

[Exoticizing Vesuvius? Formations and Representations of Naples, ca 1500-present]

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Alternative topographies of piety: pilgrimages to Neapolitan sites of literary and artistic remembrance, ca 1500-1700

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In early modern tourism, the concept of holiness is integrated and transformed in performative practices like the visit to the graves of eminent poets and artists, both antique and modern. By offering and promoting alternative topographies of piety, these secular pilgrimages not only blur but also expand traditional notions of holiness. This transformation has a particularly sharp impact on the early modern topography of Naples and its representations, where various kinds of sacredness at the heart of the cities cultural identity – the antique, the religious, the modern -- need to be integrated. But precisely because of this multi-layered heritage, the proud idea of a cultural metropolis – Napoli nobilissima -- can take root and become the essence of the cities self-representation as of the early Cinquecento.

This paper examines how alternative topographies of piety, particularly those involving sites of literary and artistic remembrance, have contributed to early modern perceptions of Naples as a cultural metropolis. In doing so, it builds on a survey of the extremely rich genre of early modern city guides of Naples and its surroundings, from Benedetto di Falco's *Descrittione dei luoghi antiqui di Napoli* (1535) and Pietro Di Stefano's *Descrittione dei luoghi sacri di Napoli* (1560) up till Carlo Celano's *Delle notizie del bello, dell'antico e del curioso della città di Napoli per gli Signori forastieri* (1692), contrasting these auto-representations moreover with the images of Naples presented in the earliest foreign guides produced within the new context of the Grand Tour, like Francis Schot's *Itinerarii Italiae rerumq. Romanarum libri tres* (1600). The paper concentrates on two elements that enable us to better grasp the transformations in the cultural topography of Naples as presented to its early modern visitors: a) the link between the antique heritage and modern Neapolitan culture, as is it most eloquently shaped in the topical combination of the visit to the graves of Virgil and Sannazaro, and b) the places shown to visitors because of the artistic or literary heritage they contain or evoke, from the art collections of private citizens like the Roomer brothers to the graves of eminent painters and poets like Berardino Rota and Giambattista Marino.