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From Pompeii: The Afterlife of a Roman Town. By Ingrid D. Rowland

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Yet the questions raised by these forum shoppers should inspire those of us who work on colonialism to consider how we might heed Lewis's call to attend to colonialism's materiality and "geographies of power" without rejecting methodologies inspired by "post-colonial theory" (5–6). Delving into the ways people from Morocco to Libya might have self-identified, and expressed those identities—especially during a period in which many might have indeed wondered, as one Italian politician put it, "what difference there was between being a subject of the bey and one of Italy" (110)—can only deepen our understanding of how colonialism worked and how it was contested.

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From Pompeii: The Afterlife of a Roman Town. By *Ingrid D. Rowland*.

Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2014. Pp. 340. \$28.95.

In 1962, an American eight-year-old accompanied her family on a fateful journey across the Atlantic. Their first stop in Europe was Naples, where they tried to tour Pompeii, which happened to be closed, as was so often the case in Italy during the "old days." Fortunately, Herculaneum was open, and the family also got to explore the slopes of Vesuvius. The experience left a deep impression on the young girl, forming "a deep stratum in a kind of personal archaeology" (4). In later decades, Ingrid Rowland would become one of America's leading interpreters of the ancient world, Italian art and architecture, and the classical tradition.

As suggested by this opening vignette and, indeed, by its very title, *From Pompeii* is less a comprehensive work of historical or archaeological analysis than it is a reflection on what people have taken away from their encounters with the famous ruins, from material artifacts to inspiration to cautionary tales. As the author puts it, her book is a "history of Pompeii's place in the imagination . . . as complex and as revealing as that of the city itself" (1). Although many of its archaeological features are richly described, complete with photographs, the physical site of Pompeii is not the book's chief protagonist. The focus is rather on the many visitors—tourists, archaeologists, artists, monarchs—whose experiences were not simply personally affecting but, equally, helped shape the ways in which subsequent generations would imagine and interact with the ancient city.

Significantly, as Rowland notes in the book's early chapters, Pompeii lay buried for centuries after its destruction in 79 CE, and visitors were drawn to the region for other reasons—foremost among them, the city of Naples and the volcano Vesuvius. By the seventeenth century, Naples had become one of the world's most populous cities and a major cultural center during the Renaissance and Baroque period. It was the promise of patronage that prompted Leopold Mozart and his talented son to travel south from Rome (though there is little indication of how the trip affected young Wolfgang Amadeus). The exact location of ancient Pompeii was discovered more or less by accident by the seventeenth-century German Jesuit Athanasius Kircher during his geological explorations of Vesuvius. Well into the nineteenth century, the volcano commanded more attention than the ruins of Pompeii; Naples and Vesuvius also feature prominently in the construction of various "imagined Pompeiis." The volcano's periodic eruptions have traditionally been seen as expressions of divine opprobrium, and the corresponding moral narrative of "The Last Days of Pompeii"—the punishment of a sinful pagan city during the nascent days of Christianity—has been enshrined in art, literature, and eventually cinema. Similarly, Rowland connects the fate of Pompeii to the Neapolitan obsession with death and salvation, as seen in the city's many ossuaries and the cult of its patron saint, San Gennaro, whose liquified

blood is believed to protect Naples from harm. This juxtaposition of the living and the dead, both under the looming threat of cataclysmic destruction, has inspired countless musings about the frailty of human existence and the unpredictability of fate.

While visitors arrived in Pompeii with many expectations or preconceptions—about morality, aesthetics, and history—they were often unprepared for what they encountered. Early modern antiquarians, versed in the formal classicism of the Italian Renaissance, were unimpressed and dismayed by the gaudy colors and whimsical wall paintings. Even more shocking was the frank eroticism to be found not only in the infamous *lupanari* (brothels) but also decorating the interiors of many private homes. Pompeii thus forced a fundamental reconceptualization of Roman art, undermining the severity and monumentality of neo-classicism. Modern artists were more receptive: one of the more evocative of the book's chapters details the visit of Pierre-Auguste Renoir, who came away inspired by the paintings' riotous colors and determined to "achieve that grandeur and simplicity that the ancients have" (214).

Another interesting dimension Rowland explores is the intertwined development of modern archaeology and tourism. The earliest excavations of the area were haphazard and mainly devoted to finding artifacts—statues, friezes, marbles—to be used as decorative elements in aristocratic villas or to enhance the royal collections of the Bourbon court. Initially, Herculaneum received greater attention and was investigated through a series of subterranean tunnels. Pompeii, however, could be excavated from the surface, and its greater accessibility soon made it more popular with both scholars and curious visitors. By the middle of the eighteenth century, it had become a destination on the Grand Tour. Excavations accelerated during the period of French occupation (1799–1815), and by 1844, Pompeii was connected to Naples by Italy's first railroad. Tourism exploded in the second half of the nineteenth century, drawing such luminaries as Charles Dickens (who was more unpreoccupied by the squalor of Neapolitan street life) and Mark Twain (who seemed uncharacteristically moved by the fate of the ancient Pompeians).

It was during this period that Pompeii also came into its own as an archaeological site. Its director in the 1860 and 1870s, Giuseppe Fiorelli, was the first to approach the task of excavation stratigraphically, instead of simply extracting artifacts from the ground. Fiorelli was responsible for the first plaster casts of preserved bodies, which are now among the site's most popular attractions. In the twentieth century, Pompeii became a required stop for visiting dignitaries—attracting everyone from a young Emperor Hirohito to Hillary and Chelsea Clinton—as well as a destination for mass tourism, a "strange mix of overly packaged Disneyland and idyllic wilderness walk" (12).

As this brief overview suggests, there are many compelling stories in *From Pompeii*. It is by no means an exhaustive or even particularly exacting analysis of Pompeii's ancient life and modern afterlife; there is no central argument or critical perspective as such. Rowland's book is, however, an extremely engaging and enjoyable read, made all the more compelling and fascinating by its author's expertise and passion for the buried city.

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The Nuns of Sant' Ambrogio: The True Story of a Convent in Scandal. By *Hubert Wolf*. Translated by *Ruth Martin*.

New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2015. Pp. xiv+480. \$30.00.

As its title and reasonable price suggest, the author and publishers of this volume, first issued in German as *Die Nonnen von Sant' Ambrogio: Eine wahre Geschichte* (Munich,