Guides in the Vesuvius Area Eternalised in Travelogues and Fiction

I've read little about the malaise of travellers, even the sense of tragedy that must come over them sometimes at their lack of relation to their environment. ¹

In questa articolo viene analizzato, attraverso testimonianze letterarie scelte tra quelle numerosissime formate da giornali di viaggio e album di ricordi, il rapporto tra i viaggiatori del grand Tour e le “guide” che venivano appaltate per accompagnarli nella visita dei siti archeologici, specie Pompei, ma anche Ercolano, il Museo di Portici e poi quello di Napoli, il Vesuvio e i dintorni. L’ultima parte è dedicata a tre esempi di testi letterari di “fiction” nei quali le “guide” hanno un ruolo importante. [RED]

In the modern discussion on the management of the excavations of Pompeii – and less of Herculaneum as well – the proposal has been made to let people visit the excavation only if accompanied by an official guide. The aim is to regularise the millions of tourists who come every year and who are gradually devastating the site, and especially those monuments visited by everybody like the Forum, the Forum Baths and the House of the Vettii. In a certain way this looks like a return to the earliest practices, when all visitors were obliged to take a guide. Without wishing to enter into the actual debate itself. I shall focus on the guides as described in the voyage journals and in fiction. As we will see, there are both positive and negative reactions on the guides hired in the excavations of Pompeii and Herculaneum, in the museums at Portici (until 1820) and Naples and on Vesuvius. Especially in the first decades of tourism to the area around Vesuvius the un-experienced grand-tourists needed the assistance of local people for a lot of reasons. Although my attention is mainly devoted to Pompeii and its archaeological monuments, I include a small section on Vesuvius, the ‘culprit’ of the calamities in Pompeii and Herculaneum and standard item in the tour to Naples and its environs. The last part is devoted to three literary works of fiction in which guides play a special role.

First of all, let me quote a sort of definition of a guide formulated by a Belgian navy officer, Paul Crombet in the early 19th century: ² «Un cicerone est un homme du bas peuple dont le principal métier est de conduire les voyageurs et qui, possédant par une tradition, qui lui est parvenue de père en fils, une connaissance superficielle et souvant fausse des antiquités de son pays, débite à un chacun ce qu’il en sait, sans jamais varier d’un seul mot, sans pouvoir jamais répondre à la moindre objection, absolument comme ces hommes qui montrent dans les foires des animaux étrangers et rares, dont il font, sans s’arrêter, l’histoire en termes ampoulés, mentant horriblement et donnant quelquefois par un long cervier, et cela je l’ai vu, un chien d’aspect un peu sauvage. Sans un certain rapport cependant l’avantage reste du côté des cicerones, parce qu’au moins ils sont de bonne foi, et s’ils vous trompent, s’ils vous induisent en erreur, ce n’est pas leur faute.»

Crombet stresses the low social status and does not bother the human dignity of these ciceroni.
Even if most upper class travellers were thinking in the same manner, the travel books often keep silent on this topic.

THE FIRST DECADES

The travellers who wanted to visit the buried cities in the 18th century needed a licence from the King of Naples which they usually could obtain from minister Tanucci and his successor Della Sambucca by intervention of the ambassador of their own country. It seems that it was not difficult to get such a written permission, but we must realise that the people who came down to Naples, belonged to the upper class of European society and possessed a high social position, having easy entrance to their Ministers Plenipotentiaries, the nobility of Naples, and often the Neapolitan court itself. Even the scholars of a more modest social rank who came to the south made the necessary contacts without big problems thanks to letters of recommendation from their Maecenases. Having obtained this permit one was constrained to hire a guide, either at Naples or at the entrance of the excavations. Like today, complete day tours were offered at Naples itself: a guide, a coach with horses, a picnic and everything else needed. A trip to Pompeii took an entire day because of the distance until the railway was opened in 1839. At the other hand, an excursion to Resina for underground Herculaneum could be combined with an ascent to Vesuvius and a sightseeing of the nearby Royal Palace at Portici that included a visit to the collections of Pompeian antiquities. Some voyagers started with Pompeii and visited Herculaneum – where relatively little was to be seen under the earth – and Portici on their way back to Naples. For the underground visit to the excavations of the theatre at Herculaneum torches formed necessary extra tools and it was always advised to buy these (and other things like food and wine) at Naples for a fair price instead of purchasing them at Resina. The more adventurous and romantic tourists climbed Vesuvius by night, especially in times of volcanic activity. Stabiae was seldom included in a tour, even by those who travelled south to Paestum, another obligatory goal from the 1750s onwards.

Mariana Starke gives practical information on the trip. «We hired a carriage for the whole day, took a cold dinner, bread, wine, knives, forks, and glasses, and set out at seven in the morning for Pompeii, bargaining, however, with our Voiturin to stop two or three hours at Portici on our return» As to the amounts of the unavoidable tips you have to give Starke lists the various persons involved: the two coachmen, the boy assistant, and «the Man who throws water on the paintings, one or two carlini», the guide gets a ducato. A visit takes some four hours and the trip to Portici is one hour and a half. The archaeological sites themselves were put under the custody of veterans, mostly disabled, who had quit from the royal army. Apparently, these men were not educated people, even lacking instruction about the place they had to look after or any interest in the monuments themselves. Some of them lived at the spot and had their accommodation in one of the ancient houses. The so-called Villa of Diomedes outside Porta di Ercolano is especially mentioned by some travellers. Carl Friedrich Benkowitz, who was at Pompeii in 1802, observed how the guards had made a garden with lettuce, broccoli and other vegetables within the portico area south of the big theatre.

These men accompanied the guests and mechanically gave some superficial information. So Benkowitz: «Ich habe mitten in Pompeji einen alten Invaliden sitzen sehen, der sich von einem andern barbieren ließ; und auf der Schwelle eines antiken Hauses sah ich zwei Weiber, wovon die eine etwas auf dem Haup­te der andern suchte, das man besser nicht nennt. Da diese Mensch auch betteln, sich schimpfen, schamlos sich in jeder Rücksicht betragen, so wird man durch diese unheiligen Scenen etwas in seinem Gemesse und in der Illusion gestört.» In the Villa of Diomedes one of them had made his quarters (p. 54): «Er brachte jedem von uns einen Blumenstrauß, und zwar aus dem Impluvio des Hauses, wo er einen kleinen Garten angelegt hatte. Dies Verschenken der Blumen und das dafür gelöste Trinkgeld scheint sein Ewerbszweig zu seyn.» Luncheon was another problem for the guards: «Sie stahlen uns die eine Hälfte davon, und das dafür gelöste Trinkgeld scheint sein Ewerbszweig zu seyn.» Luncheon was another problem for the guards: «Sie stahlen uns die eine Hälfte davon, and the other half verzeihen wir in dem Soldatenquartier dicht an den Säulen, welche den Hauptteil davon ausmachen, so daß ich behaupten kann, in einer antiken Stadt gegessen zu haben.»

As far as I known there were no hotel facilities at Pompeii until the second half of the 19th century when a new village, Pompei, was growing around the pedagogic institutes founded by Bartolo Longo. Resina had no hotels either. The few people who wanted to climb Vesuvius by night departed from Naples in the late evening after dinner or supper.
Of course, the help of a guide was more or less inevitable in the first decades when there were no written guides available. Moreover, the sites where people could see major attractions were not connected. If one wanted to go from the Street of the Tombs and the so-called Strada Consulare to the area with the theatres and the temple of Isis, one had to cross the vineyards covering the rest of the town. It was only during the French occupation that the connecting street was unearthed.

The Neapolitan court had prevented Marcello Venuti from writing a traveller’s guide and the first real practical guidebooks and booklets did not come out before the period of the French occupation. Abate Domenico Romanelli, praefect of the Royal Library at Naples, could publish a book of this kind and dedicated this *Viaggio a Pompei, a Pesto e di ritorno ad Ercolano* (Napoli 1811) to queen Caroline, the highly interested wife of king Joaquin Murat. He had written it ‘perché niuno si è occupato a fare un itinerario esatto di tutti i luoghi restituiti al giorno, e molto meno a dare un dettaglio di tutte le antichità, che vi sono state raccolte’ (p. 2).

His opinion about the guides was not high, judging from the quotation of an explanation given by one of them at the House of the Vestals in Pompeii (p. 62): ‘Un Cicerone, ch’è solito di guidare i forestieri per Pompei, ci assicurò con aria di fermezza di esser questa l’abitazione delle Vestali, e ci raccontò finanche il loro dovere di serbare e la castità, ed il fuoco sacro, e la pena a chi trasgressiva. Noi lo lasciammo in possesso della sua erudizione, e passammo avanti.’

LIKE THE CYCLOPES ON VESUVIUS

In a way, late 18th-century visitors were lucky: the huge mountain was very active and at least eight eruptions have been recorded in these hundred years only and even if the crater was not vomiting volcanic material there was much to be seen in what was compared to an amphitheatre by Dio Cassius around 200 AD. Therefore, a visit to the culprit of the devastation of the antique Campanian cities was unavoidable, the more so because no transalpine traveller could permit himself to return home without being able to boast to have seen a living volcano and Sicily with its Etna and Stromboli was too far for most of them. Although the topic of the ascent to to Vesuvius is a matter of its own, I include a few glimpses collected simultaneously with the testimonies about Pompeii and Herculaneum (fig. 1). 11

An easy road to the summit of the mountain (some 1180 metres high) like nowadays did not exist and one really had to climb its steep slopes physically, starting from a rather low point, more or less where the modern buildings of the villages end. Some used donkeys, other people a sort of sedan chair; and the fittest walked. There was yet another method: being dragged up by a strong local as is told for instance by a lady-in-waiting of the English queen: «The guides however afford every assistance, and, by means of a leathern strap thrown over their shoulders, ease the traveller not a little in his exertions. It is advisable to proceed slowly and rest at intervals, as the fatigue otherwise is sufficient to try even strong and youthful constitutions.» 12

All complained about their feet and the burnt soles of their shoes. A topos is the drinking of Lacryma Christi on the edge of the crater. In one of his letters, the archaeologist Johann Joachim Winckelmann compared himself and his companions with the Cyclopes in their caves: «Sehr viel neues habe ich gesehen, welches ich zu seiner Zeit ans Licht bringen werde, und der einzige Ausbruch des Vesuvius würde die Reise bezahlt machen. Denn wer es nicht gesehen, kann sich von diesem schrecklich schönen Schauspiele keinen Begriff machen. Ich habe eine ganze Nacht auf dem Berge selbst, in Begleitung meines Baron von Riedesel und eines berühmten Avanturiers d’Hancarville, zugebracht, wo wir an dem feurigen Flusse Tauben brieten, und Winckelmann hielt, wie die Cyclopen, nacktend seine Abendmahlszeit. Wir waren dieselbe Nacht, da alle Menschen wegflichteten, bereits dahir und also der Gefahr entgegen gegangen, und

trunken fröhlich auf dem Schloßplatz zu Portici, unter dem Getümmel der Flüchtenden, weil wir in den Häusern, die bebeten und krachten, nicht sicher waren.»

A serious problem was that of communication and mutual understanding. Many travellers spoke some Italian, but the local dialect was – and is – another matter. Hogg, who wrote extensively about his guides and whom we will meet again, noted concerning the volcano: «The ascent of Vesuvius has long been a well-organized bore» because of these terrible guides. His guide spoke «the asinine dialect of the Neapolitan tongue; which is, perhaps, a dialect of the Italian, which is a dialect of the Latin, which is a dialect of the Aeolic, which is a dialect of the Greek, which, with a slight admixture of Pelasgic, is doubtless a dialect of the Sanscrit...»

The nightly visitors were either really interested in volcanology – like the famous English ambassador Sir William Hamilton and padre Antonio Piaggio, the man who had invented the machine to unwrap the carbonised papyrus scrolls – or wanted to have a good story to tell back home. There is no doubt that the latter category was far larger.

In most travelogues of the late 18th and the early 19th century mention is made of a hermit living half up the mountain. Different names are given to this person, who had his cabin near the spot where the vulcanological observatory was to be built in the 1840s. This ‘monk’ clearly did not live the life of a real hermit: every day he saw parties of tourists, sold wine and gave information, all for money of course.

Pierre Brussel reports some verses on ‘Claude’ as early as 1768:

Vénérable frère Claude, Hermite,
Qui, suivant sa confession,
Las du dur métier de la guerre,
Où l’on ne gagne que misère,
Et souvent plus d’un horion,
A changé de profession
Et depuis quelques vingt années
Moue la résolution
De terminer ses destinées,
Dans un solitaire réduit,
Voisin du danger & du bruit.

Jakob Georg Christian Adler climbed Vesuvius in February 1781 and was quite satisfied by the services of the French hermit, whose name he did not record: «ein guter artiger Mann; er erfrischte uns, nach der Gewohnheit, mit Brot und Wein gegen einige Erkenntlichkeit, welches uns überaus willkommen war.» It is, therefore, not sure whether the same person was praised by these two early travellers.

At the other hand, a clear denial of the man’s holiness – still without a name – is given by the French tourist M. Valéry: He gossips that the 18th-century French monk was an «ancien valet de chambre de Madame de Pompadour.» In 1820 Joseph-Hippolyte Santo-Domingo tells a similar story: «... l’ermite du Vésuve est tout bonnement un laïque qui, après avoir été long-temps courtier des âmes du purgatoire et des courtisanes, a obtenu, moyennant une redevance annuelle, la capucinière du Vésuve avec les droits, profits et privilèges qui y sont attachés. Ce spéculateur, sachant combien est puissante sur la multitude l’étiquette du sac, s’est enveloppé d’un froc, coiffé d’un capuchon, et parce qu’il est moins qu’un homme, il se donne pour un moine.» At the turn of the 19th century it is still a ‘monk’, but he is now called Pietro, whereas J. G. Francis mentions «Friar Tuck’s hermitage» in 1844.

August Wilhelm Kephalides had been on Etna before and went up to Vesuvius on his return to the north, judging this experience easier than the Sicilian volcano. His impression of the hermit is decidedly negative: «In Strömen floß der Schweiß, als wir bei diesem alten Gauner anlangten, der uns mit seiner Fior d’Olanda, d.h. holländische Käse und seiner Lagrima Cristi, dem heillosesten Kräuter, die dem Haare die Pestilenz in den Leib gejagt hätte. Selbst die begehriesten Gastwirthe in Italien begnügten sich doch höchstens mit einigen hundert Prozenten Gewinn. Diesem Spitzbuben, den einige empfindsame Reisende zu einem liebevollen, einsiedlerischen Alten und Pfleger aller Fremdlinge erlegisieren, waren selbst mehrere tausend Prozenten nicht recht genug. Der elende Landwein, vino nostramo, den er sich aus Resina heraufschleppt läßt und mit ein paar Kreuzern bezahlt, trichtert er den unglücklichen Reisenden als Tränen unsern Herrn für doppelt so viel Scudi ein, und fordert man eine Rechnung, so schläft er vor Entsetzen die Hände zusammen, verwirrt die bescheidnen Fremden und prellt sie ärger als die Tuchtrempler aus Segovia den Sancho. Da wir bei diesem ehrlichen Manne vielmahl eingekehrt sind, so haben wir hinhängliche Gelegenheit gehabt, seine Taktik zu studiren.»
Some travellers wrote down their impressions in a guest book in the hermit’s hut. The following example is not only dealing with the hermit but with the preoccupation of Benkowitz himself as well. As mentioned above, he is very critical about the services in the various places. The “Einsiedler” is stupid and only has lacryma christi. Benkowitz quotes his own insertion from the guest book:21 «Edler Deutscher! (denn mit dir nur kann ich reden, da die fremden Nationen so selten diese Sprache lernen, so selten ihren Werth kennen) suche so lange du in diesem Lande wandelst, dein Glück in der schönen Natur, in der Kunst, im Alterthum. Was die letzte begrub und wieder auferstehen läßt, täglich wieder auferstehen läßt, wird dir tausend Freuden geben, die Menschen werden es vielleicht nicht. Nur was unter der Erde lag, ist geblieben, wie es war, alles übrige, alles Lebende ist verwandelt, und die wahre Cultur hat sich aufgemaakt, um weiter gegen Norden zu wandeln. Dort suche sie. Hier suche Clima, Früchte, Gemählde, Bildsäulen, paradiesische Aussichten. Roma und Parthenope leben nur in dem Todten noch, und in diesem lebe du, so lange du hier weilst.

Auf schweißtriefenden Lastthieren kamen fünf Deutsche den 9ten Decbr. 1802 hieher zu dem zuvorkommenden Eremiten, und eilten selber schweißtriefend zu der Spitze des feuerschwanger Berges, der jetzt ruhig da liegt, als hätte er nie Uebels gethan. Aber die Lavaströme, die an seinen Abhängen herabgeflossen sind, zeigen, welch ein feuerspeiender Drache er sey.

Am Vesuv, den 9ten Decbr. 1802.
Carl Friedrich Benkowitz, Kammer-Secretair im Dienst Sr. Königl. Majestät von Preußen Friedrich Wilhelms III.»

Maybe the German romantic author August von Kotzebue read these remarks when he was at the mountain in November 1804: 22 «Natürlich wird hier eine Art von Stammbuch gehalten, in welches jeder, der zu den Wundern des Vesuvs, wenn auch nur bisher wahlfahret, seinen Namen verzeichnet, und sonst noch etwas Dummies oder Kluges, nach Belieben oder Vermögen, dazu schreibt. Hilf Himmel! welch’ eine Suppe von Unsinn, auf der die Gedanken wie einzige Fettaugen schwammen. In allen Sprachen fand man hier dergleichen Allotria, doch muß ich beschämt gestehen, daß, beim flüchtigen Durchblättern, es mir so vorgekommen, als hätten die Deutschen das meiste dumme Zeug geschrieben; wenigstens affectirten die die meiste Empfindsamkeit.» Kephalides also records the nonsense put down in the book.

Among the guides accompanying the visitors of Vesuvius in the 1810-1820s, we frequently find the name of Salvatore. Mrs. Jameson saw the mountain during an eruption; the year is not indicated in the book that has been edited after her death. The date was 5 February on which an eruption was seen. Her guide was Andrea, but she also encountered Salvatore who had the task to register all volcanic activities for the King. He explained to her several things and there were many people to attend this peculiar show-piece.23 Apparently Salvatore was very good at his work, because William Edward Frye wrote October 10, 1816 the following lines for him:

Dal monte ignivomo tornati siam stanchissimi,
E dal buon Salvator siam tutti contentissimi;
Felice il pellegrin che a Salvator si fida,
Che di lui non si può trovar un migliore guida.24

Probably it was this same Salvatore Charles Dickens met in 1845, when he climbed the mountain with a party of some thirty persons, including the extremely corpulent ‘Mr Picky’: «Signor Salvatore, the recognised head-guide, with the golden band round his cap.» Salvatore will not have been the same person as «a well known and experienced chief guide» the American professor of chemistry Benjamin Silliman and his family had 35 years later.26
for English travellers who could finally cross the Channel without problems after the defeat of Napoleon. He warns the visitor to beware in every town of local rascals who want to steal your money. To put it mildly, according to Coke, Italy may be worth the visit, but keep off from the inhabitants of that country! The book – he hopes – is therefore also written for people who stay home, worth to be read in an armchair and containing nice illustrations by Pinelli. 28 One of these practical warnings considers the guides: «it may be necessary the traveller should know that the officious Cicerone, who stands at this [viz. Herculaneum’s] entrance should not be regarded: the money paid here might as well be thrown into the street; his curiosity will only be wearied with a perpetual sameness: he will be dragged up and down to the pit; and here the unfortunate inhabitants sat whilst Vesuvius was brooding their destruction.» He also states that there is little to be seen at Herculaneum, which makes a bad and expensive guide still more worthless.

THE MUSEUM AT PORTICI

Many visitors spent a lot of ink describing the miraculous collection in the special wing of the King’s summer palace at Portici. Nowhere else were to be seen so many miracles in one spot: paintings gathered in one section, mobilia and statuary in another department. However, the same visitors remember how it was forbidden to take notes and make drawings. Every movement of the visitors was meticulously controlled: objects could be stolen, copied in a drawing or touched, and all such handlings had to be prevented. For these reasons and despite the long records it has been so terribly difficult to reconstruct the exact order of the exhibited monuments. A map by Francesco Piranesi enabled Agnes Allroggen-Bedel and Helke Kammerer-Grothaus to present a trustworthy ‘guide’ to the old museum. 29

As a matter of fact, guests could be terribly impertinent, like Lady Anna Miller, who published one of the liveliest travel accounts of the 18th century. She wanted to touch a piece of fabric: «I wished to have been permitted to rub my finger (as a little remained on it) upon a piece of paper, just to bring with me an idea of the colour; but besides a sharp, though civil reprimand, for my curiosity, he [the guard] insisted peremptorily on my not carrying off an atom; ‘for,’ said he, ‘it is a curiosity no monarch upon earth can boast the possession of, besides my master, the King of Naples.» 30

The famous Encyclopédie of Diderot probably is the only major reference work that has eternised a guide of the excavations, however critically. The author, hidden behind the initial “C.”, states that in the Museum at Portici there is a certain Filippo Cartoni, «un jeune homme très peu instruit.» 31 The same is said by J. J. Volkmann in his widely read German guide from 1778: «Der jetzige Aufseher Filippo Cartoni, welcher es den Fremden zeigt, versteht wenig von den Alterthümern, und ist daher selten im Stande neubegierigen Reisenden von den Sachen, die er zeigt, Rechenschaft zu geben.» 32

Mariana Starke described the situation in the museum around 1800. The minister’s permit was valid for a whole year and the museum was open every day from 9 to 1 and from 3 to 6, excluding holidays. «The lower-rooms of the Museum, which contain the Paintings, are damp and cold – the upper apartments, which contain the bronze Statues, Vases &c. are tolerably warm.» Because of the interdiction of making notes she gives a long synopsis of the objects, partly based on the Antichità d’Ercolano. 33

Apparently, sometimes people succeeded in making notes and drawings. So the famous Comte de Caylus could publish some objects at Portici, but he stressed that he could not give his source: 34 «La crainte d’attirer des dégoûts à l’haute Artiste qui m’a communiqué ces desseins, m’oblige à cacher son nom; car l’Antiquité à Naples est une affaire d’Etat, & c’est avec une sorte d’inquiétude que je communique les monumens de ce pays, je crains de rendre leur approche encore plus difficile; mais les difficultés ne pouvant être plus grandes, la réflexion fait sentir qu’on n’a rien à ménager, & que par conséquens on peut se livrer à la jouissance du moment.»

Henry Coke had bad experiences at Portici: «At every entrance and every hedge, he [i.e. the traveller] meets a different guide, who offers to show the department entrusted to his care. He has scarcely gone a hundred paces before he is delivered over to another guide and so on as long as he stays. Gardeners, under-gardeners, and gardeners’ boys, play the stranger into another’s hand as fair game. One brings him a flower, another offers him some fruit; all expect a reward, and when it is given them, they are not satisfied.» 35 This looks like the plague of small children praying for bakshish near the pyramids in Gizeh or the temples at Karnak and Luxor.
Another complaint refers to the haste with which one had to visit the museum. So Roger Hog disliked the fact that people had no permission to walk around on their own «but are conducted on by a cicerone in the king's livery, with rather too much rapidity for such an exhibition.» This haste became still more irritating being it strictly forbidden to make notes or sketches, as was mentioned before. Why so? It caused the same irritation modern tourists - let alone scholars - experience, when they see plaques at the entrances of museums and excavation sites saying “no photographs”. Meyer wrote down the laconic explanation given to him: «Meine etwas voreilige Frage an den Aufseher des Museums nach der Ursache dieses strengen Verbotes, ward mit einem diktatorschen 'Vuole il Re!' (So will es der König) beantwortet.»

THE MUSEUM AT NAPLES

The long description by Hogg on his visits to the museum in 1825 is very instructive as to the practice of those days. On December 7th, Andrea De Jordanio, keeper of the Galleria dei Vasi in the museum, welcomes Hogg. The Neapolitan scholar “has published a great many useful guides; but is a little too anxious to sell them. To an English traveller, it is peculiarly distressing to find a gentleman puffing his own works, as it is so totally different from our habits; and with all the strangers, it must have a tendency to impede the end proposed, the sale of books; for the often reiterated recommendations must lead them to suspect, hat they do not possess the merit which they really have.” Many persons work in the office of the papyri, but most of them are not qualified and they are under-paid as well: «The yearly salary converts the undertaking into a public office; and persons paid thus demean themselves like the gentlemen whom we see in such situations; they incessantly vary their occupations, which consist mainly in reading the newspaper, and discoursing concerning its contents; in cutting their nails, or their pens; in stirring the fire; in yawning, or looking out of the window; or at their watches: we found the unrollers of the papyri thus engaged; we interrupted them for a short time, that we might see the mode of operating; they unfolded very dexterously a quarter of an inch, and then returned to their accustomed avocations.» A visitor should know the practical issues beforehand: «The galleries are open every day, but not so open as they ought to be; there is much locking and unlocking, and feeing servants; not that the sums expected are great, because I was taught by a Prussian, who had long resided in Naples, that copper does as well as silver on all occasions; so that you give, it matters not how much, or how little; but to make these frequent and trifling donations is an interruption of the perfect freedom essential to study.»

About the guards and guides in the museum at Naples in the 19th and 20th century no spicy observations have been recorded. Sometimes it is observed that too many fannulloni are standing at the entrance, whereas many exhibition rooms were (and/or are) closed.

POMPEII

Most descriptions of Pompeii contain some lines on (1) guardians, (2) guides, (3) food and drinks and (4) other visitors. Especially the way in which the guardians and guides are described is striking: many of them may belong to the species homo sapiens, but hardly of the advanced type.

Mrs. Jameson found Pompeii dull at first sight, but her enthusiasm grew rapidly. Her group of twelve persons had an active “lazzarone boy” as a guide. He had a lot of success with a frequently used trick, viz. the excavation of an object in front of the admiring visitors:

«I followed him to a spot where a quantity of dust and ashes was piled against a wall. He began to scratch away this heap of dirt with hands and nails, much after the manner of an ape, every now and then looking up in my face and grinning. The impediment being cleared away, there appeared on the wall behind a most beautiful aérial figure with floating drapery, representing either Fame or Victory: but before I had time to examine it, the little rogue flung the earth up again so as to conceal it completely, then pointed significantly at the other workmen, he nodded, shrugged, gesticulated, and held out both his paws for a recompense, which I gave him willingly; at the same time laughing and shaking my head to show I understood his knavery. I rewarded him apparently beyond his hopes, for he followed me down the street, bowing, grinning, and cutting capers like a young savage.» Note how the anonymous boy is characterised as little more than a monkey.

The party had taken a bounteous lunch with them: «Where Englishmen are, there will be a good
cheer if possible; and our banquet was in truth most luxurious. Besides more substantial plates, we had oysters from Lake Lucrine, (or Acheron), and classically excellent they were; London bottled porter, and half a dozen different kinds of wine.  

Our dinner went off most gaily, but no order was kept afterwards: the purpose of our expedition seemed to be forgotten in general mirth: many witty things were said and done, and many merry ones, and not a few silly ones.»

Despite this lack of discipline they visited afterwards the Temple of Isis, the theatres and the ‘Doric’ Temple. Mrs. Jameson concludes with satisfaction: «Of all the heavenly days we had since we came to Naples, this has been the most heavenly; and of all the lovely scenes I have beheld in Italy, what I saw to-day has most enchanted my senses and imagination.»

Like at the museum in Portici, Lady Miller is doing her own will, bothering little about the rules and the guardians of those rules. So she wants various inscriptions copied by a member of her party, to begin with that of the theatre tectum: «By a stratagem, M-, unseen by our guides, copied it exactly as follows: C. Ovinctius [etc.]» Then she likes to make drawings in an adjacent house, but gets no chance from the guardians. «They followed us closely, so that we could rarely evade their vigilance and impertinent curiosity.» During lunch everyone relaxes, including the local personnel, and “M-” can copy another text. During the afternoon stroll the greatest attention was paid to the Temple of Isis: (fig. 2) «I amused our guide, by walking towards some paintings, that appeared at a little distance, while M- took down this inscription in the temple. Whilst he was copying this inscription, I came to the painting in view. ...I took a pencil out of my pocket, and began to make a rude sketch from this stag, and intended, if possible, to do the like from the perspective view; but my guide, in the most pressing manner imaginable, begged me to desist: he assured me he saw some soldiers on an eminence not very distant; that should I be perceived, he must suffer for his inattention, and even I should be sharply reprimanded by government. ...I continued my work during this harangue. ...But to return to our poor Cicerone, he really was in the right as to the soldiers.»  

Bribery was necessary to get access to the newest excavations. Vivant Denon, working in the project of Saint-Non’s future Voyage pittoresque  and later the founder of the imperial museum collections at Paris, is quite clear about that when he describes his efforts to enter the afore-mentioned Villa of Diomedes in order to continue his documentation work: «Nous corrompîmes, comme nous nous étions promis; mais comme notre coquin de ce jour-là n’était qu’un coquin subalterne, qu’un ouvrier qui avait envie de garder notre argent sans cesser de faire son métier de sentinelle, il nous
tourmentait pendant notre travail, et nous ne pûmes que lever une très petite partie du plan qu’il nous faillait, et que nous étions à force de soins, de tentatives, de travail et d’argent.»

It is not clear why a large party was exempt of taking a guide. But Jane Waldie suggested to gather a great number of people and was clearly glad that they could now walk «in perfect liberty.» To do us justice, however, with the exception of a few broken bits of marble, of little value, which we pilfered as remembrances of the place, we made no other bad use of the opportunities thus afforded, than that of breaking through a royal edict. Without an express permission from the king, no one was allowed to sketch at Pompeii; but I found my usual despatchful style of drawing enable me to evade the regulation, and to secure such views of the place as I wished, quite as effectually as if all the crowned heads in Europe had been graciously pleased to approve of my doing so.»

Some decades later the American traveller Thurlow Weed is satisfied about the guides: «The King keeps intelligent guides at Pompeii for the twofold purpose of showing Visitors through the City and protecting its treasures.» He informs that some fifty workmen are active in the excavation and that the tourist could share the heavy job for a moment: «We were allowed to use the Pick, but not to take away any of the Spoils, though like other Visitors, we did obtain a few specimens, among which were fragments of stucco and Etruscan ware.»

Théophile Gautier records an unflattering image of guides in his famous novella Arria Marcella. Moderns apparently are uglier than the old Romans: «leur [scil. Paysans romains] physionomie différait de celle des paysans aujourd’hui comme une médaille diffère d’un sou». The obligation to take the guide is formulated in the following way. The three friends «prirent un guide à l’osteria bâtie en dehors des anciens ramparts, ou, pour parler plus correctement, un guide les prit. Calamité qu’il est difficile de conjurer en Italie.»

The Bremen minister R. Schramm was satisfied by the work of his guide who introduced every sentence with «Haben Sie die Gewogenheit» and derived his qualities as a cicerone from topographical reasons: «Er war kein Neapolitaner, sondern ein Piemontese, und diese hier im Süden recht häufige Anstellung der Norditaliener durch die Regierung erweist sich als eine vorzügliche Maßregel, einmal um tüchtige und brauchbare Beamte zu bekommen, mitten unter einer sonst ziemlich unzuverlässigen Bevölkerung, sodann aber auch zu dem andern Zweck, die verschiedenen italienischen Stämme durch einander zu würfeln und miteinander bekannt zu machen. Einstweilen ist freilich die Eifersucht und Mißgunst, der Neid und Argwohn der neuen Provinzen gegen diese piemontesischen Eidringlinge noch groß genug; wo immer man sie findet, hört man Klagen über sie, die zum theil berechtigt sein mögen, im Ganzen aber doch meistens nur darauf hunauslaufen, daß die stramme piemontesische Art und Zucht den schlaffen Südtalienern unbequem ist.» The man refused a tip after the stroll — presumably according to the rules Fiorelli had installed. Apparently, the policy to hire personnel from different regions was copied from Italian military service where, even up to now, the young men are sent to far areas on purpose.

DUMAS’ GUIDE FOR THE MILORDI

One of the most witty and hilarious accounts of guides is included in Alexandre Dumas’ beautiful literary portrait of Naples, Le Corricolo from 1841-1843. Dumas fostered warm feelings for the town where he had been for three weeks in November 1835, despite his political problems with the government and the clandestinity of his sejourn.

The essential point Dumas stresses is the flexibility of the people of this city. They can arrange everything, whereas in official life so much is forbidden. Foreigners tend to immediately protest against the rules, claiming their nordic democratic freedom of speech, and have to be assuaged by a good local companion. In Dumas’s book the Neapolitan lazzarone has a fine talent arranging everything an English tourist wants, with the following result: «L’Anglais avait fait les trois choses les plus expressément défendues à Naples: il avait dit du mal du roi, il avait copié des fresques, il avait volé une statue, et tout cela, non pas grâce à son argent, son argent ne lui servi de rien pour ces trois choses, mais grâce à l’imaginative d’un lazzarone.»

Dumas obviously exaggerates the stupidity of the local people and the severity of the rules. The British tourist curses against the court of Naples: better to remain silent, or take a deaf guide! The English visitor wants to make sketches: take a blind “invalid”. And don’t buy but steal a souvenir from the new excavations: take a literally invalid
guardian («un invalide boiteux»). Let me cite the discussion that leads to the solution of the first problem, held in some gibberish. After the invections the lazzarone says they have to return:

«Pourquoi toi retourner à Naples?» demanda l’Anglais.

‘Parce que moi pas avoir envie d’être pendu’, dit le lazzarone, empruntant pour répondre à l’Anglais la tournure de phrase qu’il parassait affectionner.

‘Et qui oserait pendre toi?’ reprit l’Anglais.

‘Roi à moi.’ répondit le lazzarone.

‘Et pourquoi pendrait-il toi?’

‘Parce que vous avoir dit des injures de lui.’

‘L’Anglais être libre de dire tout ce qu’il veut.’

‘Le lazzarone ne l’être pas.’

‘Mais toi n’avoir rien dit.’

‘Mais moi avoir entendu tout.’

‘Qui dira toi avoir entendu tout.’

‘L’invalide.’

‘Quel invalide?’

‘L’invalide qui va nous accompagner pour visiter Pompeïa.’

‘Mais moi pas vouloir d’invalide.’

‘Alors vous pas visiter Pompeïa.’

‘Moi pas pouvoir visiter Pompeïa sans invalide?’

‘Non.’

‘Moi en payant?’

‘Non.’

‘Moi, en donnant le double, le triple, le quadruple?’

‘Non, non, non!’

‘Oh! oh!’ fit l’Anglais; et il tomba dans une réflexion profonde.

Quant au lazzarone, il se mit à essayer de sauter par dessus son ombre.

‘Je veux bien prendre l’invalide, moi.’ dit l’Anglais au but d’un instant.

‘Prenez l’invalide alors,’ répondit le lazzarone.

‘Mais je ne veux pas taire la langue à moi.’

‘En ce cas, je souhaite le bonjour à vous.’

‘Moi vouloir que tu restes.’

‘En ce cas, laissez-moi donner un conseil à vous.’

‘Donne le conseil à moi.’

‘Puisque vous ne vouloir pas taire la langue à vous, prenez un invalide sourd au moins.’

‘Oh!’ dit l’Anglais émerveillé du conseil, moi bien vouloir le invalide sourd. ‘Voilà un piastre pour toi avoir trouvé l’invalide sourd.’»

NEW RULES UNDER FIORELLI

It is common knowledge that Giuseppe Fiorelli (1823-1896; 1860-1875 leader of the excavations) modernised the archaeological excavations and research at Pompeii and introduced several new rules. He gave way to investigations by foreign students, especially Germans like Wolfgang Helbig, Heinrich Nissen, Theodor Mommsen and August Mau, but also established a school for Italian archaeologists, and not only Neapolitans, that unfortunately would not be a very successful enterprise.53 It is less known, however, that, among many practical innovations, he also installed ticket boxes and established the entrance fee cum ticket. This meant that visitors could enter during fixed opening hours and were no longer dependent on the willingness of local guides. These old (or former) guides were now employed as custodians in the excavations and got a regular fee of 1.5 lire, whilst it was no longer permitted to accept tipping by the visitors.54 However, it soon materialised that their wage was too small, as they had earned much more before and Fiorelli had to raise their salaries very soon. The number of custodians increased from 16 in 1861 to 41 in 1872: «A costoro venne assegnato lira una e cent, cinquanta per giorno, estensibile a due, e poiché i custodi ottenevano dai curiosi retribuzioni più o meno volontarie a titolo di mance, per la cura che prendevano di essi nella visita ai monumenti, e con la istituzione della tassa d’ingresso veniva loro vietata qualsiasi regalia, fu mestieri dare a tutti un supplemento di paga, proporzionato al servigio renduto da ciascuno, anche in vista dei larghi guadagni perduti, e dello aggravio di fatica per la guardia notturna, e per la nettezza di Pompei, che prima pagavasi separatamente ad operai, destinati a svellere le erbe in tutto l’anno.» Therefore, they now got 2.0 to 2.5 lire.

This does not mean that the race of guides was extinguished.

He was to return in 1860, on request of Garibaldi, to become director of the Archaeological Museum, thanks to his help in Garibaldi’s military actions in the Mezzogiorno. It may also have been a recompensation for the bad treatment he had received by the court before, and – one is tempted – for his really warm love towards the inhabitants of Naples. But, as Ronald T. Ridley pointed out, this period that ran from September 1860 through May 1861, was hardly a success for the great writer.52
The new rules are described by a Dutch gentleman, J. W. Staats Evers, who had been here in 1840 and updates his own memories with these novelties: «The city now is both surrounded and guarded by an excellent corps of gendarmes who, as it were, are on the heels of every stranger so that damaging or stealing treasuries now has become impossible. Thirty two well disciplined guides are at disposition to the traveller. Near Pompeii itself a museum and a library have been erected and hundreds of workmen are usually working in the excavations during the winter.» These digs are now finished for approximately a third, but there is reason to suppose that the most important zone of the town, with the forum, temples, amphitheatres, theatres and many public offices, must have been unearthed.»

Murray’s Handbook for Travellers in Southern Italy also informs that the guides are forbidden to accept any gratuity, but if the visitor wishes to mark his sense of any extra attention he may do so by purchasing some of the photographic views of the ruins which they are permitted to sell.»

As I pointed out, the new regime made working easier for great scholars from other countries. So, we see three of the major German classicists gathered at one time at Pompeii. Shortly after Theodor Gomperz’s first stay in Naples in 1871 another famous German scholar arrived: Ulrich von Wilamowitz came to assist the historian Theodor Mommsen and to work personally. May-June 1875 Wilamowitz was in Naples and Pompeii where he met the archaeologist August Mau. He stayed in the primitive Albergo Sole and got a special permission from Fiorelli to work day and night: «Wir waren im Besuche ganz unbehindert, denn durch Mommsen waren wir Fiorelli vorgestellt, zu dessen großzügiger Verwaltung es stimmte, uns bei Tag und Nacht in Pompei jede erdenkliche Freiheit zu gewähren, so daß uns die Wächter beinahe als Vorgesetzte betrachteten. Es stand damals ein Haus für wissenschaftliche Arbeit in der Stadt, auch mit einigen Büchern. Dort liebten wir bei Nacht zu sitzen oder durch die Gassen zu schlendern, wenn der Mond schein auf die Ruinen so belebend wirkte wie auf der Burg von Athen oder wie die Fackelbeleuchtung der Statuen im kapitolinischen Museum. Wenn eins gespenstisch genannt werden durfte, war es nur das Letzte.»

The following section contains three examples of fiction in which guides and guardians play an important role.

AN ANCIENT POMPEIAN FOR GUIDE – OR A FOOL? (figs. 4-5)

The storyteller of Le fou du Vésuve by Alexandre de Lamothe is living in private quarters at Naples. When he wants to go to Pompeii, his host recommends a signor Carlo, who, according to this man, will be better than Fiorelli himself. They leave and have a lively conversation. Gradually, the
narrator begins to understand that Carlo thinks himself to be a resurrected inhabitant of Pompeii. In the Museo Nazionale at Naples, the explanations start ‘normally’. When talking about ancient window glass, Carlo refers to a learned, fat German who wrote a thick book on the non-existence of window panes in Pompeii and reacts, upon seeing one example, with «Das ist eine Einrede», that’s an exception (p. 20). At the end of the tour they arrive at the “Morgue de Pompéi”, a room with human remains. Here they see according to Carlo two victims found near their house at Pompeii, the villa of Diomedes (p. 33-34) «Métella [...] c’est tout ce qui reste d’une riche et fière matrone, de la femme de Diomède, mon ami; je l’ai vue tomber dans la petite rue; elle fuya, la vapeur du souffre l’étouffa, hélas! Je l’avais averti, mais elle voulait sauver ses objets les plus précieuses. On a retrouvé près d’elle ces deux vases d’argent ciselés, des clefs, des bijoux, une bourse renfermant quatre-vingt-onze pièces de monnaie. Son mari tomba cent pas plus loin à peine, à la petite porte du jardin donnant sur la mer; j’étais près de lui; les cris déchirants de ses enfants enfermés dans les caves parvenaient jusqu’à nous. Quelle nuit affreuse! quelle nuit épouvantable! pluie de cendres, écroulement des monuments, hurlements d’une foule éperdue, mugissements de la mer, rugissements sourds de la montagne, plaintes des morants, alternatives d’éblouissantes clartés et d’opales ténèbres, d’espérances et de désespoirs!» And he describes the situation in detail (p. 35): «Plus loin encore, un soldat, sa tête rasée, moustache taillée en brosse, carré des épaules, le visage menaçant: Impavidum ferient ruinae. Le ciel s’écroule, la terre chancelle, la mer se soulève furieuse, il pleut des pierres rougies au feu du cratère, il faut mourir; et il s’est couché sur le dos, le visage tourné vers l’ennemi, les bras collés au corps, les jambes réunies; si on le redressait, il se trouverait au poste d’arme. J’avais presque envie de demander à mon guide le nom de ce brave et celui de sa légion; je n’ai pas osé.»

The next day they pay a visit to Pompeii, but they get off late only on demand of the guide to be there in the late afternoon and the early evening. The arrival is impressive (p. 48): «On n’entre pas à Pompéi comme partout ailleurs; la mort a imprégné à cette ville de plaisir le sceau de majesté qu’elle donne à tout ce qu’elle touche.» That the houses are small is not strange; Carlo explains it from his own experience (p. 51): «La maison pour nous n’était qu’un accessoire, un asile temporaire, à l’heure du sommeil ou des repas. Les vrais Ro­ mains, souvenez-vous de cela, étaient les plus grands promeneurs du monde.»

Carlo tells that some third of the Pompeii area has been excavated and according to him it is a pity that all objects have been removed to the museum. Nevertheless, he states the problem of the tourists, especially the English ones (p. 73): «Per Bacco! Ce n’est pas Pompéi qui les regarde, mais eux qui regardent Pompéi, et de si près qu’il a fallu doubler les portes à toutes les portes pour les empêcher d’escamoter les maisons: jugez ce qu’ils auraient fait du mobilier! Oh! fis-je d’un ton d’incrédulité. Mais il signor Carlo était anglophobe.»

When they sit in the amphitheatre Carlo tells the story of his former life. He was Minucius Félix, son of a public servant stemming from Lavinium. As his mother died in his childbed and his father was much away, he was practically an orphan, fostered in the family of the richest man of town, Arius [sic] Diomedes, who was a cousin of his mother and had four sons and two daughters. As to the father (p. 102): «Gastronome plus que gourmand, Arius n’aimait pas ces gros mangeurs rouges et apoplexiques dont les mâchoires broient et l’estomac engloutit indifféremment les mets les plus vulgaires.» They knew Pliny the Elder and his young cousin Pliny the Younger, as well as Seneca and Tacitus.

At some day, a human victim was needed for a big show in the amphitheatre, organised by Holco­ nius who even had bought a tiger. Diomedes offered the Gaulish slave Gunderik, a Christian, who once had rescued Diomedes’ son Tiberius from the attack of a boar. When this man entered the arena a girl howled to him, calling him her father. She was arrested and brought into the arena as well. Neither a lion nor the tiger attacked the two victims. And at that very moment the disaster began. Diomedes and his friends reached their villa and Carlo/Minucius comments (p. 127): «J’avoue qu’à partir de ce moment la religion du Nazaréen com­ mença à me paraître digne de respect, et peut-être aurais-je songé à l’étudier si l’idée de devenir le frère de misérables esclaves ne m’eût pas retenu.» He died, struck by a stone and (p. 131): «Plusieurs siècles après, nos corps ont été retrouvés à cette place, Arius et un esclave gisaient à trois pas de moi: quant au chrétien, je ne sais ce qu’il est devenu.»
At dawn Carlo and the storyteller walk down the street of the tombs outside Porta Ercolano (p. 134):
«Mon guide m’indiqua plusieurs endroits où avaient péri des malheureux; ici, sous cette voûte que porte le nom d’hémicycle couvert, on a trouvé les uns sur les autres les cadavres d’une mère et de ses trois enfants; là dormait de son dernier sommeil la fière sentinelle couchée près de sa guérite, la main sur la lance et la visère baissée.»

In the villa of Diomedes the impressions found in the lapilli are those of the girls Julia and Térentilla (cp. note 61).

The long stroll – and the story – ends rather abruptly with Carlo’s last words (p. 138):
«Partons, dit-il brusquement: ma place n’est plus ici, le bonheur n’y habite plus pour moi; rentrons dans notre prison.

Un instant après, installés dans la voiture qui par son ordre était venue nous attendre en cet endroit, nous roulions de nouveau sur la route poudreuse de Naples.

Dans le trajet, il ne m’adressa pas trois paroles et me quitta sans vouloir écouter mes remerciements.

Je ne l’ai pas revu depuis, mais je ne l’oublierai jamais.»

A peculiar encounter indeed. It often occurs in fiction on Pompeii that modern people meet ancient inhabitants in their dreams or during a walk, the most famous example being Octavien in Gau-tier’s Arria Marcella, but the guide who tells about the past as his own history has no parallels in fiction about Pompeii. Carlo does not feel at ease: first, he misses his old life in a lucky and prosperous Pompeii, second, he lacks the experience of the first Christians he encountered at Pompeii in its last hours. He hesitates between pagan and Christian belief, excluding the latter for the lack of social prestige. At the moment he tells his story, he cannot boast to have a socio-cultural rank equal to that at Pompeii. In sum, Carlo is a tragic person who is not at ease with both past and present.

The novella shows De Lamothe’s good knowledge of the monuments and doesn’t take much from fiction. Some topoi found in other novels, novellas and short stories as well are the Diomedes family, apparently the best-known inhabitants of Pompeii, the use of graffiti to illustrate the ancient mood and the Christians in the amphitheatre, who are rescued from being killed by wild animals by the eruption of Vesuvius. And if we meet an old Pompeian, it will always be one from the highest social level: had Carlo not been a member of an upper class family?

LOWRY’S DESCENT INTO HELL

A relatively unknown short story by the author of the famous Under the Volcano is situated at Pompeii, some years after the Second World War. Malcolm Lowry wrote ‘Present Estate of Pompeii’ during a trip through Italy with his wife in 1948 or between their return to British Columbia in 1949 and his untimely death in 1954. The plot is simple: a touristic stroll of a Canadian couple around Pompeii with Signor Salacci. Roderick McGregor Fairhaven and his wife Tansy from Eridanus, British Columbia, first have lunch in the small restaurant Vesuvius, not far from the Circumvesuvian railway station and wait until the pouring rain will stop. The day before they had been on Vesuvius, down into the crater, where Roderick got scared. After having drunk much wine and the weather having cleared up, they take courage to enter the excavations. Roderick has no great envy, he longs for his home at Eridanus. It was as if Eridanus had suddenly become, like ancient Rome, a theater of prodigies, real and imaginary» (p. 181).

Tansy reads from her guide book: «The ruins are open to visitors daily free of charge, from nine to seventeen o’clock. At the entrance, and even at the station, French, German and English-speaking guides (tariff) press their services on the tourists. [...] The time required for a conduct tour is from one and a half to two hours, but to view the place properly, four or five hours are necessary. Visitors are not allowed to take food in with them» (p. 183). They are late and will have time for a short tour only.

The visit turns out to stimulate Fairhaven’s reflections on ruins and the decay of humanity. At first glance, Pompeii looks like the ruins of Liverpool (p. 183). There are no people around but the three of them (guide included). Signor Salacci compares Pompeii to St. Maio, Rotterdam and Naples, also destroyed severely during the war (p. 187), and mentions the bombs on Pompeii itself when they see the Temple of Apollo (p. 193). The great difference is, Roderick thinks, that people preserve the ruins of Pompeii and throw the debris of the other cities away (p. 188, 199).

In Roderick’s view, a guide essentially is compulsory and keeps you in his power (p. 184): «And as
a matter of fact he [Roderick] half remembered Tansy saying that you couldn't escape these clutches, you were legally bound to take a guide.» Clutches! Signor Salacci says two times that he is a Pompeian (p. 185, 200). The city looks alive and is said to have been destroyed by God «for its wickedness» (p. 185). He remembers Roderick of his elder brother, a man like him dressed as an old-fashioned businessman (p. 187).

«And there was no doubt about it, Roderick thought again, this town, that both was and was not there, was obviously very real and complete to the excellent Signor Salacci: he saw it all.» Salacci concentrates his explanations on the topic of love in Pompeii, albeit in nearly all cases paid love, without which life decays rapidly. All this reasoning starts in the House of the Vettii. The Priapus in the vestibulum is hidden behind shutters, whilst erotic paintings in the room behind the kitchen are locked behind a door, but the guide has a key and shows them to his clients. The Priapus is «a Cyrano engaged in weighing, it seemed at first sight, upon a sort of Safeway scale, his nose, which emitted curious carmine sparkles» (p. 190): the pun hits on the phallus similar to or even identical with the enormous nose of Cyrano de Bergerac. Then they pass to the lupanare, where real life is found according to the guide. «There are, unless you happened to be Toulouse-Lautrec, few things in life less profitable than going to a brothel, unless, Roderick reflected, it was going to a ruined brothel» (p. 191). He feels growing his hatred against the place: the wrong things have been preserved in this town! The more while the guide seeks his own pleasure and commerce by showing out-of-use brothels, shops and bakeries. He gets obsessed with the notion of 'decay' and remembers a walk by night in which he reflected upon the ideas of Volney and Toynbee about that matter. 68 Hence his thought: «Well, St. Malo was wiped out, Napoli defaced, but a cock in the street outside an antique Pompeian brothel still survived. Well, why not?» (p. 195). Finally Fairhaven understands his fear: he is «the visitor from Ultima Thule» and he gets «a feeling that there was not going to be time». Moreover Pompeii was not a «man-made ruin» (p. 199). 69

The Eridanus returns in other short stories in Lowry's book and one may associate it with the underworld river Virgil mentions in Aeneid VI 659: plurimus Eridani per siluam uoluitur amnis («the stream of Eridanus is twisting through the wood in all his strength»). Otherwise it is known as the name of the Rhône and the Po. 70 But as it forms part of the Hades visited by Aeneas during his katabasis I think this is a fundamental reference: Lowry's prose is always learned and full of open and hidden references to the great literary works from antiquity onwards. Moreover Virgil is mentioned writing the Aeneid at p. 188. The fear for the ruins and the unavoidance of the guide – he is a bad sort of Hermes-Mercury, with his commercial ideas and traits of a swindler – transforms the tour into a descent to hell. And the great difference with the hell made by men in the Second World War is that Pompeii's hell cannot be missed, because it was created by other forces. The man-made ruins can be swept away, Pompeii not. In this context the guide becomes a new Hermes psychopomp. At the end he may even abscond a question on a possible next eruption of Vesuvius but for the rest, he cannot be missed either. All his observations on life are related to deceased Pompeians. He explains the labyrinth-like structure of the town, especially the curved street of the lupanare (p. 195) and so we get the image of the Underworld. 71

A GUIDE'S MONOLOGUE

Roger Peyrefitte (1907-2000) travelled in the Mezzogiorno around 1950 and published an anthology of impressions in Du Vésuve à l'Etna. One sketch, 'Le gardien de Pompéi', 72 contains the quite humorous monologue of a guide who dislikes visitors wanting more than a short and stereotypical tour around the place. The listener, Peyrefitte, other writers, scientists and journalists however ask for more than the average hour. Peyrefitte's is a very original approach of the Pompeii theme in fiction. 73 Some thoughts, surely those of the author himself but also of some intelligent guides, are worth to be quoted.

The man has no name, but is proud of his profession (p. 160): «Ce qui nous distingue des simples gardiens de musée, c'est justement que nous gardons autre chose que des objets d'art. Nous ne sommes pas voués à contempler éternellement des salons; nous pouvons nous délasser chez le barbier, chez le cabaretier, chez le savetier, et il y a toujours, au coin d'une rue, le symbole revigorant que nous indique le chemin du lupanar. Tout cela nous attache à ces pierres et nous les fait aimer.»
«Ce qui fait aimer Pompéi, c’est que ce luxe et ce goût n’y aient pas été le privilège des riches. Vous avez vu, dans de simples boutiques, des peintures aussi exquises que celles des plus grandes demeures. Voilà, je crois, ce qui caractérisait la vie antique: l’art y était à la portée de tous, comme le plaisir.»

As far as I know this short story gives one of the first mention of the damages caused by the American bombardments of 1944 (p. 161-162; see also Malcom Lowry, supra): «Au cours de la guerre, des renseignements erronés avaient fait croire que les Allemands truffaient de munitions des ruines de Pompéi. Elles furent, pendant trois jours, le point de mire de l’aviation américaine: cent soixante-deux bombes ajoutèrent des ruines aux ruines, sans faire toutefois des dégâts irréparables aux édifices principaux. Mais c’est miracle que vous puissiez encore visiter Pompéi! [...] Bref, Pompéi a ressuscité, une fois de plus. Elle a survécu à la pluie de feu, comme elle avait survécu à la pluie des cendres.»

I think our guide hides his real political preferences when saying (p. 163-164): «Nous sommes en dehors de la politique et des régimes: nous avons vu avec indifférence les soldats allemands venir saluer les croix gammées des mosaïques, et les miliciens fascistes venir saluer le temple du génie d’Auguste. Nous avons conduit au lupanar des bataillons de nègres, apaisé les rixes entre Anglais et Hindous, fait arrêter des Américains ivres qui volaient des squelettes.»

Finally, the brothel in the vicolo del lupanare cannot be avoided and is profitable (p. 167): «Que dirai-je du lupanar? Il nous vaut des rentes.» But «à force de chanter le lupanar, nous avons fait venir la Madone.»

CONCLUSION

From the time Herculaneum and Pompeii were discovered, these small Roman cities became important stops during the grand tour of the northern-European noblemen and scholars. The people from abroad sought for experienced guides, with the capacity to explain the peculiar aspects of antiquity and to enhance their experience of encountering an almost living past. The travellers could not enter easily into the antique ruins by themselves, not only for practical reasons but also for the lack of knowledge and understanding. These cities were monuments nobody had seen before! The ciceroni they were obliged to take with them, however, had no means to satisfy these great expectations. Socially, they stood on the lowest sports of the ladder, educationally they lacked almost every sort of instruction and in the sense of communication the two categories did not meet either. In the run of time the abyss seems to become less profound and lot of tourists appreciate the services rendered by the guides. The latter may even have learned from the experiences of their predecessors and try more eagerly to satisfy the demands of their clients. Probably, there will be more concurrence between the guides, who have to please the much more numerous visitors, both individual and in organised tours. Cicenoni get better instruction, there are more books available on all levels of education and the study of language is considered compulsory. Nevertheless, both parties stick in their local mentalities: even the traveller, who has come from far away, has not put off his local or provincial mood and is not doing any effort to understand the spirit of his hosts.

These factors made that many travellers who wrote about their visits to Pompeii and the other antiquities around Vesuvius disliked the ciceroni they encountered. But, in sum, the number of negative reactions is smaller than one would expect from the elite point of view of most visitors in the early days of Pompeii tourism. There was no real tourist industry based on the wishes of this peculiar sort of public, first elitist and mostly well-informed about the things they were going to see, later numerous and less well instructed. Apparently, the successive supervisors of the excavations were not interested in a better service in this respect, whereas they considered it necessary that the visitors were accompanied. The lack of custodians indeed could endanger the maintenance of the monuments.

Literary evocations of guides are rare: in the older novels they are present as the necessary companions of travellers like in the travel memoirs. The three works highlighted in the last section of this essay pay more attention to them, because they have become personae of their own, with their own individual characteristics. These guides are protagonists instead of personnel. Therefore, the social discrepancies disappear and the authors concentrate on the spirits and ideas of these men. That does not mean that the guides in these books become persons of flesh and blood: they stay in the shade and function within the world of the people...
they accompany. This is even the case in Peyrefitte’s novel, where the storyteller brings to the fore ideas of his own by a spokesman in the form of a Neapolitan gentleman.

The florilegium of texts about guides and with guides illustrates the ongoing interest for Pompeii and the other ancient monuments destroyed by Vesuvius in a particular way. The visitor makes clear that the guide is his leader, even if he dislikes him, in the discovery of the past and in the encounter with people who seem to stay away for a while and are not at all escaped from the earth. Pompeii remains a living city and the guides give the keys to enter into that society.

NOTE

1 Malcolm Lowry, Present Estate of Pompeii, in Hear us, O Lord from the heaven thy dwelling place, London 1961, p. 177.
3 See for instance M. de la Roche, Voyage d’un amateur des arts en Flandre, dans les Pays-Bas, en Hollande, en France, en Savoye, en Italie, en Suisse, fait dans les Années 1775-76-77-78 ... par M. de la R°-, I-IV, Amsterdam 1783, III, p. 59 note: «Ces permissions ne se refusent guères, mais elles ne sont point prodiguées.»
4 To avoid these contacts some noblemen even travelled incognito like Gustav III, King of Sweden, who used the name Count of Haga. Goethe started his Italian voyage in disguise as a merchant.
5 See de la Roche (cited in note 3), p. 43-51 (on Vesuvius and the preparation of the tour).
7 Mariana Starke, Travels in Italy between the Years 1792 and 1798; containing a view of the late revolutions in that country, London 1802, II, p. 97, 109.
8 Reisen von Neapel in die umliegenden Gegenden, Berlin 1806, p. 7-10, quotation from p. 10, at the date 4-12-1802. Benkwitz also wrote Reise von Glogau nach Sorrent über Breslau, Wien, Triest, Venedig, Bologna, Florenz, Rom und Neapel, Berlin 1803, part 3 on Naples (non vidi).
9 It is even told that the railway station at Pompeii was only constructed after Longo had guaranteed that every day a determinate number of people would get on and off at this place.
10 Dio Cassius, Roman History 66.21 uses the word ‘theatre’ but this is an easily understandable error.
12 [Louise Dement], Voyages and Travels of Her Majesty, Caroline, Queen of Great Britain, ..., by one of Her Majesty’s Suite, London 1821, p. 284-285.
13 Johann Joachim Winckelmann, Briefe, in Verbindung mit Hans Diepolder herausgegeben von Walther Rehm III, Berlin 1956, p. 528 (5 December 1767 to his friend Francke in Dresden). This eruption took place 18, 19 and 20 October 1767.

14 Thomas Jefferson Hogg, Two hundred and nine days; or, the Journal of a traveller on the continent, London 1827, p. 112 and 113. The Englishman was in December 1825 at Naples.
15 Pierre Brusel, Promenade utile et récréative de deux Parisiens en cent soixante cinq jours, Avignon 1768, p. 280.
19 John George Francis, Notes from a journal kept in Italy and Sicily During the Years 1844, 1845, and 1846, London 1847, p. 128-132.
21 Benkwitz (cited in note 8), p. 150-151.
22 August von Kotzebue, Erinnerungen von einer Reise aus Liefland nach Rom und Neapel, Berlin 1805, I, p. 298-299. Laurentino Garcia y Garcia, Nova Bibliotheca Pompeiana, Roma 1998 has both Von Kotzebue (nos. 7516-7519) and ‘Rossebue’ (no. 11.666), apparently due to some erroneous transcription.
23 Mrs Jameson [=Anna Brownell Murphey], Diary of an Enmuée, London 1826, p. 231-238. Gasparini/Musella (cited in note 11), p. 81 (cf. p. 240, quotation in Italian) date her visit and the eruption between 21 and 24 October 1822. The “5 February” may be an erroneous (or even fictional) chronology established later, while writing down the text for publication. The title of Jameson’s book is not explained unless by the motto on the frontispiece, viz. a quotation from the Elisabethan poet Edmund Spenser:
Sad, solemn, sour, and full of fancies fraile,
Yet wist she was not well at ease perdie;
Yet thought it was not Love, but some Melancholie.
26 Benjamin Sillman, A visit to Europe in 1851, New York 1853, p. 382.
27 Lady Sydney Owen Morgan, Italy, Paris 1821, III, p. 97.
28 Henry Coke [=John Millard], A Picture of Italy being a Guide to the Antiques and Curiosities of that Classical and Interesting Country, London 1815; 2nd ed. 1825 [actualised until 1817, see p. 360], quotation at p. 383.
30 Lady Anna Miller, Letters from Italy, describing the Manners, Customs, Antiquities, Paintings, &c. of that Country, in the years MDCCCLX and MDCCCLXI, to a Friend Residing in France, London 1776, p. 263-264.
31 C., lemma Herculanum in: Encyclopédie ou Dictionnaire
raisonné des sciences, des arts et des métiers, Supplément 3, 1777, 349-358, quotation at p. 352. This entry, strangely enough, does not refer to the lemma Herculaneum in the main corpus of the Encyclopédie 8, 1765, p. 150-154 by CHEVALIER DE JACQUARD. JERÔME DE LALANDE used the same wording in his highly authoritative Voyage en Italie, Paris 1769: 2. ed. 1786, VII, p. 425: «jeune homme très-peu instruit [...] on ne recevait de lui aucune lumière.»


33 STARK (cited in note 7), II, p. 117. FELIX FERNANDEZ MURGA, Carlos III y el descubrimiento de Herculano. Pompeya y Estabia, Salamanca 1989, p. 18 maintains that the in­terdiction to write notes was abolished in 1775, the one about making drawings never officially.

34 COMTE DE CAYLUS, Recueil d'Antiquités égyptiennes, etrusques, grecques et romaines, III, Paris 1759, p. 539.

35 COKE (cited in note 28), p. 394-395. In his days the Pompeian paintings were still in Portici, the rest was brought over to Naples (p. 358-362).

36 ROGER HOG ESC., Tour on the Continent in France, Switzerland, and Italy, in the years 1817 and 1818, London 1824, p. 202. A similar person accompanied him to the theatre at Herculanum (p. 203).


39 HOGG (cited in note 14), p. 57. The following quotations are on p. 59-61. His comment is interesting, because he was barrister at the Temple in London.

40 CROMBET (cited in note 2), p. 180 has the same experience: the museum entrance is free, but the guards'services are not.


42 Eating well seems to be a sort of topos. See for instance KARL FRIEDRICH SCHINKEL, Reisen nach Italien. Tagebücher, Briefe, Zeichnungen, Aquarelle, Berlin 1797, p. 194 on a lunch in the Caserma dei gladiatori in September 1824: «Fremde Weine, Champagner in Eis fehlt dabei nicht. Das Frühstück reichte für den ganzen Tag aus.»


44 During the 18th century there was a hot debate concerning the interpretation of sexs in the Popidius inscription. Many people could not believe that the boy was as young as six and suggested that this spelling intended to mean sexaginta, sixty. I cite two examples only. (1) DOMENICO MIGLIACCI, Riflessioni Sopra al Tempio d'ISIDE, nuovamente cavato nel corrente anno 1765, di là dalla Torre dell'Annunziata nel luogo detta la Taverna del Rapillo, nella città che si crede diatterta di ceneri, e sabbione dalla primiera eruttazione del Vesuvio sotto l'Imperatore Tito Vespasiano nell'anno 81. dell'Era corrente, Napoli 1765, p. 21: «La diffìcilità alla è, per qual motivo nella Iscrizione dicendosi, i Decurioni aver aggregato Gratis al loro ordine Numero Popidio, per la sua liberalità, vi si apponga la circostanza dell'età di anni sessanta; essendo marco sproposito sognarsi anni sei o sedeci, per esser la parola mozza e puntata, SEX. o SEXS. ricercandosi l'età di anni 25. pel Decurionato.» To this extremely strange pamphlet there came the following reaction in which the number of six was advocated: A.G., Continuazione di riflessioni in risposta alla Continuazione delle novelle letterarie per una lettera scritta da Catanzaro sulla spiegazione delle due parole Sexs. & Gratis nell'Iscrizione trovata sul Tempio d'ISIDE di là dalla Torre dell'Annunziata, n.p., n.y. (2) EDWARD DE BOURKE, Notice sur les ruines le plus remarquables de Naples et de ses environs, Paris 1823 (written in 1795), p. 236: «Il me semble que l'inscription dit tout simplement que Popidius avait soixante ans lorsqu'il fut agréé à cet ordre.»


47 JANE WALDE [=MRS WATTS], Sketches descriptive of Italy in the years 1816 and 1817, London 1820, III, p. 120.

48 THURLOW WEED, Letters from Europe and the West Indies 1843-1852, Albany 1866, Letter XX, from Naples, February 20 1852, p. 531 and 529.


54 GIUSEPPE FIORELLI, Gli scavi di Pompei dal 1862 al 1872, Relazione al Ministro della Istruzione Pubblica, Naples 1873, p. VI. The following quotation about the wages is at p. 175.

55 J. W. STAATS Evers published hin journal of his grand tour in 1840, three decades after the voyage itself: Honderd dagen in Italiën en Midden Europa, Arnhem 1872, p. 105-106: «De stad is nu mede door een uitstekend corps gendarmen omringd, die ieder vreemdeling als het ware op de hielen zitten, zoodat alle beschadiging of ontvreemding van schatten tot de onmogelijkheden behoort. Twee en dertig goed gedisciplineerde gilden staan hier verder den reiziger ten dienste. Men heeft bij Pompeji zelve een museum en bibliotheek, opgerigt en hondere [sic] werklieden houden zich des winters gewoonlijk met opgravingen onledig, die nu eerst voor een derde gedeeltelijk verrigt zijn: er bestaat evenwel alle reden om te veronderstellen, dat reeds het meest belangrijk gedeelte der stad, waaronder forum, tempels, amphitheaters, schouwburgen en vele openbare gebouwen, moet opgedolven zijn.»

56 Fiorelli in the same 1873 report cited in note 54 gives precise lists of workmen. In general their number increased from 7 to 500, with an average of 81 persons per day (p. 9).

59 The school Fiorelli had erected (see note 53). Here Wilamowitz met Giulio De Petra (p. 160).
62 Horace, Carmen 3.3.8: even if the world falls down in pieces, a hero cannot avoid to be hit by the debris.
63 For the motif of the sentinel near the Porta Vesuvio see Moormann, Una città mummificata ecc. (cited in note 61), p. 11-13 and Moormann, Evocazioni letterarie (cited in note 61) p. 20-25.
64 Carlo transforms the well-known motto from the House of Pansa: Hie habitat Felicitas, cited in all books on Pompeii.
65 Lowry (cited in note 1), p. 175-200. The only discussion I know is in Wolfgang Leppmann, Pompeji. Eine Stadt in Literatur und Leben, München 1966, p. 207, 235-238. Maybe it is not superfluous to say that Lowry’s masterpiece Under the Volcano does not deal with Pompeii, but is situated in Mexico (it is listed by Garcia y Garcia, cited in note 22, no. 8175).
66 P. 186. At p. 176 it is said that they arrived yesterday with the Roma-Napoli express. Did they do both things at the same day or was this a flaw Lowry should have corrected in the final version if he had had an opportunity?
67 Is his family name ‘Fairhaven’ in this sense of interest? Eridanus had a port and there are references to ships and to Herman Melville’s, Moby Dick.
68 P. 194. He partly cites the title of the masterpiece: Constant-François Volney, Les Ruines ou Méditations sur les révolutions des empires, Genève 1791 (written during the bloodthirsty days of French Revolution). Toynbee must be Arnold Toynbee, Civilization on trial from 1948. From both books quotations are inserted, dealing with the destruction of the wrong things.
69 The same distinction is made by Primo Levi when he compares the ruins of Pompeii with those of Hiroshima in his poem ‘La bambina di Pompei’ in Ad ora incerta (1984), quoted in Moormann (see note 61), p. 11 and Id., Evocazioni (cited in note 61) p. 19-20.
71 The guide makes a pun with curva, curved street and — according to him “lost woman” (p. 198). I could find no evidence for that. The late Marcello Gigante from Naples and Camillo Neri from Bologna confirmed my doubt orally during a stay at Vandoeuvres, Fondation Hardt (June 2001). Neri said that in Serban curva has this meaning. Did Lowry know that and confuse the two words? For the topography of the underworld cf. the article by Setaioli cited in note 70.
73 It is shortly mentioned by Leppmann (cited in note 65), p. 143, 233 as example of «gehobene Belletristik».