*Conference Tourist Guidebooks: where the vocabulary and images of Cultural Heritage meet*, Pisa and Florence, 11-12 June 2015.

Summary by Liliana Arrabito and Monica Shenouda, LBC, University of Florence

The research unit Lessico dei Beni Culturali – University of Florence – invited specialists in linguistics, literature, history, art history, photography and multi-media to the conference on *Tourist Guidebooks: where the vocabulary and images of Cultural Heritage meet* on 11-12 June. The conference focused on how cultural heritage narrative, vocabulary and imagery intertwine in tourist guidebooks in passages dedicated to urban spaces, landscapes, architecture, figurative art and crafts.

The principal themes included:

- The vocabulary of cultural heritage in tourist guidebooks from synchronic or diachronic perspectives

- Translated tourist guidebooks

- Different editions of tourist guidebooks

- The images of cultural heritage in tourist guidebooks in synchronic or diachronic perspectives

- The imagery of cultural heritage

- The protagonists of tourist guidebooks: authors of texts and images and readers

- Interactions with other descriptive genres: tourist guidebooks and travel journals, travel photography

- The study of tourist guidebooks at large: open issues

Which words and images are used to describe cultural heritage assets? How are certain items selected through narratives and what is instead left out? What is the role of the author(s) in selecting which cultural assets to include in a guidebook and how to represent them linguistically and figuratively? How do images and the lexical repertoire become stereotypical? What is the interplay of text and images?

The conference aimed at investigating tourist guidebooks as the locus where the real or virtual tourist experience is shaped and, therefore, their key contribution is to create images of the destination and its heritage. Through description and narration,

guidebooks become intermediaries between the reader and the cultural heritage of the

destination.

Guidebooks were also studied in terms of their relationship with the individual reader, guiding them through a cultural space and focusing on the most representative aspects of specific places and epochs. Moreover, their influence is

 not limited to the time of travel; they represent a textual space capable of organizing the traveller’s memories by bringing together actual spaces and the tourist’s subjective experience of them.

The first conference session focused on the linguistic aspects of guidebooks and their common goal across several languages to develop instruments for better and more systematic translations. Christina Dechamps described her project of analyzing a corpus of touristic text on the Internet in French, Italian and Portuguese. The study investigates the collocation of frequent verbs and nouns used in tourist language to offer a more precise translation of terms, since collocations are the real key to master a language. She used terms such as photographier, faire une photo, prendre une photographe to demonstrate the range of combinations and complexity in interpreting seemingly simple collocations. Marisa Da Silva Valente

analysed the use of “Italianisms” in tourist guidebooks on Florence in Portuguese, seeking to understand their logic and presence in the texts. In some cases, equivalent terms are used – catedral, Miguel Ângelo – whereas in others italian words dominate, as, for example, Santa Croce or Piazza della Signoria. The decision to translate or not proper names seems to follow no consistent logic: a single referent might be found in both Portuguese and Italian, even within the same guidebook. The common Latin roots of the two languages sometimes present false friends, resulting in potential confusion and lack of uniformity. For instance, the term palazzo has different connotations in Portuguese and in Italian. Da Silva Valente advocates a more systematic presentation of these terms for greater clarity and comprehension. Eglantina Gishti and Fjoralba Dado discussed the difficulties of translating Albanian toponyms and proper names in French guidebooks on Albania. Due to completely different linguistic roots, the passage from Albanian to French highlights complex problems, therefore the use of proper names in the original transcription with a corresponding translation (Bulevardi Dëshmorëte Kombit - Avenue des Martyrs de la Nation) would preserve the Albanian language while promoting clarity for the visitor. Valentina Crestani compared Italian and German approaches to the same cultural resources and sites in Italy in tourist marketing sites and guidebooks on the Internet. In her semiotic analysis, Crestani found that when addressing an Italian audience, the cultural and historical value of the sites provide ample information with the function of a virtual trip. By contrast, the sites in German focused on the natural beauty, relaxation and fun, and acted more as a persuasive tool to draw visitors to these sites. Elisa Ravazzolo observed the co-creation of shared cultural references in action in guided tours. Her project, which records and transcribes tours, underlines the ways in which the guide solicits a response from the group through a proverb or a legend. These shared cultural references mitigate the sense of estrangement in the site by enhancing the understanding and appreciation on the part of the visitors. Damien Petermann systematically analyzed guidebooks of Lyon in the 20th century, tracking changes in the description of the city. As the century progressed, the sense of what constitutes cultural patrimony is widened. Space for museums and their collections has diminished, whereas more importance is given to description of sites like squares, fountains, panoramic lookout points and the traboules, characteristic passageways of Lyon. Laura Balbiani focused on a travel diary, written in 1643 by a German Palatine count, to discuss the fusion of objective and subjective information that typified early modern guidebooks. Writing about his travel to Italy, the count combined useful practical information about roads, accommodation with personal impressions about politics, culture and sites he was visiting. In part used initially as a way to communicate with his family in Germany, the travel diary later became an instrument for friends and relatives on their successive tours of Italy.

The second session concentrated on particular examples of guidebooks and travelers, drawing attention to the question of perception and new means of travel.

Michael Harrigan investigated the interplay between genre and representation in the travel accounts of three wealthy French visitors to Ireland in the seventeenth century. The search for ‘belles choses’ was complicated by the

 encounter of the evidence of religious and political conflict. The early modern guidebooks display a proto-anthropological strategy in line with other contemporary texts, with the desire to entertain the reader. Furthermore, they highlight ‘curiosity’ as a positive value in their search to assess cultural differences.

Marie Bernard Bat introduced Octave Mirbeau’s La 628-E8 (the author’s license plate number) published in 1907, a sort of ‘anti-Baedeker’ and its accompanying bourgeois values, promoting the automobile as a means of travel. Rather than featuring the sites which are typical of other guidebooks of the time, i.e. churches, museums and governmental buildings, the La 628-E8 resets the travel narrative, emphasizing the freedom and speed afforded by an automobile and thus those sites that can be reached only by this means. Laura Mier Valerón and José María Rodríguez-Vigil Reguera discussed how the Principality of Asturias was promoted in guidebooks and other travel literature from the 1880s to the 1990s. So different from the popular image of sand and sun that many visitors have of Spain, Asturias was instead described as a Spanish Switzerland or ‘underground’ retreat. The advent of the automobile and its replacement of railways, as the primary means of travel, influenced the qualities and sites that the literature featured.

Giovanni Pestelli traced the gradual transformation of Vallambrosa as a sacred site in the eleventh century to its use as a recreational resort in the 19th and 20th centuries. Founded to host the Vallambrosan monastic community for its remote position and suggestive landscape, the abbey also became a destination for pilgrimage and secular retreat especially in literary and artistic circles in the 15th and 18th centuries. The construction of a new carriage road and cog railway in the late 19th

 century made the area available to many more visitors, replacing the difficult access by donkey and walking. Thus, Vallambrosa assumed its role as one of the most popular summer mountain destinations, favored for its fresh air and cooler temperatures. Natalia Zhukova examined guidebooks of Florence in Russian, given

the recent interest and influx of tourists from Russia. Besides guidebooks translated from other languages, there is a demand for a guide adapted to the new type of traveler requiring many images as for example an E-Book. The Russian audience has particular interests and curiosities such as why the dome of the Cathedral is not golden, or why the Demidoff family influenced the city, or why there is a predominant use of the superlative in describing monuments and places such as “the most perfect male body” of David in the Accademia. Jessica Blanc discussed her recently published cookbook and gastronomic guide to Brazilian cuisine. She developed the book as a mix of a travel experience and cuisine to present the regional variety of Brazil. In the book, chefs introduce the recipes highlighting the geographical and cultural context of each region. While not explicit, the autobiographical dimension of the book steered certain elements like the choice of images. Brazil distinguishes itself from other cookbooks in French on Brazilian cuisine by the emphasis it puts in the regional aspect and in photography.

The opening session of the second day displayed the range of instruments to visually document sites of interest in Italy, given the new possibilities of mass publication starting in the second half of the eighteenth century. Luigi Tomassini described the formation of photographic catalogues in the late 19th century that documented the rich patrimony of Tuscany. The catalogues were produced by private photographic firms, most notably Alinari, Brogi and Anderson. While

in France documentation of the national patrimony was commissioned by the State, in Italy private firms responded to the commercial demand for images of sites and were then sold throughout the world. These archives represent rich repositories of images that optimize the burgeoning art of photography and the greater diffusion of illustrated print culture. Monica Maffioli explained how photography in the 19th

 century became an essential tool to narrate Sicily, a destination considered fascinating and mythical for centuries, yet difficult to understand. Photographs filled in where literary description and engravings were insufficient to render the metaphysical landscape, stark contrasts and emotions that Sicily provoked. In addition to featuring monuments, landscapes and signs of the classical heritage, the photographic reconnaissance depicted aspects of folklore and everyday life, especially the harsh living conditions. Silvia Paoli presented the role of The Touring Club Italiano’s publications in serving a new class of tourism – middle class Italians visiting their own country. Founded in 1894, the TCI produced several types of tourist material that placed images on equal if not higher rank as the descriptive text: L’Italia in 300 immagine, Attraverso l’Italia, and various cartographic series. The campaigns had a documentary character, often starting with lesser-known regions, to expose and classify the vast and deep patrimony to its audience.

Marie-France Merger analyzed several editions of the Guide Bleu French guides of Tuscany, to trace the evolution over the course of the 20th century. For the Guide Bleu series, Tuscany and particularly Florence epitomize Italian identity and the perfect union of nature and art. Indeed charme, “charmant” and “pittoresque” are words that frequently recur to describe sites, art, landscape as well as the climate or the Florentine accent. The guides aim at a cultured reader who would understand many of the artistic, literary and historical references made without further explanation. Lorenzo Devilla compared various contemporary French guidebooks on Sardegna that highlight both the island’s position at the crossroads of a Mediterranean culture and its timeless character off the beaten path that has preserved many of its traditions. The cultural and practical guides serve as “markers” to entice the visitor and construct an image of the place. The French guides all highlight “unique”, “rare” facets of Sardegna: from its cuisine to the ancient musical tradition, the oldest in the Mediterranean, to its language. Gabriella Ballesio recounted the development of guides to the Vaudoise Valley of the Valdese religious community in the Piedmont. Early examples of guidebooks included travel narratives, often by British and Scottish visitors – members of the clergy and the

bourgeoisie – interested in the spiritual revival occurring in the Valdese movement.

Paola Novara showed the evolution of guidebooks on Ravenna in the 18th and 19th centuries, which took advantage of its place as a center of engraving taken from photographs. Interest in and production of guidebooks of the city developed alongside the possibility of including illustrations and photographic imagery within print. Over time, the focus of attention shifted from monograms and inscriptions to visual documentation of Ravenna’s particular heritage.

In the afternoon of the second day, the speakers approached the theme of art and

architecture in guidebooks. Karolina Jara discussed the ongoing project to make guidebook, Before/After of Wroclaw, Poland, that surveys 170 buildings to create a larger narrative about the city’s history and architecture during the 20th century, rather than isolating any particular fragment. Originally part of Germany and the Weimar Republic in the early twentieth century, Wroclaw was a site of architectural experimentation. The city passed to the Nazis and then became part of Poland, exhibiting building ventures such as social housing and public projects typical of Eastern Bloc countries. With the fall of the Berlin Wall and Socialism, new building types and styles peppered the cityscape, the first, most notable example being the postmodern SolPol department store. Marija Drėmaitė

and Ūla Ambrasaitė demonstrated the approach of Vilnius and Kaunas Architectural Guides that have become important also for local citizens as a handbook to the social history and civic heritage. The guidebooks fill in gaps that are not discussed elsewhere in academic texts on architectural history –

information about the historical owners, users and uses of the past – as well providing

valuable traces of buildings that have been destroyed. The presenters manifested questions of content, form and audience that guide each publication. Philipp Meuser explained the strategy of his publishing house, DOM, to produce architectural guides for cities around the world, forty thus far, many for places that have never had a guidebook (e.g. Astana) while others (e.g. Wien, Cologne) require a new approach to distinguish themselves.The publisher’s philosophy sees the description of the built environment as the nucleus to any guidebook, yet the architectural guide offers a more detailed and systematic method, with an implicit architectural criticism that forms one of the bases of a civil society. Ulrike Müller traced the usefulness of historical travel guides to understand the role of private art collections in Belgium before and after 1870. Her research discussed the great number and accessibility of private collections, particularly in Ghent and Antwerp, as well as the specific preferences in each city. Once Brussels became the capital of the newly formed government, national museums gradually eclipsed the importance of collecting on a micro-level. Dorit Kluge discussed the seeds of art criticism within tourist guidebooks of the 18th century that blurred the lines between subjective narrative and descriptions of the cityscape. For example, La Font de Saint-Yenne in his Description de Paris et de ses environs, believed that architecture should be a showcase of a nation and makes comments that judge the buildings as such. The travel guidebook thus is a particular blend of different genres – literary, scientific, and art criticism.

The final session of the conference addressed the theme of guidebooks as vehicles for propaganda that shape, as well as draw from the collective imagination.

Hannah Wirta Kinney described the interlocking relationship between written text and reproductions of sculptures in creating and promoting an artistic canon. The written texts created expectations, knowledge and thus demand for reproductions of antique and modern sculptures made from originals as a sort of material text. The goal of the copies or the casts was to capture the essence of the original lauded in art criticism, more than trying to achieve an exact correspondence. The reproductions offered the consumer a more direct relationship to the original work of art. Adolfo Mignemi introduced guidebooks conceived for military troops occupying foreign

territories as early as the World War I and quite prevalent during the 1930s and 1940s. For example, the Italian military developed guides to Libya, Croatia and Tunisia, directing the troops to the territory as well as describing the important monuments and artworks in those foreign lands. The Soldier’s Guide to Italy conditioned many American and British soldiers’ attitudes and behaviour in the country, unlikely and heretofore unusual consumers of Italy’s famous heritage. David Boffa revealed the uneven reception of Michelangelo’s David in early modern

guidebooks until its canonization as a prime symbol of Florence and the Renaissance itself in the late 19th century. From being called “not one of Michael Angelo’s finest works” to even being ignored in earlier guidebooks, the colossal statue achieved undisputed iconic status in steps – a long development of culturally constructed beliefs and myths. Key to the formation of David’s mythology were factors such as its installation in the Accademia galleries and the rise of Italian nationalism. Galia Yanoshevsky presented “A travers Israel (1950-1951)” a series of photo albums in

Hebrew, French and English that served as promotional guidebooks, attracting the viewers to curiosity, nostalgia and support of the country. Taken by many different photographers, the photographs represent different aspects of Israeli life, from religious and cultural to landscape features. The guidebook blends past and present, various genres like family albums and documentary photographic collections of the Depression era, in order to elicit from the viewer a mélange of reactions and associations.