked, and having no ladies with us, my friend ordered it to be opened, in which is placed a single bronze statue [sic!] of a goat and satyr in a joined unnatural position, that with decency cannot be described, and had it been mine I would have thrown it into the burning mountain, which had once buried it under its lava. ([Brooke] 1798, 139 (Letter XXXIII, Naples, May 14th, 1794))

Despite the prohibition on drawing, there was obviously a brisk trade in well forged Priapi, paintings and sculptures, as Winckelmann observes, which were sold to travellers and collectors–among them were pieces with erotic subjects (Harris 2015, 115). Finally, the collection was moved at the beginning of the 19th century from Portici to Naples.[25]

Johann Joachim Winckelmann's reports and thirty-five German-language travelogues described the excavations and the finds between 1762 and 1806.[26] The growing interest of visitors is documented by the reports of the director of the excavations, Rocco Gioacchino de Alcubierre. From the 1770s onwards

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24 An overview of the impressions and feelings of the travellers is given by Fitzon 2004.

25 The "Real Museo Borbonico" was opened in 1822. On the history of the Real Museo Borbonico, today the Museo Archeologico Nazionale, in Naples see Milanese 2013, 13-29.

26 Until 1780, there are only eight german traveller reports from Pompeii. Between 1780 and 1792, there are 17 reports. After 1780, Pompeii established itself as popular destination for German travellers. The Expansion of the railway led to an increase in travellers (1839), cf. Fitzon 2004, 120-121.

Herculaneum and Pompeii were increasingly visited by travellers (Fitzon 2004, 118). Pompeii and Herculaneum become a travel attraction and a fixed component of the Grand Tour[27] at the latest after the clear identification of Pompeii as the ancient town Pompeii in 1763. The Temple of Isis (**fig. 4**)[28] and the finds of the Gladiator Barracks (especially gladiatorial armour and skeletons) produced a sensation. That had little or nothing to do with statues: Here was ancient life, in its most extreme forms: an exotic Egyptian cult and the most brutal of entertainments. The international interest was immense.

4 *The Temple of Isis at Pompeii, 1788,* etched by Francesco Piranesi, hand-colourd by Louis Jean Desprez. J. Cleveland Museum of Art. https://www.clevelandart.org/art/2001.19. CC0 1.0. Public domain.

27 Interest in the cities of Herculaneum and Pompeii was aroused somewhat earlier among French and English travellers than among German travellers, cf. Fitzon 2004, 118, 122 with further readings.

28 Interested travellers looking at the Temple of Isis in Pompeii are impressively shown by Francesco Piranesi, "The Temple of Isis at Pompeii" (1788), in: Cleveland Museum of Art, https://clevelandart.org/art/2001.19 (accessed on May 20, 2023). Emperor Joseph II (1768) and Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart with his father Leopold also visited the ancient site (1770), cf. von Hase 2013, 215.

Conclusion

Eighteenth-century Italy was one of the main places of an imaginary antiquity and part of the Grand Tour of the European nobility. The main attractions in Italy were Venice, Florence, Rome, and *Napoli e dintorni*. The rediscovery of Pompeii and Herculaneum triggered an unprecedented enthusiasm for antiquities in Europe, which was visibly reflected in the ambience and furnishings of aristocratic and upper middle-class life. The demand for antiquities and antique decorative pieces led to the emergence of specialisations in the arts and crafts sector, not least in Naples, in order to meet the demand through imitations.

Despite, or perhaps because of, the secrecy surrounding the king's excavations in Herculaneum and Pompeii, it had become an important point of sightseeing for travellers to southern Italy by the end of the 18th century.

Starting with scholars like Winckelmann, but very soon also by interested travellers and the official and non-official publications, knowledge of the finds was spread. Even before the first streams of tourists at the beginning of the 19th century, the cities of Herculaneum and Pompeii as well as the finds in the castle of Portici exerted an attraction. Further, the erotic finds may have stimulated the curiosity of one or the other.

The excursions to the ancient cities were recorded in numerous travelogues. The attempts to keep the erotic objects hidden from the eyes of the public have led to stimulating people's imagination. Even today, the lupanar—the brothel—with its erotic frescoes in Pompeii attracts many visitors, dealing with it is not easy for them either. Often, they react with laughter, as visitors' observations have shown, maybe also discomfort (Levin-Richardson 2011, 330).[29]

Museums and libraries, with their collections, reflect the cultural and moral attitudes of generations of curators. What was and is classified as "obscene" changed both in the academic world and in the respective society. However, it is in one way or another of importance for the attraction of tourists. It is as true of a world where sculptures wore fig leaves as it is of a world full of trigger warnings that artefacts with overt or covert eroticism pique the interest of the public—and of scientists.

29 For observations of tourist behavior, see McGinn 2004, 116.

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