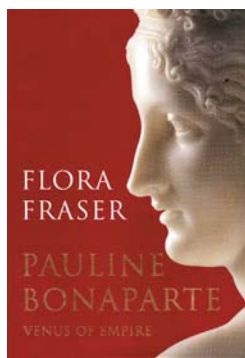


THE NAUGHTY BITS

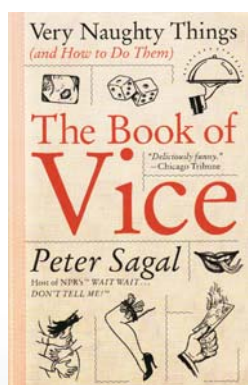
THERE WAS A TIME WHEN BEING NAUGHTY CAME NATURALLY – AND AT TIMES, QUITE SPECTACULARLY



Pauline Bonaparte: Venus of Empire, Flora Fraser

Personally, I didn't think Flora Fraser had quite her mother Lady Antonia Fraser's flair for readable biography, but then again, I was basing that on her biography of the daughters of George III (*Princesses*). It took an awfully long time before anything got interesting, unless you are fascinated by Georgian court etiquette. Such is not the case with Pauline Bonaparte, who was most precocious from an early age. It is widely

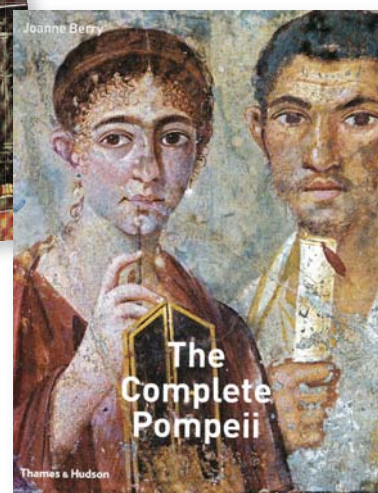
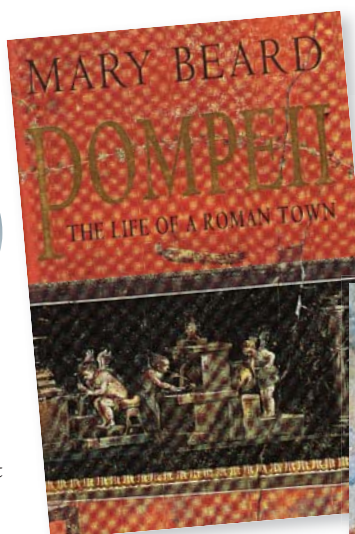
believed that she had an incestuous affair with her brother (Fraser concedes that might indeed be the case); Napoleon married her off to one of the great Roman families (who surrendered most of their vast collection of Roman and Greek statuary in exchange for the honour) who, in turn, were then horrified when she posed nearly nude for one of the more erotic statues of the early 19th century.



The Book of Vice: Very Naughty Things (and How to Do Them), Peter Sagal

You'd think that by now, we'd know all there is to know about vice, having lived through the Bush administration, assorted celebrity hijinks, the Jerry Springer Show and the advent of YouTube. I suspect Sagal's book is aimed at Americans, perhaps those living in isolated suburbs of Midwestern cities, who avoid dancing because it looks as if they might be having sex standing up.

Sagal defines vice as sin that gives you pleasure, includes a sense of guilt as part of the "Is it really vice?" test, gives drug use a miss and defines lying as a vice when we all know that it is either a great wickedness or a sign of mental instability. Written by someone like AA Gill, this would be a truly delicious read; however Sagal's take is akin to a snack that ruins your appetite for a superb dinner.



**Pompeii: The Life of a Roman Town, Mary Beard
The Complete Pompeii, Joanne Berry**

Edward "It was a dark and stormy night" Bulwer-Lytton's *The Last Days of Pompeii* chronicled, however melodramatically, the excavated ruins of the city under Vesuvius. As more and more of Pompeii was revealed and opened to the public, Pompeians began to look like people who really knew how to have a good time: anatomically incorrect phalli depicted literally everywhere one looks; highly graphic paintings of sexual intercourse; murals depicting drunken dinner parties; sybaritic public baths; an unlimited supply of brothels and wine shops. And then there are the remains of those caught in the final hours, most notably a male slave and his mistress.

Ah well, so much for that. Mary Beard is one of Britain's top classical scholars and she puts a very wet blanket on the party we thought was Pompeii. There were, she says, probably only a handful of brothels; the phalli simply a symbol of wealth and fertility; the wine jars most likely held soup and the baths were nasty places where you would most likely have caught a disease from the water rather than a sexual partner. As for the drunken dinner parties, most people, including the rich, ate out or ordered in.

Still, a good recreation of life during the Roman imperium. As Beard is stingy with pictures, plump for Thames & Hudson's *Complete Pompeii*. ■ – JH