

Educators as Change Agents:

An Interpretation proposal for the Marquis of Pombal Palace, in Oeiras

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Abstract:

The authors are both lecturers at Estoril Higher Institute for Tourism and Hotel Studies and tourist guides in Portugal. One of the visits they usually perform with the students in the context of their lessons is exactly to Pombal palace, an 18th century Baroque summer residence located in Oeiras, 10 km away from Lisbon.

This paper starts with a theoretical approach on interpretation, followed by an historic presentation of the palace and its main areas, and some suggestions for the interpretation of palace and gardens. Therefore, the article aims at granting propositions that might be applied to assist guides, tour operators and the venue's managers to prepare (complementary) general and theme tours, and host niche markets to fully grasp the cultural resource's charisma and ambience.

Weiler and Black (2015) claim that guides resort to many interpretative media, such as drama, storytelling and narratives, in order to create more persuasive tours. All in all, both interpretation narratives and techniques leading to mental time travel are key to the clients' understanding of a site's evolving identity, especially when complemented with the teasing of the visitors' senses as one shall reveal.

Conclusions stress that appropriate and effective competence on interpretation techniques allied to professional practice and theoretical background during the education of students are pivotal to shape the future of guided tours.

Keywords:

Heritage Interpretation, Oeiras, Pombal Palace, Tourist Guides, Education.

Introduction

The present article is based on the authors' experience on heritage interpretation both as certified guides and lecturers at the Higher Institute of Tourism and Hotel Studies, in Estoril, where they teach tourism information, heritage interpretation and foreign languages. In the last few years both authors performed several visits with graduate students to the Palace of the Marquis of Pombal, in Oeiras, a town located 10 km away from Lisbon.

The object of this study is the Palace of the Marquis of Pombal. The goal of the researchers is to propose a creative interpretation of both palace and gardens, and to bring an innovative but professional perspective to cultural heritage interpretation:

1. Innovative because instead of the common guiding speech, the authors propose several interpretation techniques to provide a deep significance to the heritage site, leading to its full comprehension, appreciation and preservation.
2. Professional because well-trained guides are conscious of their interpretation techniques, and of their roles as guides who facilitate the understanding of the site as hosts, ambassadors, leaders, and educators (Pond, 1993).

Other aims can be pointed out such as to convey the 18th-century atmosphere of the estate, its everyday life, decorative arts, and cultural *ambiance*.

The research method is characterized as bibliographical and documentary. According to Gil (2010), the bibliographic research was elaborated from the search for clarification and discussion based on material already published. Examples include printed materials, legislation, such as books, magazines, newspapers, theses, dissertations, and annals of scientific events. Other types of publications can be added, such as disks and all material made available on the Internet. The above mentioned sources were used for the construction of the theoretical framework, interconnecting them with the practical part of the work. According to Severino (2007), documentary research was performed through the use of several types of documents as data source. Documentary research is the collection of data in primary sources, either written or not, belonging to public archives; private archives of institutions and households, and statistics.

The paper starts with a theoretical approach on interpretation and continues with a section dedicated to a brief description of the venue and its historic, cultural and artistic relevance. The execution of the study was only possible due to the personal and professional experience of the authors. At the end of the second section some theme tours will be suggested.



Map 1 Greater Lisbon (with international airport) and Oeiras' location.
 (https://map.viamichelin.com/map/carte?map=viamichelin&z=10&lat=38.70701&lon=-9.13564&width=550&height=382&format=png&version=latest&layer=background&debug_pattern=*)

Theoretical Approach on Interpretation

A contemporary definition of interpretation can be found in the website of the American National Association for Interpretation (NAI). According to NAI interpretation is “a mission-based communication process that forges emotional and intellectual connections between the interests of the audience and meanings inherent in the resource.” In this definition we find the idea of «mission», as the aim and the reason for interpretation, associated with emotion, knowledge and intellect, which are fundamental to understand heritage and deliver a message about it. Additionally, tourist guides have the important mission of conveying positive messages, changing and improving the tourist behavior in order to contribute to a better and more sustainable world. Tourist guides contribute for the preservation of world heritage and make tourists understand that, if they are visiting a world heritage natural or cultural site, that site is also the tourist’s heritage, not only the guide’s; the heritage site is also part of the tourist history, therefore they should contribute to its preservation. How? Well, to understand is to appreciate; appreciation leads to protection and care. Arguably, instead of overusing, damaging and despising, tourists may help preserve and promote culture, knowing that a tourist site is also part of their heritage and advertising it through the word-of-mouth process. Moreover, they can also buy something about the monument and contribute to the economic sustainability of the resource and the local community (Brito, 2010).

Interpretation is a form of communication in which data flows between the parts involved. According to Oschell (2009), it can be a one-way, two-way, or circular process involving sender, receiver, medium and message. Interpretation is different from information, because the former is about the «how» whereas the latter is about the «what». In guiding, the most important element of the communicative component is interpretation that must be adjusted to the audience's knowledge of the resource. According to Figueira (2013) we can distinguish four levels of interpretation:

1st level – Initiation

Intended for publics that are not related to the object of visit and with a basic level of complexity (under/up to compulsory schooling)

2nd level – Disclosure

For publics with capacity to accommodate the medium complexity (corresponding to secondary schooling or equivalent)

3rd level – Deepening

Aimed at publics with higher education or equivalent, with a need for a deeper interpretation (corresponding to graduates, postgraduates, and self-educators with skills equivalent to these levels of academic training)

4th level – Research

Which will focus on the scientific and technical publics operating in the domains where the objects of visitation can be contextualized. It takes shape in what can be called technical-scientific visits.

The job of the guide is to finely-tune his/her discourse to the audience, so that the resource meaning can be perfectly understood and the interpretation can be enjoyable. This is actually the distinctive element of the trained tour guide professional quality that can make the practice of tour guiding more enjoyable (Weiler and Black, 2015b). The guide has to speak in such a manner that it will take the tourist to hear him/her, activating communication and causing the interaction between the tourist culture and the local culture: "The guides' cultural brokering role revolved largely around communicating and interpreting local cultural values" (Weiler & Black, 2015a: 367).

Several authors (Ham, 1992; Pastorelli, 2003; Pond, 1993) refer the importance of having a theme as a message that the tourist will take home and also as a thread of the tour, i.e. the link between the several elements that reveals what is unique and relevant. Thus, the audience will be able to easily assimilate the main ideas and messages that the guide conveys, although according to Brochu & Merriman (2002) most people will only remember about five ideas at the end of the tour.

During a tour there are three phases: the welcoming, the intermediate phase and the conclusion of the tour. In the reception phase, the guide warmly greets customers and explains in general the itinerary and how s/he will run the tour. The conclusion is the phase in which the guide bids farewell to customers, compares what they knew to what they know now, invites visitors to return and wishes a good trip and a good stay. The comment is pronounced in the intermediate part of the tour and is regarded as the interpretation of tourism resources, which is delivered by the guide to the audience. Because there are many professionals with different backgrounds, different types of tours and different audiences, there are also many types of comments and themes.

According to Brito (2010), interpretation is personal. Each interpreter has a unique way of interpreting, depending on his/her style, background and passions (which are shown on the enthusiasm and the voice), his/her knowledge and training and the audience that is ahead of him/her. Interpretation has to meet four requirements: be enjoyable (to keep the listener attentive), relevant (significant and related to the listener), organized (with an introduction, a development and a conclusion) and thematic (must have a sequence and a message). In addition, it must be intercultural, meaning that it has to establish a link between the culture of the host and the culture of the tourist. In order to achieve this aim, it includes connections between the object/resource and universal concepts, which are intangible, appealing to the attention and understanding of everyone, regardless of their personal experiences. Examples of intangible concepts are family, death, prejudice, love, friendship, beauty, culture, faith, home, tradition. The best interpretation combines tangible and intangible elements, i.e. it gives meaning to an object.

Thus to interpret is not simply to inform or describe. If a guide says «This is a cork oak» s/he is giving basic information; but if s/he says «the bark of the tree is used for various purposes, such as heat, humidity and vibrations insulation and manufacturing stoppers» s/he is interpreting (Brito, 2010). The information must not only be interpreted but also centered in the receiver, i.e. it must be different according to the audience. Therefore, for an American audience the idea that «NASA uses Portuguese cork as insulation in spaceships» should be added to the discourse. The advantage is that the public feel involved in some way or identified with the resource, which becomes more familiar, thus creating a link with the country. In this manner, communication is improved and interpretation becomes intercultural, because a cultural link is established between the culture of the host and the one of the guest reducing uncertainty. The use of intercultural interpretation techniques implies proficiency - a deep awareness and understanding of the tourist culture (Brito, 2010).

According to Weiler and Black "Many of the techniques used by guides to foster understanding and appreciation are well-known interpretive techniques such as non-verbal communication, asking questions, making use of anecdotes, examples, analogies and personal references, and using props (e.g. artefacts and photos from the past)" (Weiler and Black, 2015a: 367). In heritage interpretation we can consider rhetoric techniques and strategies. They are used by guides with three specific aims: to convince, delight

and educate visitors. Rethoric techniques are only produced through the guides' oral communication, whereas interpretation strategies also include an action, body language and non-verbal communication.

As far as discourse techniques are concerned we may distinguish *logos*, *pathos* and *ethos*. *Logos* appeals to reason and logic and consists on narratives based on facts, numbers, dates and logical explanations as well as in the use of paradox, humour and irony. It also includes the use of questions. Some examples frequently used in guiding: «Do not forget this date - 1755. At the end of the tour, anyone who doesn't remember this date will have to do the whole tour again!»

Pathos is related to feelings, emotions and passion. It is defined by the use of superlatives, hyperboles and colourful descriptions, such as «King John V had one of the three richest courts in Europe.» The five senses can be used by guides to tell stories, provoke the tourists and illustrate the sites. For instance: «Belém custard tartlets are topped with cinnamon powder, a spice that came to Lisbon with the 16th century discoveries? Hum... they are delicious.» Storytelling is another technique, which aims at suggesting rather than saying/disclosing. Stories cause strong feelings in the people, because they are a way of letting them imagine situations and characters as they like, besides being a way of feeling different experiences, creating a unique opportunity to enrich a tour. If storytelling is used together with drama it becomes a discourse technique and a strategy at the same time.

Ethos appeals to ethics and morals, values, norms and consciousness. Appealing to ethos causes more attention and participation in the tour. For instance: «In Portugal we always eat with fork and knife.»

The use of non-verbal communication, props and drama are the main interpretation strategies. Non-verbal communication techniques such as smiling, friendly body language and eye-contact are often used to get the attention of the audience (Weiler and Black, 2015b). Nevertheless, they can have different meanings according to the culture of the people: A stare can be understood as evidence of interest, but in another context it can mean threat, provocation.

Props are rarely used by most guides, but they are a very useful strategy to explain what cannot be seen or illustrate how a certain space or object was/will be in a different time. The most common props are maps, drawings, schemes, postcards, historical photographs, artefacts and crafts. Eco and nature tour guides often use examples of plants and natural materials during their tours, as well as mirrors to reflect sunlight and use it as a natural focus, pocket flashlights, binoculars and lenses. Other props are books, music and instruments.

Drama is created by the use of illustrative costumes, but sometimes a peculiar and symbolic object like a hat or a pair of glasses can be enough to illustrate a time or exemplify

a character, cultural practices and traditions. Many guides change their voice when they are telling a story as a simple way of dramatizing, while some tour operators hire volunteers or professional actors to perform a story or event. They sometimes perform a character themselves, or sometimes prefer to tell a story in the third person.



Figure 1: *The elegant stairway that leads into Oeiras' palace. (Authors' collection)*

The Marquis of Pombal Palace in Oeiras

Carvalho e Melo's Life & Estate

Sebastião José de Carvalho e Melo was the 1st Count of Oeiras and Marquis of Pombal. The reforms of Joseph I's Secretary of State changed Portugal's economic, intellectual and administrative features, while Lisbon (then capital of empire) rose from the ashes after the 1755 earthquake. Although unappreciated by the late King John V, Carvalho e Melo's negotiating skills led him as ambassador to England and Austria, there getting acquainted with the latest ideals of the Scientific Revolution and Enlightenment periods.

While in Vienna he married his 2nd wife and may have become a Free Mason. After his return to Lisbon, what was still a majorat owned by his family was to become a lavish estate with two sections. Its accomplishment was only possible after a pact forever recalled in the current building's Agreement Hall's ceiling where one admires the brothers who strove to fulfil the dream; the canvas' pictorial elements also reveal hints of their links to Free Masonry (Gonçalves, 2005). In the early 1750s Oeiras majorat was a

discreet farm set between the royal road to Lisbon and the coastline, with the Palace's initial section preserving its Baroque glazed tiles of battle scenes on the skirting boards of the Grand Hall. The room's current designation was granted after the building's enlargement, when the ceiling's stuccoed medallion with an allegory to Bounty (and Oeiras' lands) was added.



Figure 2: A ceiling embellished by the brothers' pact. (Authors' collection)

Had it not been for the 1st November 1755 earthquake that reduced Lisbon to ashes, and one would not be writing about Carvalho e Melo and his Oeiras' estate. The then Minister of Foreign Affairs's prompt response to the catastrophe contrasted with the Sovereign's, and soon Carvalho e Melo was to overpower Joseph I, which actually worked as a double-edged sword. On the one hand, the country was to be swept away by winds of (political, economic, scientific, social and intellectual) change; on the other, the timeless *status quo* of the aristocratic families was to be disturbed by Carvalho e Melo's arrogance (the Minister was but an esquire until 1759). Educated in Classical and contemporary authors alike, the depiction of Ovid's *Metamorphoses'* episodes might be found across Oeiras' Palace in areas like the Music Room's ceiling, the garden's cascades and tiled stairways.



Figure 3: *Orpheus playing the lyre that enchanted all creatures. (Authors' collection)*

His cosmopolitan taste explains the naming of the Hungarian Karl Mardel as the architect for the estate that articulated productive and leisure areas, besides taking advantage of flowing brook and viewpoints that once allowed force lines, linking Sintra and Arrábida mountains. As Dias (1993) sustains, Mardel “was inspired by the landscapes of Vaux le Viconte and Versailles (...) and the philosophies of André Le Nôtre – grand architect of Louis XIV (...). Naturally Oeiras is smaller” (19). Other important artists included the Italian stucco master Giovanni Grossi, and the Portuguese (sculptor) Machado de Castro and (painter) André Gonçalves. Grossi’s stuccoes are everywhere: from the chapel to the Grand Hall, from intimate leisure spots like the Music Room (where lessons for the children and *soirées* for the family were organised) to Carvalho e Melo’s study (whose ceiling reveals Mercury flying over a building site, an allusion to Lisbon’s reconstruction works, but the guide might recall the Minister’s fine lacquered desk). Grossi’s artistry meets Castro’s skills in the Dinning Hall, where the stuccoed groin vault is embellished with Carrara marble statues, besides Rococo glazed tiles with scenes of 18th-century indoor and outdoor meals. There the guide might lead visitors to find the pannel were coffee and chocolate are being served, or the stucco *cartouche* where a servant wearing a turbant waits on a lady.

The estate was a model of efficiency in its articulation between upper and lower areas (meaning, productive and leisure sections), the blending of the lattest building and decorative techniques, Classical references found everywhere, and effectiveness of the brothers that in two decades developed the family status (Pinto, 2006).

Joseph I’s death, the growing animosity between Carvalho e Melo and the aristocracy that he persecuted, and young Mary I’s unstable mental condition sealed the Minister’s



Figure 4: Tiles depicting 18th-century exotic beverages served in the Dining Hall. (Authors' collection)

fate. The already known as Marquis of Pombal was sent into exile to the namesake territory in central Portugal, but in the 1830s the victory of liberal principles would praise his reforms. By the early-20th century his offspring sold Oeiras' estate to Artur Brandão, a businessman who split it into three sections before selling them. For decades the silhouette of the mighty palace resembled a ghost of Ages past in the quiet panorama of the downtown area, until the early-21st century. Decades of mismanagement took its toll on palace and gardens, hence the continuous renovation works at hand, especially considering the "many tile panels from different periods of the 18th century and of great artistic and historical quality that presented several frailties and pathologies (...). Therefore, to preserve (...) is to carefully save and maintain in good condition our heritage". (Fernandes, 2016: 41)

Theme Tours

Despite being open to the public, the venue now mostly receives spontaneous and national visitors. However, the proper planning of hosting, promotional and interpretative strategies could be accomplished, not only to revive its faded charisma, but also to assist in the municipal seat's economic boost in these days of economic backlash. Among other possibilities, considering nationalities, age groups, and cultural awareness, one shall present a few possible theme tours to interpret this venue:

1. Carvalho e Melo: National Reformer & Regional Landowner;
2. The 18th century Cultural and Economic Reality;
3. Meeting Ovid in Oeiras' Pombal Palace;
4. Wine & Dine with the Marquis of Pombal;
5. A ghost story in the Palace: children's tour.

Table 1: *Theme tours in Oeiras' Palace and tourist guides' interpretation*

The guided tour	The interpretation
1) Carvalho e Melo: National Reformer & Regional Landowner	1. Comparisons, props and drama
2) The 18th century Cultural and Economic Reality;	2. Silent tour with non-verbal and sign language followed by questions and remarks.
3) Meeting Ovid in Oeiras' Pombal Palace;	3. Storytelling
4) Wine & Dine with the Marquis of Pombal;	4. Five senses, <i>ethos</i>
5) A ghost story in the Palace: children's tour.	5. Storytelling, humour and emotions

Source: authors

The 1st proposition targets anyone who wishes to know both venue and its owner, on a basic approach to timeline and character that might be available for groups previously booked and for random visitors. The latter simply have to wait for the hour scheduled for the visit to begin, and its definition by the equipment's managers should take into account the timetable of trains reaching Oeiras' station. Visitors' might be both seduced and teased with the guide resorting to props, body language, and irony.

The 2nd suggestion broadens the visitors' Knowledge on the 18th century lifestyle by providing references to Portugal's and other European courts' trends, and recalling travel writing reports of then foreign visitors. Historic and artistic episodes linked to the niche market that booked this tour in advance should be conveyed, thus strengthening the intercultural role of the guide as a «go-between», who might use comparisons, blended with the narrative and questions asked to the clients.

The 3rd idea might be booked by adults, children, or families, with the guided tour being led by the Classical author, or one of his own characters. Storytelling, eye-contact, body language and (vocal) emotion should be applied.

These suggestions would also include, not only the already-common children's birthday parties on the weekends, but once a month in the Summer (e.g. on a Wednesday at 9 PM) there could be telescopes (of parents and teenagers) set in the gardens. The latter proposition would firstly encompass the guide's presentation of Mardel's force lines and key elements scattered across the landscape at Sunset, and as night falls astronomy lessons conducted by the Calouste Gulbenkian Planetarium's scientists might happen; the fee charged on this activity should include an evening snack of grape juice and Oeiras' biscuits. Both activities should have items

sold at the palace's souvenir shop from cloth dolls to miniature tea sets, and junior astronomy kits.



Figure 5: *One of the authors'/Guides near the Classical Poets' Cascade. (Authors' collection)*



Figure 6: *Another author/Guide interpreting the venue under mystical lenses. (Authors' collection)*

Final Remarks

When in 1777 Carvalho e Melo fell from grace after Joseph I's death, his enemies sought to influence Queen Mary I's unbalanced judgement to make sure he was to be erased from History records. Carved in stone, Oeiras' Pombal Palace is the lasting vestige of its remarkable owner's vision and travels. Set halfway between the capital city, Cascais and Sintra, and served by a fine network of roads and motorways, Oeiras' "Sleeping Beauty" awaits. All being well, International Tourism might arrive through efficiency and promotion. It takes more than the organisation of random events to firm the image of a tourist asset such as this, which is why the paper's authors resorted to their scientific and technical expertise as certified tourist guides and teachers to propose a few theme tours that might revitalise both venue and downtown, by fostering a sense of partnership between the community and the venue's managers and stakeholders.

Certified tourist guides are agents of change when presenting novelties like this cultural equipment to Tourism students, and these theoretical theme tours to the venue's official managers. But they are also adaptable agents when interpreting such an outstanding heritage in many possible ways and still succeeding in conveying the right message, thus keeping the lines of intercultural communication open. As Pond (1993) sustains,

Powerful interpreters who can capture the essence of a place, person, or idea and infuse it in others abound in many fields. (...) Like master artisans, seasoned guides conduct themselves with seemingly little effort and a palpable sense of joy, so that anyone observing them feels drawn to the place, the experience, and the guide themselves. (p.138)

Alongside an appealing menu of *a la carte* theme tours available, venues like this object of study require a pragmatic management strategy and marketing plan. As examples of the former the availability of proper parking lots, traffic control, street signs, toilets, inclusive tours, and certified guides are mandatory. On the latter, elements like official website and booklets/guides in languages like Portuguese, English and Spanish, the hosting of Tour Operators' and Portugal's Tourist Authority's (*Turismo de Portugal*) collaborators invited to enjoy two or three of the tours listed, invitations directed to the tourist and/or cultural departments of diplomatic delegations set in Lisbon, and the creation of a package combining train ride, guided theme tour and meal (whether lunch of an afternoon snack) should be implemented. The latter could offer as options an afternoon visit to *Casal da Manteiga* where the Carcavelos wine is produced (and tasted), or to Oeiras' historic centre and key 17th and 18th century landmarks.

In recent years Portugal became an appealing destination to international flows as statistics and awards reveal. On the other hand, scholars like Bramwell (2004) claim "Alternative' [tourist] products are often considered better adapted to the changing tastes of consumers, who, it is suggested, are increasingly looking for more specialist and customised holiday experiences" (p.3). The authors' propositions offered to the future management of Oeiras' Pombal Palace might be applied in any other monu-

ment, museum, or cultural resource where guided tours can be conducted by certified professionals. One focused in Oeiras Palace's uniqueness, and the same spirit should lead similar cultural and promotional initiatives aiming at interpreting heritage to the 21st-century visitor. As Salazar (2010) defends, in these days of globalised operations and services, it is the local distinctiveness of an attraction that succeeds in the growing competitive reality of tourist destinations.

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