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The Reporting of the Discoveries at Herculaneum and Pompeii in 18th-century English Newspapers (1747-99)

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Abstract:

The paper examines persuasive and popularizing strategies of news reporting in a database of 50 news items about the discovery of Herculaneum and Pompeii published in London newspapers from 1747 to 1799. By applying van Dijk's persuasive content features of modern journalism (1988) and integrating them with the indicators of popularization in the news identified by Umbricht and Esser (2016), the study aims to identify the major discourse strategies adopted in 18th-century news in order to disseminate specialized knowledge to the public. The qualitative analysis of the different news text-types documents a gradual change of attitude towards antiquities throughout the century.

Keywords: 18th Century, Herculaneum, London Newspapers, News Reporting, Pompeii

Introduction

At a time when archaeology did not exist as a discipline, newspapers provided a significant platform for sharing information about the discovery of antiquities and eliciting interest in classical art. The resumption of the digging in Herculaneum (1738) and the rediscovery of Pompeii (1748) under the patronage of the king of the Two Sicilies aroused great curiosity among English middle- and upper-class consumers of newspapers (Black 1987). Not only the learned English nobleman who had received a classical education and could afford an extension of the Grand Tour from Rome to Naples, but also merchants, artisans and shopkeepers developed an interest in the finds and pursued Herculaneum fashion as a marker of refined taste and socio-cultural status.

Newspapers gathered news from different sources in order to keep up with the public's demand: from letters from Naples and accounts of different or unspecified origin to letters from travellers and experts. Some accounts did not always convince the readership and editors maintained a cautious attitude when publishing the news, specifying that "this was in need of confirmation" or overtly claiming that "we are assured that". Under readers' pressure, editors also engaged in soliciting confirmation of the news from their correspondents in Naples.

Problems of credibility about discoveries which brought to light pristine artifacts of Greek and Roman times were predictable, especially in the early stage of news dissemination. While king Charles of Bourbon was trying hard

to compromise between secrecy about the finds and the need to exploit them for political propaganda, news landed periodically in England both through official and unofficial sources. Until 1758, the English government could also benefit from the favour of Camillo Paderni, an exceptional informer superintending the works at Naples who sent his letters to members of the Royal Society, partly violating the king's prohibition to share unauthorized information about the excavation progress. As the keeper of the Royal Museum at Portici, Paderni had very privileged information to share with the Royal Society which, in return, appointed him fellow in 1755 (Roberts 2015). His correspondence started very early in 1739, so one year after the king resumed the digging, and finished in 1758. After being read to the scientific community, his letters were published in the *Philosophical Transactions*, some also appeared in the specialized *Gentleman's Magazine* and three of them later appeared in newspapers several months afterwards, thus contributing to the dissemination and sharing of a vocabulary of antiquities amongst a wider community of readers (Knight 1997; D'Amore 2017, 2019).

In my paper I shall examine what text-types were reported in newspapers and the value which was ascribed to them at different points in time. By adopting a narrative approach to news, I shall focus on aspects of news reporting and editorial adjustments. The research questions which I aim to answer are the following ones:

1. What sources and text-types were published to cover the excavations at Herculaneum and Pompeii?
2. What strategies were used to combine specialized knowledge and entertainment in accounts which had to appear authentic and reliable to the reader?
3. Is it possible to trace any change in the content or structure of the accounts reported in the newspaper? And, if so, how can they be interpreted in terms of their impact on people's attitudes towards antiquities?

In order to answer these questions, I have built a database of 50 news items reporting the discoveries at Herculaneum and Pompeii. The items were selected from the *Seventeenth and Eighteenth Century Burney Newspapers Collection* for the period from 1747 to 1799. The news items were retrieved from the archive by searching for the words "Herculaneum" and "Pompeii". Occurrences in which the keywords were used either as terms of comparison to discuss other antiquities in Britain and in Italy or on occasion of the eruptions of Mount Vesuvius were eliminated and cases in which the same news item was copied in different newspapers were counted as one in my database. Results show that the patchwork of news from different sources encoded in different text-types contributed to the construction of a macro-level narrative of discovery of the ancient past, where the language of knowledge was combined with popularizing strategies to spark interest and fascination among the 18th-century public.[1] The mixture of specialized information and fashion, sensationalism and scandalization, intellectual and domestic served to engage readers in a communicative encounter with a civilization of the past of which they could envisage themselves as legitimate heirs (Roberts 2015). The diachronic analysis of the news accounts also sheds some light on a gradual change of attitude towards the discoveries at Herculaneum and Pompeii on the part of correspondents, experts and visitors: from the focus on antiquities as objects of interest *per se* to an emerging critical insight into the methods of the excavation, the contextualization of the finds and conservation for posterity.

1. Methodology

In order to investigate the authenticating devices adopted to make the news credible and its content and values acceptable to consumers, I draw upon van Dijk's persuasive content features of modern journalism and apply them to the 18th-century accounts of the discovery of Herculaneum and Pompeii. Van Dijk (1988, 84-85) identifies three major discourse strategies to promote the credibility of the news:

1. Emphasise the factual nature of events (e.g. through direct description of ongoing events, signals that indicate precision and exactness, using evidence from close eye-witnesses, using evidence from reliable sources).
2. Build a strong relational structure for facts (e.g. mentioning previous events as conditions or causes and describing or predicting next events as possible consequences; inserting facts into well-known situation models).

[1] As Black (1987) and Slauter (2015) make clear, the readership of 18th-century newspapers was largely made up of middling and upper-class consumers who also read books and magazines. In 1757 the stamp tax increased and the cost of a newspaper went up to 2½d. The price represented about 5% of a London worker's weekly wage and 10% of an agricultural worker's weekly wage. In 1776 the tax rose again and the price of a newspaper reached 3d.

3. Provide information that also has an attitudinal and emotional dimension, as facts are better memorized if they involve or arouse strong emotions.

Van Dijk's appeal to the attitudinal and emotional dimension appears to be sufficiently broad to include the five indicators of audience-friendly packaging of information which were identified by Umbricht and Esser (2016, 101) in modern-day politics-related news and which will be applied to my database of 18th-century London newspapers. Since both politics and antiquities represent specialized knowledge to be disseminated among the masses, I believe that Umbricht and Esser's framework can be equally applied to 18th-century accounts of antiquities, despite the temporal gap. The five indicators of popularization of news are 1) sensationalization, 2) scandalization, 3) emotionalization, 4) common people narrative, 5) privatization of public figures. By sensationalization, Umbricht and Esser refer to stories which emphasize uncommon, extreme elements of attention-grabbing character and deviate from a rational, matter-of-fact writing style. Scandalization (often combined with problematization) is associated with stories that focus on defects, negligence and misbehaviours and that provoke indignation and sense of outrage. Emotionalization refers to narratives which amplify the reader's emotions and feelings. Stories with a common people narrative introduce "political issues into the lives of otherwise non-included citizens by likening them to their reality of life, privileging the viewpoints of ordinary people" (102). The indicator can be equally applied to other forms of specialized discourse. In the case of news about antiquities, for example, stories with a common people narrative are used to shrink the distance between past and present by introducing aspects of the life of the ancients into the pattern of 18th-century people's life. Finally, privatization of public figures focuses on personal and non-politics-related traits of a public personage, including attitudes and habits. In my database, the political figure to be represented in his personalizing traits is Charles of Bourbon, the king of the Two Sicilies, whose habits and attitudes with respect to antiquities dictated fashion and style to the British readership. In the course of the analysis, the five parameters will be examined within the emotional and attitudinal dimension outlined by van Dijk.

2. News Circulation and Variety of Text-types

London newspapers started publishing accounts of the discoveries at Herculaneum about 10 years after the resumption of the excavation by the king's order in 1738 and almost 38 years after the first excavations had been conducted by the former resident at Villa in Portici, the Austrian Prince d'Elbeuf, in 1710. The news about the Prince's finds had been published for the first time in the *Giornale dei Letterati d'Italia* in 1711 but it was only decades later (1739-58) that Camillo Paderni began to report on the royal excavations to his influential friends in England (Moormann 2015; D'Amore 2019). News about Pompeii had followed a similar path. The excavation of the city had started in 1748 but it was only in 1755 that accounts of the finds in the *Civitas* (Pompeii) arrived in England by means of a letter of Paderni to Esq. Thomas Hollis. The letter was published in the *Philosophical Transactions* and read at the Royal Society in 1756 before making its appearance in newspapers (Knight 1997, 34).

By and large, London newspapers had their share in the delivery of news about Herculaneum and Pompeii, although only after specialized monthly periodicals had already informed their most receptive readers. Nevertheless, newspapers had the advantage of gathering information from different sources in order to ensure their coverage at shorter intervals. This determined the co-existence of different text-types. In particular, I have identified five major text-types used to provide news about Herculaneum and Pompeii in my dataset: letters/accounts/advices from Naples (LN), letters from travellers (LT), letters from experts (LE), news accounts of different or unspecified origin (NA) and specialized works (e.g. catalogues, discourse, anecdotes) (SW).[2] LN are the most frequent text-type with 25 occurrences, followed by LT, LE and NA which occur respectively 9, 7 and 6 times. SW feature the lowest frequency with 3 occurrences concentrated in the last decades of the century.

It is worth bearing in mind that the distribution of text-types in my dataset changes throughout the decades. From 1747 until 1755, the year of the publication of an extract from Paderni's fourth letter to Esq. Thomas Hollis in the *Public Advertiser*, newspapers mostly rely on LN (12 occurrences) and LT (3 occurrences). From 1755 to 1772, the year of the publication of extracts from the Abbé Winckelmann's letter to Count Ch. H. von

[2] Letters from Naples are also called "accounts" and "advices". The three terms all refer to epistolary news and are used interchangeably by editors to indicate dispatches coming from Naples, the site of the Court of Bourbon. According to Brownlees (2011, 193) the word *advice* is a calque, the literal translation of *aviso/avviso* in Italian or *avis* in French. The term is mostly found in the reporting of foreign news.

Brühl of Saxony about the latest Herculanean Discoveries in the *London Chronicle*, LE and SW increase (from 1 to 5 occurrences) while LN and NA continue to provide the main coverage (14 occurrences). From 1773 to 1799, LT outnumber the other text-types with 6 occurrences (against 3 instances of LE, 3 occurrences of LN, 2 instances of SW and 1 case of NA). They contribute to keeping readers' interest alive but with some interesting changes in the attitude towards antiquity in comparison with the earlier letters.

From the perspective of the history of language, the circulation of news about Herculaneum and Pompeii coincides with the beginning of the late modern period (1750-1945). In this regard, London newspapers – and the variety of text-types contained in them – played an important role in the development of Late Modern English (LModE) (Tieken-Boon van Ostade 2009). In particular, the second half of the 18th century was characterised by an increasing social and geographical mobility which found in the readership of the London newspaper one of its major protagonists. As a result of the shift from land to money connected to the Industrial Revolution, different criteria were set to define social status and social mobility expanded accordingly. Membership of the gentry no longer depended solely on their position in the status hierarchy, as both wealth and education became important parameters to assess the social standing of a speaker (Smitterberg 2021, 17). Contacts between members of different socio-economic groups became more frequent owing to the regular interaction between the upper- and middle-classes who found in the newspaper a common platform of information, entertainment and education. This led middle- and even lower-class Londoners to ape the fashions, manners and interests of polite society (Langford 1992, 382).

Geographical mobility increased as well, as documented by letters from travellers often published in newspapers. Travelling for education across Europe, for example, enabled people to get in contact with different groups of speakers and acquire new cultural and artistic interests which left their mark on the English lexicon. With respect to this, excerpts taken from my database show how specialised words relating to art made their way into newspapers thus contributing to the propagation of terms which, although already attested in previous centuries, recorded a surge in usage from the 1750s onwards. The frequency of words such as *alabaster*, *antiquity*, *Bacchanalian*, *literati* reached a peak in the decades comprised between 1750 and 1800, while the usage of terms such as *bas relief*, *cabinet*, *pediment*, and *subterranean* increased in the late 18th century to peak in the 19th century, as shown in the factsheet of the *Oxford English Dictionary* (OED). Data also confirm Breban's (2014, 114) finding about the change of the adjective *several* into an unspecific quantifier which occurred in LModE, as we can see from the examples of *several* as premodifier of plural nouns indicating "a number of different; various, divers, sundry" (OED) (e.g. *several Historians* in example 4*, several Manuscripts* in example 12).

3. News-reporting: Factuality

When reporting news, the main concern of the editor is the selection and publication of reliable information to prove the factuality of the account (van Dijk 1988). In the early phase of news circulation editors relied on letters from Naples and letters from travellers. The first news about Herculaneum in my dataset comes from letters from travellers and appears in the *Whitehall Evening Post* within the London column:

(1) As we have formerly given the Publick an Account of the Discovery of a subterraneous City in the Kingdom of Naples, we have reason to expect that the two following Letters, in Confirmation of that Account will be very acceptable. The first is from a Knight of Malta and is dated the 24th of June, and runs thus […] The second Letter was written from Rome in the month of June last, by the Abbé d'Orval, at his return from Naples and Portici, who expresses himself upon this Subject thus […]. (*Whitehall Evening Post,* 8-10 August 1747)[3]

The role of letters from travellers in corroborating foreign news seems to suggest that, at least at this early stage of the discovery, a high degree of reliability is attributed to travellers' eyewitness reportage.[4] In 1747, both the knight of Malta and the Abbé d'Orval refer to the subterranean city near Portici as Heraclea, rather than Herculaneum. The first use of the name Herculaneum occurs the following year when the same letters are reprinted in the *Penny London Post*, accompanied by a more detailed editorial preface. Whereas the news in the *Whitehall Evening Post* and the *London Evening Post* is presented as a brief item, embedded among other reports on the second and fourth pages, respectively, it is given prominent placement in the *Penny London Post*, where it appears as the lead story in the first column of the first page. The initial letter of the knight of Malta's account,

[3] With minor editorial changes the same news is published in the same days on the *London Evening Post* (8-10 August 1747).
[4] On the reliability of epistolary news as a genre, see, amongst others, Brownlees (2016) and Schneider (2005).

"I", is embellished within an ornamental woodcut and typographic choices – including spacing, capitalization, headings and italics – are made by the printer in order to attract the reader's attention and give more prominence to the reportage:

(2) *As we had lately an Account from Naples* of some new Discoveries in relation to the ancient city of Heraclea (or Herculaneum) which was destroyed about 1600 years ago by an Earthquake, when there happened a great Eruption of Mount Vesuvius; *the two following letters in confirmation of that Account cannot but be acceptable to our Readers*. The first is from a Knight from Malta, dated June 24, 1747 and runs thus […] In the second Letter which was written from Rome in June last by the Abbé d'Orval at his Return from Naples and Portici, he expresses himself thus […] (*Penny London Post*, 18-20 July 1748, my emphasis)

The editor of the *Penny London Post* offers a more comprehensive contextualization of the letters from the two travellers. In the preface, he reveals the name of the city and provides additional details regarding the time and circumstances surrounding the burial of Herculaneum. Another noteworthy addition is the use of the noun phrase "our Readers" in the expression "the two following letters […] cannot but be acceptable to our Readers", which serves to emphasize the editor's attentiveness to the subscribers' demand for accurate and reliable news.

Both in the news published in 1747 and in its reprint in 1748 the credibility of the two travellers is foregrounded through the reference to their professional and social standing (a knight and an Abbé). Even so, at least one of them, the Abbé d'Orval, spreads misinformation when he claims that "Heraclea was discovered two or three years ago by order of the king of Naples" (*Penny London Post*, 18-20 July 1748). The proposition conceals the real origin of the finds of which the Austrian Prince d'Elebuf was the former promoter, albeit for his own personal usage (Özgenel 2008). Although this occultation of information might have been in line with the Bourbon propaganda, the error in postponing the beginning of the royal excavations in 1745 remains, along with his misnaming of Mount Vesuvius as Mount Aetna: "That which we have found most wonderful […] is a subterranean City, overwhelmed with the ashes of Mount Aetna, under the reign of Titus" (*ibidem*). This lack of accuracy in the information appears to be justified by the early stage of news circulation. Even so, it is important to bear in mind that by the end of the century, abbés were often perceived as lower-ranking ecclesiastics with limited educational backgrounds. This might explain the presence of inaccuracies in their accounts.[5] Overall, the editors' caution in reporting news remains high throughout the decades.

A similar testimony of the suspicious attitude of the reader and the corresponding editorial care for authenticity is found in the *London Evening-Post*:

(3) As many Persons doubted the Truth of what was said in our Gazette of the 17th April concerning the Ancient Manuscripts lately found in the Ruins of Heraclea or Herculaneum, we wrote to Naples for further information of this Discovery and have received the following Answer: 'it is true that they have found at Herculaneum not only a great number of Greek Manuscripts but also some others in an unknown Character'. (9-11 July 1754)

The example reveals that by 1754 the editor considers Naples as the official source of news about Herculaneum, capable of confirming or disconfirming information coming from other sources. The use of the inverted comma indicates the verbatim report of the content from the capital and is meant to certify to both the authenticity of the news and the reliability of the newspaper.

From 1755 onwards newspapers begin to publish letters written by experts, superintendents and esteemed antiquarians visiting the site. The reliability and authoritativeness of these sources is such that readers are no longer encoded in discourse as reluctant to accept the truthfulness of the news. If upper-class subscribers of the *Philosophical Transactions* or the *Gentleman's Magazine* were already acquainted with the names of Camillo Paderni, Antonio Bayardi or the Abbé Winckelmann, antiquarian of the Pope, some middle-class readers of three-weeklies and dailies might have encountered these names for the first time. In the following example, the editor's source was the *Gentleman's Magazine* which published Camillo Paderni's letter of October 1754 in May 1755. The *Public Advertiser* re-published the same account two months later with editorial intervention in the headline. The substitution of the initials of the addressee along with an anticipation of the content of the letter

[5] An example of the public's skepticism regarding the credibility of abbés in matters of antiquities can be found in the news article entitled "Ciceroni", published in the *Whitehall Evening Post* in 1789. The article reports that: "[...] it is now become much of the fashion in Italy particularly among the English to employ such intelligent persons, who [...] are more likely to contribute to form his [gentleman's] taste [...] than if he be conducted by an ignorant Abbé, a Valet de Place or by a Gondolier". (*Whitehall Evening Post*, 28-30 May 1789).

were functional to the advertising purpose of the topical headline. The catchphrase "late Discoveries at Herculaneum" (6 occurrences) which framed accounts on the front page of newspapers acted as a bait for readers who were eager for the latest from the site:

(4) Extract of a Letter from Camillo Paderni, Keeper of the Herculaneum Museum, [addition: relating to the late Discoveries at Herculaneum] [omission: to T____S H____S. Esq.], dated at Naples, Oct. 18 1754. [omission: See Vol. XXIV pag. 261]. (*Public Advertiser,* 11 July 1755)

Another device which was commonly used by editors in order to enhance the factuality of the news is the reference to "accounts" and "advices" in the plural. Brownlees noticed a similar preference for the plural form in the word "letter(s)" in 17th-century news reporting. The strategy enhances credibility suggesting that more than one account/advice/letter has been received and processed before the news is considered sufficiently worthy of attention to be conveyed to the reader. In Brownlees's words, "the published news is presented not as an account of one personal viewpoint but instead as a composite practice of assorted epistolary news" (2016, 400). Below are two examples from the *Whitehall Evening Post*:

(5) Our last accounts from Naples say that Report prevails among the Literati of that City, as if the Manuscript contained, either in whole or in part, the Roman History composed by Pliny the Elder. (3-5 December 1754)

(6) According to our last Advices from Naples, the Public may expect in due Time to have a Share in those invaluable Treasures that have been extracted out of the ruins of Herculaneum; since it is certain that no less than 150 volumes have been found. (9-11 July 1754)

As example (6) shows, numbers are a crucial truth-authenticating strategy in news reports. According to van Dijk (1988, 87) and Brownlees (2011, 78), it is not so much the exactness of these numbers that is important but rather the fact that they are given at all, since a reporter capable of providing exact figures must have had first-hand knowledge of the event. In my dataset numerical referencing is copious: it indicates the dates of the finds, the days employed to extract objects, the quantity of artifacts, their size and people working on them. In particular, the manuscript mania which pervades the macro-level narrative of the discoveries at Herculaneum since the first attestation of the Villa of Papyri provides a significant example of the use of numbers not only as markers of factuality but also as markers of evaluation.[6] When reporting on the manuscripts found in the Villa, numbers are used either to apportion praise for the excavation progress or blame for the incompetence shown by superintendents and workmen in dealing with such an increasing amount of treasure, depending on the stance of the author. In example (5) the number of manuscripts found is given as 150 and a few months later, in the *Public Adviser* of 11 December 1754 we read that "according to advices from Naples not less than 250 volumes have been found in a wooden Chess […] perfectly legible and well preserved". In the extract of a Letter from Camillo Paderni written in October 1754 and published in the *Public Advertiser* on 11 July 1755, the manuscripts taken away "amounted to the Number of three hundred and thirty-seven and all of them at present uncapable of being opened". The number increases again as the excavations continue. In Winckelmann's letter to Count von Brühl of Saxony dated 1762 and reporting the situation of the excavation 4 years earlier in 1758, the manuscripts collected were said to amount to a thousand and "no more than four rolls have been as yet entirely unfolded" (*Critical Account* 1771, 41). The same number was reported by Earl Buchan almost twenty years later in his Discourse to the Society of Antiquarians of Scotland:

(7) in the excavation of Herculaneum, there was discovered many years ago […] a library consisting of about one thousand volumes, two hundreds of which perished before the workmen […] and of these 800 rolls of volumes which remain, a few only have been unfolded or unrolled. (*Morning Post,* 17 January 1788)

While the increasing number of manuscripts found undoubtedly indicates progress in the digging, the use of numbers in context documents a changing attitude towards the finds throughout the years. In particular, the enthusiasm for the considerable amount of manuscripts, most of them "perfectly legible" and "well-preserved",

[6] Villa of Papyri was an ancient Roman villa discovered in Herculaneum in 1750. It takes its name from the thousands of papyrus scrolls that were found within it from 1752 onwards (Lapatin 2019).

which characterises the early accounts, gradually gives way to a more or less veiled disappointment/criticism for the impossibility – or incapability of the superintendents – to open them ("uncapable of being opened", "two hundreds of which perished before the workmen", "only a few have been unfolded or unrolled"). The manuscript saga comes to a provisional end in 1795 when the first of the four manuscripts unrolled and deciphered was published and a copy sent to England.[7] The news account reported in the *St James Chronicle* makes precise use of numbers for an accurate and ultimately self-celebratory presentation of the manuscript edited by the Literati of the Bourbon Court:

(8) It consists of 38 fragments or columns besides the title […] In this manner it is carried on throughout, extending the whole volume, with the aid of five useful indexes to 180 pages, besides the preface of between 20 and 30. (14-16 July 1795)

4. News-reporting: Relational Structure for Facts

According to van Dijk, the credibility of the news is also determined by the way in which events are related to one another so as to sound plausible and comprehensible to the reader. When the early accounts on the discovery of Herculaneum began to circulate editors had to contextualize the event within a cause-effect relationship, in order to make it acceptable and newsworthy to the reader. This required hyper-condensed historical summaries which linked past geological events to the present discoveries. In the early accounts, the historical reconstruction is inserted within a top-down structure of the information whose use can be documented in news discourse from the 17th century (Cecconi 2009, 146). The top-down structuring of the news event envisages that what is most important in the story is told at the beginning while details of the events and its causes are given in later paragraphs (Jucker 2005, 13). In the letters from the Kinght of Malta and from the Abbé d'Orval reprinted in the *Penny London Post* in 1748, the editorial lead foregrounds the most recent event, i.e. new discoveries at Herculaneum and postpones the historical background of the city to subordinate clauses with a clear explicatory function:

(9) As we had lately an Account from Naples of some new Discoveries in relation to the ancient city of Heraclea (or Herculaneum) *which was destroyed about 1600 years ago by an Earthquake, when there happened a great Eruption of Mount Vesuvius*; (*Penny London Post*, 18-20 July 1748, my emphasis)

After reporting the two letters from travellers, the editor takes care to supply readers with further background information about the Eruption of Mount Vesuvius. He devotes a paragraph to preface the account of the eruption narrated in Pliny's letter to Tacitus followed by the letter itself:

(10) The first Eruption of Mount Vesuvius of which we have any Distinct Account in History is that which happened under the reign of Titus Vespasiani, mentioned by several Historians […] It was at this Time, very probably, that the City before mentioned was either buried under a Torrent of Ashes and combustible Matter from the Mountain or sunk in the earthquake which attended the Eruption. We have a surprising Account of both in Pliny's Letters [Book vi, Letters 15 and 20] which we shall give our Readers from the late excellent Translation of Mr. Melmoth. They are both addressed to Tacitus the Historian, and are as follows. (*Penny London Post*, 18-20 July 1748)

A similar top-down structuring of the information is found in the following news dated 1751, where the curiosities lately discovered in Herculaneum and Pompeii are put in prominent position while the historical circumstances which caused the burial of the cities are condensed in subordinate clauses at the end of the paragraph:

(11) By a Letter from a Gentleman on his Travels not at Naples, we are informed that more and greater curiosities are daily discovered among the ruins of the ancient Cities of Herculaneum and Pompeii, *which were buried about eight Feet under Ground, by the Ashes and Stones thrown out of Vesuvius in a violent Eruption of that Mountain, in the year 79 after Christi.* (*Whitehall Evening Post*, 9-12 February 1751, my emphasis)

In the following advices from Naples, on the other hand, the contextualization of the discoveries is restricted to the present-day situation of the digging and no historical framework or reference is added:

[7] The manuscript was written by the Epicurean Philosopher Philodemus of Gadara (c. 100 BC – prob. c. 40-35 BC) on the topic of music (Gigante 2002).

(12) The workmen, who are employed in removing the ruins at Herculaneum, have lately discovered a Marble Urn, as transparent as Alabaster; it is three foot and a half and the Bas Relief thereof is a curious Representation of a Female Bacchanalian. In that Bas Relief and the other Embellishments of the Urn, the fine Taste of some curious Sculptor who lived in Greece, when his Art was in its utmost Perfection – is plainly manifest. (*General Advertiser*, 29 May 1752, my emphasis)

(13) By a Letter from Naples, we learn that, *in digging the Ruins at Herculaneum,* they have found several Manuscripts rolled up; which excited the greater Curiosity as they were thought to relate to Ancient History. But, notwithstanding all their Art, they were unable to unroll them […]. (*Public Advertiser,* 28 June 1753, my emphasis)

(14) The workmen, *employed in digging the ruins of Herculaneum,* have lately made an important discovery. It is a Statue of white Marble, seven feet high of exquisite Workmanship […] half defaced on the bottom of the Pedestrial represents the famous Sibyl of Cuma […]. (*Whitehall Evening Post*, 30 November 1760, my emphasis)

The contextual proposition is expressed in subordinate and parenthetical clauses within the script of the "sudden discovery" during the excavation. It is likely that editors are less committed to providing historical background as news readers are supposedly growing acquainted with Herculaneum and Pompeii. At the same time, we may assume that informers from Naples are much more interested in disseminating propaganda about the key role of the Bourbon Court in the finds than in supplying readers with background knowledge. In this regard the use of the *ing*-form for the material verbs "digging" and "removing ruins" highlights the continuity and intensity of the excavation process, tracing a clear cause-effect relationship between the royal patronage and the inestimable discoveries of the classical past. In the three examples above, the script of the "sudden discovery during the excavation" – encoded in discourse through the pattern *ing*-form + present perfect (+ lately) – provides the framework for the introduction and description of the find, which represents the real kernel of the news (e.g. "a marble Urn", "Manuscripts", "a Statue of white marble").

5. News-reporting: Emotional/Attitudinal Dimension and Popularizing Strategies

The emotional/attitudinal dimension – and its articulation in the five indicators of popularized news outlined by Umbricht and Esser (2016) – is principally traceable in LE and LT where authors indulge in captivating and attention-grabbing descriptions of the excavations and the finds. Sensationalization, for example, characterises the letter of Abbé d'Orval originally published in the *Whitehall Evening Post* (1747) and then reprinted in the *Penny London Post* (1748). The language of wonder and abundance pervades the narrative through positive evaluative words, some of which in superlative constructions, plural nouns and quantifiers which, combined with progressive tenses, enhance the continuity of the excavation and the quantity and value of the discoveries:

(15) That which we found *most wonderful* and which will appear *most incredible to the World* is a subterranean City, overwhelmed with the Ashes […] discovered two or three years ago by order of the King of Naples, *they have been digging it up ever since*. They have drawn from thence and *are every Day drawing* antique Statues of *inestimable value, the most precious kinds* of Marbles and *rich Remains of Antiquity of all kinds.* (*Penny London Post*, 18-20 July 1748, my emphasis)

A similar enthusiastic account full of quantifiers and positively evaluative adjectives is found in the extract of a letter from a gentleman at Naples to a friend of his in London. The letter favours the finds in Pompeii over those in Herculaneum.[8] This unusual focus on the Roman city may be due to the assumption that by 1765 people had grown sufficiently familiar with the excavation progress at Herculaneum and were presumably more eager to receive news from the nearby Pompeii:

(16) The antiquities which have been found at Pompeii are very numerous and many of the Paintings, Statues and Mosaics, as capital as any than have been discovered. The chambers which were painted are preserved. None of them have windows and the light […] was by the door which are of a very tall proportion. (*British Chronicle*, 1-3 April 1765)

[8] For a complete study on the rediscovery of Pompeii in the 18th century and its popularization through the 19th-century Grand Tour, see Cooley (2023).

Sensationalization couples with another indicator of popularisation in the news: the common people narrative, which reanimates the past by making readers experience the life of the ancients as being very close to theirs. This sense of proximity between past and present is meant to inspire feelings of sympathetic closeness in the reader as we can see in the letter from a knight from Malta where the detailed description of common utensils used by the Romans creates a strong tie with the 18th-century reader's habits and life:

(17) This City is entire and the Furniture well preserved. I have seen everything prepared for Dinner at the time the Eruption happened as Bread, Meal, Wine &c. all very fresh, Utensils, Earthen Vessels, Tools, Fishing Nets of Silk, not very different from those now in use. (*Penny London Post*, 18-20 July 1748)

As Roberts notes, the apparent freshness of substances of perishable nature, such as food or wine, invited visitors "to think of the excavations as less an investigation into a society already dead and ossified than a reanimation of a community that for centuries had been preserved in a kind of stasis […]" (2015, 64). The interest in the domestic life of the ancients was enhanced by the finds at Pompeii, where the comparison between past and present contributed to developing a sense of continuity and heritage:

(18) Many precious monuments of antiquity are still frequently found in the neighbourhood of the ancient city of Herculaneum. Some kettles and other vessels of copper were very lately discovered: they are not tinned within-side, like ours, but lined with silver; from whence it appears that in old times they thought more of preserving health than at present. (*Morning Chronicle*, 12 June 1772)

The fascinating power that these pieces of furniture and food which had been carbonized and were therefore unspoilt by time must have exerted on the early visitors is also traceable in the letter of Abbé d'Orval where he very modestly reports that he has "For [his] part, [he] contended [himself] with taking some Corn and some Bread of those Times which remains perfectly found in the Houses" (*Penny London Post*, 18-20 July 1748). To be precise, this is not the only souvenir the Abbé takes away from the ruins, he also takes hold of "the remain of a piece of Painting [he] found in a Hall" (*ibidem*). The fashion of taking away objects from the site of discovery is recounted as being ordinary or acceptable though not necessarily legitimate. In the letter from a gentleman on his travels published in 1751, we learn that "several things had appeared abroad equally valuable with the best in the king's Possession" which caused his Majesty to double the number of Guards (*Whitehall Evening Post*, 9-12 February 1751). Taking away pieces of wall paintings as souvenirs and purchasing whatever came from the site of the excavations were common practices, not to be disjointed by the king's own custom to take mosaics and artifacts from the ruins and use them to decorate his residence and palace at Portici (Moormann 2015, 21).

Narrative incursion into the attitude and habits of the king can be interpreted as consistent with the privatization of public figures, another indicator of popularization which blends information and entertainment. The knight from Malta and Abbé d'Orval provide the first testimonies in my dataset of the king's custom of digging in order to take away objects to decorate his palace. The knight closes his letter by saying that: "the king has paved Parlours in his new Palace which is adorned with these Rarities, with Mosaicks and other Pediments taken up entirely" (*Penny London Post*, 18-20 July 1748). The Abbé from Rome, with equal candor, reports that Marbles and antiquities of all kinds "are employed by his Majesty in adorning his Palaces" (*ibidem*). The reader's imagination was stimulated further by accounts of the king "busying himself daily among the infinite Collection of Rarities, the Discovery of these ancient Cities has put in his possessions" (*Whitehall Evening Post*, 9-12 February 1751). Descriptions of the king's humour in relation to the finds equally contribute to arousing readers' curiosity about news regarding Herculaneum. The following letter written by a Spanish nobleman in Madrid is indicative of the beneficial effects that precious discoveries had on the king's spirit and how they were likely to impact on his political and military actions. Further to the capture of the Spanish frigate Hermione during the Anglo-Spanish war, the Spanish nobleman reports that:

(19) His Majesty is much out of humour […] What seemed to please him most was the venerable remnant of an ancient beard lately discovered at Herculaneum and which the learned Bajardi supposes to have been the beard of Zeuxis […] When this matter is once fully decided, orders will be given to carry on with vigour the siege of Almeida. (*London Chronicle*, 7-9 September 1762)

In the following years, accounts of the Royal Collection at Portici and the catalogues published by king's order fuelled the Herculaneum mania to the point that a commentator claimed that "anything from Herculaneum becomes ruptuous" (*Loyd Evening-Post,* 8-10 May 1765).

A turning point in the sensational and propagandistic macro-narrative of discoveries at Herculaneum and Pompeii is marked by the Abbé Winckelmann's letter to Count Brühl which newspapers played a significant part in disseminating. From that moment onward scandalization/problematization takes over and although self-celebratory accounts from Naples continue to feed readers' imagination with news of additional volumes of Bayardi's catalogue, attention progressively shifts from the enthusiastic accounts of treasure-hunt to aspects of the excavation methodology, with important implications in digging techniques, documentation and representation (Özgenel 2008).

In the summary of Winckelmann's letter, originally published in the *Gentleman's Magazine* (June 1765) and then copied in the *London Chronicle*, the name of the engineer targeted by Winckelmann as responsible for the unforgivable errors in the early phase of the excavation, the Spanish Alcubierre, is carefully omitted. No mitigation, however, is applied to the description of the man's incompetence:

(20) In the process of the work, labourers discovered the Theatre […] they found also another public inscription, the letters of which were of bronze and four palms high; this they shewed to the engineer who, *with a stupidity scarce to be paralleled*, ordered the letters to be torn from the wall uncopied and, throwing them all into a basket, sent them in this confusion as a present to his Majesty. (*London Chronicle,* 6-9 July 1765, my emphasis)

Although the expression "with stupidity scarce to be paralleled" is not in the original, its harshness conforms to Winckelmann's curious judgement of Alcubierre as a man "who knew as much of Antiquities as the Moon does of Lobsters" (*Critical Account,* 1771). The incompetence shown by the man is exemplified in the narrative of a case of shameful negligence. It regards the fate of a four-horse car which had been originally located at the top of the Herculaneum theatre. As we can read in the summary of Winckelmann's letter in the *London Chronicle*, very harsh expressions are used to elicit the reader's indignation:

(21) At the top of the Theatre there was a car drawn by four horses, of bronze, and a figure in the car, of bronze gilt. This was thrown down and broken by the earthquake but as all the parts remained, it might easily have been repaired. So little care, however, was taken of this curious and valuable piece of antiquity, that they threw it in fragments as they found it into a cart and sent it to Naples, where they shot it, like rubbish in a corner of the court before the castle. (6-9 July 1765)

The polarization between the highly positive semantics for describing the value of the artifact ("curious and valuable piece of antiquity", "all the parts remained") and the negatively connoted expressions referring to its ill treatment: "threw it in fragments […] into a cart", "shot it like rubbish" and "corner of the court" exacerbates the ineptitude of the superintendence, maximising scandal and resentment.

As this was not enough to sensitize public opinion, in the *London Chronicle* of 10-12 September 1772, one year after the publication of the translation of Winckelmann's letter as *Critical Account* (1771), English readers were also informed that what remained of the statues, after a theft of the most valuable fragments, was melted down into two busts of the king and the queen:

(22) One may easily guess what has been the fate of these two pieces [the bust of the king and the queen], which I could never get a sight of. In fact they are become invisible. Care was taken to bury them in some hole, as soon as the shameful neglect of which they were the monuments came to be taken notice of. (*London Chronicle,* 10-12 September 1772)

The dissemination of Winckelmann's work appears to have impacted on travellers' reception by developing a highly critical approach where scandalization progressively replaces wonder. A case in point is the letter of a traveller recently returned from Naples in 1773:

(23) The search for antiques at Pompeia goes on but slowly about 20 men are employed there and in uncovering the Theatre at Herculaneum. *This is the more inexcusable* in a place like Naples, where it is computed that forty thousand men are without houses and lie soaking above one another in the streets and where the king has so many useless troops. There is only one man employed in unrolling the ancient manuscripts at Portici. […] they have no sense to examine the titles or some part of the work before they proceed to unroll it and the slowness of the operation may make it 1000 years before they come to anything worthwhile; in which time Portici will probably be buried under another eruption of Vesuvius. (*General Evening Post*, 24-27 February 1773, my emphasis)

Numbers which originally underlined the abundance of the finds are now used to denounce the scarcity of people working on the ruins in relation to the quantity of antiques still lying underground. The *Discourse*

delivered by Earl Buchan to the Society of Antiquarians of Scotland published in the *Morning Post* merges the scandal/problematization related to the slowness of the work with advice as to the methods which should be employed to optimize the results:

(24) In the excavation of Herculaneum, there was discovered […] a library consisting of about one thousand volumes; two hundreds of which perished before the workmen, who were not aware of their nature or importance. Of these 800 rolls or volumes, a few only have been unfolded or unrolled, by a process which […] is extremely slow and tedious. Instead of employing forty of fifty hands to perform this task and beginning by discovering the subjects or authors of the books, one or two persons only have continued to unroll books that chanced first to be opened and which have happened to be of no great value. (17 January 1788)

By 1799, when the French arrived in Naples, newspaper readers were fully aware of the problems inherent in the digging methods, the indolence of workers and their general neglect. Humour was mixed with scandal in an account published in the *Morning Chronicle* where Sir William Hamilton, archaeologist and British envoy at the Bourbon Court of Naples,[9] comments on the slowness of the digging:

(25) This work was carried out with so much languor by the people appointed to execute it, that our Ambassador, Sir William Hamilton, used jokingly to say to the King of Naples, that he should send for a hen and chickens from England, who would scratch up the City [Pompeii] sooner than his Majesty's men would uncover it. (22 March 1799)

Scandalisation also pervaded a previous account about the state of preservation in Pompeii. The news was originally reported in the *Sporting Magazine* in April 1793 and four months afterwards it appeared in newspapers:

(26) Mr Watkins, the last examiner of the buried town of Pompeii appears to have gone a step beyond his predecessors in a quarter, which there is in most towns, called the WONDERFUL. The following is part of his Description: "You may suppose the houses of Pompeii are in high preservation, when I tell you, that we saw on the Sill of a window, stains of some such liquor as coffee or chocolate, made by the bottoms of cups. (*Star and Evening Advertiser,* 10 August 1793)

Although scandal-based micro-narratives increased in the last decades of the century, partly disturbing the enthusiastic dispatches from Naples, they did not erase the interest in Herculaneum and its treasures, as we can read in one of the narratives that continued to circulate in newspapers before the French occupation:

(27) Naples, Sept. 3
On the 13th last was exposed to Public View in the King's palace a set of China representing the Grecian curiosities dug out of Herculaneum. Each peace is valued at 400 ducats. Chevalier Venuti, Director of the Royal Manufactory, as inventor of this new elegant ware, is preparing to give a full explanation […] for the satisfaction of the lovers of antiquity and fine arts. (*Gazetteer and New Daily Advertiser,* 1 Nov. 1782)

At the end of the century the myth of Herculaneum and Pompeii continued to fuel people's imagination. Even so, the predominance of popularization through scandalization was indicative of the emergence of a new, more critical sensitivity towards the management and preservation of classical antiquities. In the following decades the increasing desire for antiquities and the interest in progressively more accurate methods of excavation and preservation paved the way for a more scientific approach to classical archaeology (Özgenel 2008).

Conclusion

The macro-level narrative of the discovery of classical antiquities reported in 18th-century London newspapers relies on a variety of sources and text-types, each providing an episodic insight into the excavations at Herculaneum and Pompeii. In particular, five text-types in order of frequency have been identified in the serialization of the coverage of the finds: letters from Naples, letters from travelers, letters from experts, news accounts of unspecified origin and specialized works. These sources stretched over a period of 50 years from 1747 to 1799 supplying the reader with a polyphonic representation of an unprecedented large-scale discovery of Greek and Roman antiquities. In order to be accepted as reliable by an increasingly demanding readership, the accounts

[9] Studies on William Hamilton's role at the Court of Naples during the excavations can be found in Ramage (1992).

conformed to a set of truth-authenticating strategies which have been examined by combining van Dijk's model of persuasive content features of modern journalism (1988) with Umbricht and Esser's indicators of popularization in political news (2016). The results revealed the editor's need to enhance the authenticity of the news by appealing to factuality in the form of a) news attribution (with Naples being considered as the main source of reliable news about the finds); b) use of eye-witness reportage (in letters from British travelers which were also considered very precious sources of information given the amount of time required to receive more official news from Naples); c) the voice of experts in their letters and catalogues (e.g. Paderni, Winckelmann, Bayardi); d) precise description of the artifacts, especially through the use of numbers often exploited as a means to apportion praise or blame towards the sponsored digging.

The intelligibility of the news, on the other hand, was guaranteed by the construction of a strong relational structure for facts through a) editorial supply of historical background knowledge, and b) the script of the "sudden discovery" during excavation. At the early stage of news circulation, the historical contextualization was supplied by the editor after the news of the finds, according to a top-down structuring principle which prioritized the outcome of an event over its origin. In the following decades the historical contextualization disappeared while the script of the sudden discoveries continued to frame the majority of the accounts.

Authenticity and intelligibility of the news, however, would not have been sufficient to ensure the long-term interest of the readership without the simultaneous orchestration of popularizing strategies pertaining to the emotional/attitudinal dimension of the news. Results have shown that throughout the 50 years examined all the five indicators of popularization outlined by Umbricht and Esser were used in London newspapers, although with a different distribution. While sensationalism, emotionalization, privatization of public figures and common people narrative characterized the first twenty years of press coverage through a rhetoric of wonder and abundance, scandalization/problematization about the recovery methods gained ground in newspapers after the publication of the Abbé Winckelmann's *Critical Account* (1771). The initial emphasis on the extraction of the object from the site and its value for collection purposes progressively shrank as more attention was devoted to the excavation procedure itself. The emerging sensitivity which took shape in the public platform of newspapers appeared to lay the groundwork for a different scale of values and beliefs in relation to antiquities: from a mere treasure hunt aimed at embellishing villas and palaces towards a more systematic and rational approach to excavation and preservation.

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