

CHAPTER I

Forerunners

On 3 February 1863, Giuseppe Fiorelli, director of the Pompeii excavations, poured a dilute mixture of plaster of paris and glue into a cavity made in the soil by the body of a victim of the volcanic eruption. When the plaster had set and the cast was removed from its envelope of hardened volcanic ashes, even Fiorelli was startled by what he saw. News of the discovery spread quickly, thanks to the presence of foreign journalists in Naples.¹ The casts of three more victims followed in quick succession. The need to protect the casts led to the creation of a small museum in a house that had been excavated in the eighteenth century, which soon became a necessary stop for the growing number of visitors to Pompeii. Yet nothing spread the fame of the casts so much as the hundreds of reproductions made of them, in the form of shocking cartes de visite, cabinet prints, and stereo cards turned out by professional photographers in Naples, as well as the engraved book illustrations made after these photos. The casts of the victims rapidly altered the public image of Pompeii from the ideal city conjured up by Bulwer-Lytton at the height of the Romantic era to a more familiar and realistic site of natural disaster.

Fiorelli's "discovery" was quite simple and required no new technology. His contemporaries, without detracting from the praise that was due him, marveled that such casts had not been made before. The same opportunities—some even better—had presented themselves during the long history of digging at Pompeii, and gesso had been used by artists to cast bodies since the Renaissance.² Yet for a number of simple

reasons, the procedure was not and could not have been done successfully before the 1860s. The reason for this is that the casts were an artifact of a revolution in government and in science that came about only in 1860. The understanding of the science of vulcanology had first to change from what it had been earlier in the century. The attitude of the state toward archaeology and toward the treatment of human remains had first to change from what it had been earlier. Most important, the administration of the excavations at Pompeii had to change—and Giuseppe Fiorelli was the agent of change.

Almost by itself, Fiorelli's discovery and exploitation of the casts changed the purpose of archaeology from an exclusive focus on the collection and classification of artifacts to the material reconstruction of ancient history. For a century and a half previously, the mission of excavators at Herculaneum and Pompeii had been to dig up and remove to safekeeping the items of painting and sculpture, furniture, papyri, inscriptions, and even bits of architecture encountered at the two sites. For the same reason, before the "French decade" (1805–15), the state had been content merely to rent the land on which the digging took place. The king claimed the antiquities, empowered by some of the most progressive patrimony laws in Europe, but he willingly returned the land to agricultural use once it had been explored. For a brief period, first under Joseph Bonaparte and then under his successor, Joachim Murat, as kings of Naples, the state determined the full extent of the ancient city and purchased the land above it with the intention of uncovering it. The restoration of the Bourbon monarchy to the throne of Naples in 1816 slowed the pace of excavation at Pompeii, and the state even resold much of the land to private owners. The buried city of Pompeii had by that time, however, become an object of interest for tourists as an architectural entity and as a place where the modern visitor might commune with the ancient dead: Pompeii had been considered a "city of the dead" for some time before Fiorelli, in the words of Luigi Settembrini, "discovered human pain" so that "whoever is human can feel it."³ This reputation, which was no doubt well merited, had been built on particular discoveries and monuments that preceded Fiorelli's discovery of 1863. Before looking in greater detail at

Fiorelli's discovery, it will be necessary to have a look at some of the changes in science, the nature of the excavations, and the representation of death itself that led up to it.

Despite the location of Naples between Avernus and Vesuvius, both at one time widely believed to be entrances to the Underworld, and despite the elaborate cult of death for which Naples is famous, it was the visit of two foreigners, men from beyond the Alps, that made Pompeii's reputation as the "city of the dead" and elevated the discovery and the contemplation of the bodies of ancient victims to a level of great meaning. The visits of J. J. Winckelmann between 1759 and 1765 had a transforming effect on the Neapolitans.⁴ The man who was the first to treat ancient statues like living flesh and blood was the same to delight in living human beings as if they were ancient works of art. Yet his influence on the study of the dead at Pompeii was indirect. On his initial visit to Naples, he received a cool—even hostile—reception that prevented his gaining access to the most important discoveries. Subsequent visits were even more difficult, since he had an unfortunate habit of publishing his criticisms of certain members of the local establishment, pedants as well as various other types of scoundrels. Unfortunately, his visits to Herculaneum and Pompeii did not coincide with the discovery of any ancient victims, and so we are deprived of his specific comments on the Pompeian dead.⁵ Nevertheless, we can infer his sentiments—what he *would* have written—from many passages in his voluminous writings that never cease to concern themselves with human life and death. One of Winckelmann's ideas about the human body and how it grew to a godlike state of perfection in the South was to find many echoes among those who, like Hippolyte Taine, visited Pompeii and its museums at a later time. Turning his attention toward the Bay of Naples, Winckelmann wrote in the *History of Ancient Art*: "The lower portion of Italy, which enjoys a softer climate than any other part of it, brings forth men of superb and vigorously designed forms, which appear to have been made, as it were, for the purposes of sculpture."⁶ It was impossible for the Neapolitans to bear a grudge against a man who wrote such things, and it was even more impossible not to come around to his way of thinking. Winckelmann introduced

a new fervor, akin to the religious, into the study of antiquity. More than any other person, he was the driving force behind the neoclassical revolution that swept Europe in the 1760s.

Winckelmann's impact on the study of Herculaneum and Pompeii may be seen in his remarkable observations of the archaeological context of both sites and in his attempt to devise a unified theory of the eruption. Herculaneum, he concluded, had been buried not in lava but in fiery ash and torrential rain, whereas Pompeii and Stabiae did not experience the same amount of rain, for their ash was of a looser composition.⁷ Winckelmann also concluded, too hastily as it turned out, that the inhabitants of Pompeii and Stabiae, like those of Herculaneum, had had sufficient time to flee the volcano and save their lives.⁸ He apparently knew of no bodies found at either Pompeii or Herculaneum but only of those found at Stabiae (Gragnano), where "three female bodies, one of which appeared to be the maid of the other two and was carrying a wooden casket: this lay beside her and had decomposed in the ash. The two other ladies both had golden bracelets and earrings, which were sent to the museum."⁹ In Pompeii, Winckelmann noted, many heavy items had been discarded far from their original location in their houses by those fleeing. Unfortunately, he gave no examples in support of this attractive theory. His lasting contribution to the archaeology of these sites, however, was to see them as places where human activity took place and left evidence.

Two of the greatest finds of victims overcome by the final phase of the eruption—namely, the victims found in the Temple of Isis and those in the Barracks of the Gladiators—were made just after Winckelmann's last visit to Pompeii.¹⁰ At the beginning of the year 1765, the excavators passed from the Theater to what they soon recognized as a temple of Isis.¹¹ This site was immediately recognized as something that had never been seen before: a fully decorated ancient temple. Its discovery dictated an entirely new archaeological policy, as it became the first site in Pompeii to be excavated without being intended for reburial. Although it was most prized for its paintings and sculptures, the temple also preserved the remains of several of its priests. The *Giornale* of the excavators mentions but one skeleton, found in the kitchen near

a table and lying on some chicken bones.¹² There is, however, some indirect evidence that more human remains were uncovered. François de Paule Latapie, writing in 1776, mentioned a stunning discovery:

In another room adjoining the refectory there was found a skeleton with a bronze axe, having attempted to break through the wall next to him. It is not unreasonable to suppose that he was a sacrificant who, being unable to flee by means of the courtyard, where the volcanic debris was too abundant, had attempted to make his way through the opposite wall.¹³

Although not recorded in the *Giornale*, this discovery entered into the growing literature on Pompeii, being mentioned by Mazois and by Dyer and even forming part of the action in the last frantic episode of Bulwer-Lytton's *Last Days of Pompeii* (1834). Bulwer-Lytton, who displayed a talent for interpreting archaeological evidence and was well advised in Pompeian matters by the reigning English antiquary of the time, Sir William Gell, seems to have made an effort to incorporate into his narrative the fates of nearly all the colorful victims known before 1832. In the case of the axe-wielding Isis priest, the story that was passed along to Bulwer-Lytton was far more interesting than the official record in the *Giornale* would lead us to have expected. This particular victim who died in an attempt to escape burial by piercing a wall was the first of several such victims to be found in the course of the excavations. Although such discoveries might be subject to different interpretation—namely, as salvagers or treasure hunters who had died in their attempts to enter the ruins—it is interesting that the first body found under these circumstances was identified as a man who had been attempting to escape the volcano.¹⁴

Working in the vicinity of the Temple of Isis in the autumn of 1766, the excavators stumbled onto one of the most remarkable finds ever made in Pompeii or elsewhere. In a building now known as the Theater Portico, they began to find numerous fugitives, as well as quantities of bronze arms, some finely decorated in relief. At the time, they did not realize that they had come upon the remains of Pompeii's leading in-

dustry, a school of gladiators located in proximity to the theater where they may have performed. The victims, however, seem to have been a group of fugitives who had sought temporary refuge here during the last, cataclysmic phase of the eruption. While the gladiatorial armor from this single find in Pompeii now forms a spectacular exhibit in the Naples Museum, the archaeological context soon produced even more startling results. In a room adjoining the portico, excavators found a lockable stock with places for ten persons.¹⁵ Four skeletons were found in the same room, but from the language of the *Giornale* (namely, “perhaps prisoners”), there was no clear evidence recorded that they had been found confined in the stock at the time of death.¹⁶ The stocks were eventually sent to the Naples Museum, where they were exhibited among the “utilitarian objects.”¹⁷ The fact that the bodies were not observed to have been locked into the leg stock, however, did not prevent “the dark brain of Piranesi” (as Victor Hugo and Marguerite Yourcenar called it) from imagining the worst in a drawing now in Berlin.¹⁸

Because of the discoveries made in the Theater and in the Villa of Diomedes uncovered shortly afterward, the excavators began to take more careful notice of the specific context in which victims were being found. The Pompeian excavators were becoming archaeologists. In one of the rooms was found “a complete skeleton crouching on the ground—a most curious sight.”¹⁹ Another was found in the portico, “between the layers of pumice (lapilli) and ashes.”²⁰ The excavation of the Barracks of the Gladiators also provided fuel for imaginative speculation along the same lines as Piranesi’s. Bodies that are now recognized as those of fugitives who had sought refuge in the building while they were bearing their most precious belongings were once interpreted, from the gold jewelry on their persons, as rich women who had been consorting with gladiators at the time of the eruption. Such supposed impropriety did not seem to have occurred to the excavator, who simply mentioned the facts of the discovery, but it was repeated again and again during the Romantic period and may be read even now.²¹ The contemporary *Giornale* author makes it very clear that the most treasure-laden group consisted of no fewer than eighteen individuals, children and dogs included.²² The speculation, even if it did not measure up to the standards of Winckelmann, proved that everyone loved a

good story. Where bodies had been found and reported previously in the *Giornale* because they usually promised the recovery of some precious items, the writers of these reports began, as a consequence of the rich Pompeian finds, to look for evidence of the manner in which the victims perished.

Another discovery in the Barracks of the Gladiators, misinterpreted at the time, has been represented again and again as an example of the iniquity of the Pompeians. In one of the rooms, the excavators found a terracotta pot without a bottom. The pot held the bones of a creature that has subsequently been identified as a dormouse, a delicacy intended for the Roman table.²³ The *Giornale* referred to it as “a newborn creature” (*una creatura, che pare da poco nata*), and Francesco La Vega, who directed the excavations, identified the bones as the “bones of a child” (*ossa di fanciullo*).²⁴ With time, the fevered imagination of antiquaries and tourists embellished the earlier suspicions, so that the object came to be described by Austen Henry Layard, in the *London Quarterly Review* for 1864, as “a bottomless wine-jar, in which were the bones of a new-born child.” “Were these the proofs,” he speculated, “of a crime committed by one of the miserable inmates of the prison?”²⁵

In 1769, the year following Winckelmann's tragic death, the young Austrian emperor Joseph II paid a visit to his sister, Maria Carolina, the young queen of Naples. Joseph's visit had even more direct consequences for the excavations than Winckelmann's four earlier visits, since he seems to have played a decisive role in encouraging the young queen to become involved in archaeological matters. La Vega's entry in the *Giornale* provides a rare glimpse into history, as he recorded—in uncharacteristic diary mode—a conversation that was to have serious consequences. When Joseph asked why the work at Pompeii was proceeding so slowly and with no apparent plan, he was told somewhat defensively by La Vega that “eventually all would be done.”²⁶ The Emperor replied that Pompeii was a job for three thousand men and asked who was in charge of the operation? When La Vega answered that it was the Marchese Tanucci, the Queen showed her displeasure. It took the young queen several years to get rid of the powerful Tanucci, but she had her way in the end.

During the same fateful visit, a notable event occurred when Joseph

was taken to a subterranean room in the House of the Emperor Joseph II (VIII.2.38/39). There, he and the rest of the party saw an intact skeleton, presumably of a victim who had perished in that place. "For a long time," it is reported, "the Emperor stood reflectively before these tokens of an intense human drama."²⁷ Trite as this may seem, it appears to have been a novelty at the time.

The same scene was repeated several years later. Traveler P.-J. O. Bergeret de Grancourt wrote:

In one house, among others, in the room downstairs where they must have done the washing, we could see all the implements, the stove, the washtub, etc. . . . and a heap of volcanic ash upon which rested the skeleton of a woman, as if, having tried to escape from the choking ashes coming in from all sides, she had finally fallen backwards and died. Everything about the placement and position of her bones indicated that this was clearly what had happened, and one remains stunned at the contemplation of the events of 1,700 years ago.²⁸

In view of the enduring popularity of the subject, it can be inferred that Joseph's visit introduced a new sensibility into the relations between the living and the dead in Pompeii. The basement room of the emperor's reflection became the setting for the iconography of a scene that was often to be repeated over the course of the next hundred or so years. French architect Charles François Mazois published an engraving of a nearly identical scene, with the costumes of the visitors adapted to the fashions of his time (ca. 1810), as did the Englishman Henry Wilkins in his suite of engravings of 1819 (fig. 1).²⁹ A new sensibility, even more emotive, is apparent in the response of Charles Dupaty to the sight of a room full of bones in one of the houses he visited in 1785:

But what do I perceive in that chamber. They are ten deaths heads. The unfortunate wretches saved themselves here, where they could not be saved. This is the head of a little child: its father and mother then are there! Let us go up stairs again; the heart feels not at ease here.³⁰

But it was an excavation in the Villa Suburbana, also known as the Villa of Diomedes, that provided the most affecting and pitiable scene of the volcano's victims. The fate of the victims in the cellar of the Villa Suburbana had long made students of Pompeii aware of the possibility of natural casts. The excavation of the gruesome scene, not surprisingly, played an important role in the evolution of modern scientific archaeology from what had previously been a hunt for treasure.

The excavator La Vega showed uncharacteristic sensibility and historical awareness in his report of the excavation:

12 December—During the past week, we have begun to remove the fill in a corridor that is covered by a vault and surrounds the garden of the house already mentioned and is some kind of cellar. When we had dug a few feet into said corridor, we found the skeletons of eighteen adults, not including a boy and a baby. It can easily be concluded that these, and perhaps others who may yet be found as we continue this excavation, were overcome in this part of the house, the most removed from suffering any damage, but which was not able to protect them from the rain of ashes, which fell after that of the lapillo and, as can be seen, was accompanied by water that found its way into all the parts where the first rain had not been able to penetrate. This inundation of highly fluid matter hardened after some time into very dense earth, so as to surround and envelop the bodies on all sides, while these perished owing to their fragility. This material has preserved the impression and the hollow. Similarly preserved is the impression of a wooden casket and one of a large stack of small wooden boards. The same fate happened to the unfortunates who were discovered. Nothing remains of their flesh but hollows and impressions in the earth, and within these the bones have hardly moved from their original configurations. The hair is preserved on some of the skulls, and some of the arrangements appear to be braided. Of their clothing, there is found only the ashes, but these preserve the texture of the material as it covered their bodies; thus one distinguishes very well both the fineness of the weaving and the coarseness. In order to preserve some evidence of that which I observed, I de-

cided to cut no less than sixteen pieces of the impressions of these bodies. In one of them can be seen the breast of a woman covered by her dress, and in all of them there are remains of garments, sometimes two or three, one on top of another. I also carefully removed a skull with the accompanying hair, and all of these things I sent to the museum. From what little that I was able to make out of the garments, it is evident that many had hoods on their heads; that these fell over their shoulders; that they wore two or three garments, one over the other; that their stockings were of woven material or of cloth cut like trousers; that some of them did not have any shoes at all. With regard to the shoes, it can be supposed that those observed would have been slaves of inferior status. It was clearly by means of the jewelry, by the fineness of the garments, and by the coins found nearby that one woman was distinguished above the others.³¹

Exactly one hundred years after this was written, Charles-Ernest Boulé elaborately paraphrased La Vega's moving account, adding, in post-Fiorellian hindsight, a lament for the opportunity that had been lost:

Alas! The artists or the scholars who were present at the discovery had no idea to profit from such fortune, to stop the workers, to repair the damage they had done, and to pour liquid plaster into the cavities that presented themselves. They would thereby have brought back to life the heap of victims, and we would have beheld an image of a drama no less moving than the depictions of *The Massacre of Chios* or of *The Wreck of the Medusa*. A thought so simple did not occur to them.³²

When the Romantic Dupaty visited the Villa of Diomedes, the observations he made were full of enthusiasm:

I cannot be far from the country-house of *Aufidius*; for there are the gates of the city. Here is the tomb of the family of Diomedes. Let us rest a moment under these porticoes where the philosophers used to sit.

I am not mistaken. The country-house of *Aufidius* is charming; the paintings in fresco are delicious. What an excellent effect have those

blue grounds! With what propriety, and consequently with what taste, are the figures distributed in the panels! Flora herself has woven that garland. But who has painted this Venus? This Adonis? This youthful Narcissus, in that bath? And here again, this charming Mercury? It is surely not a week since they were painted.

I like this portico round the garden; and this square covered cellar round the portico. Do these *Amphorae* contain the true Falernian? How many *consulates* has this wine been kept?³³

Because La Vega had removed much of the evidence, Dupaty was spared the horrific sight in the cellar. He did see some of what was found there when he visited the Royal Museum in Portici:

But I must not omit one of the greatest curiosities in this celebrated cabinet: it consists in the fragments of a cement of cinders, which in one of the eruptions of Vesuvius, surprised a woman, and totally enveloped her. This cement compressed and hardened by time around her body, has become a compleat mould of it, and in the pieces here preserved we see a perfect impression of the different parts to which it adhered. One represents half of her bosom, which is of exquisite beauty; another a shoulder, a third a portion of her shape, and all concur in revealing to us that this woman was young, and that she was tall and well made, and even that she had escaped in her shift; for some pieces of linen are still adhering to the ashes.³⁴

In contrast with the romanticism of Dupaty and lending support to Beulé's lament was an observation made by Joseph-Jérôme Lalande, who visited Herculaneum and Pompeii numerous times, beginning in the mid 1750s, and established himself as one of the cities' chief foreign correspondents, praised for his cool precision. Describing the bodies found beneath the Villa of Diomedes, he noted the impression of a "reversed woman" (*une femme renversée*) found in the volcanic mud, intuiting the possibility of making a positive cast, as did René de Chateaubriand, when he wrote: "Death, like a sculptor, has moulded his victim."³⁵

La Vega's account of his excavation was buried in the Neapolitan archives and remained unknown until Fiorelli published it in 1860. Dupaty's travel memoir was better known but would not have become part of Pompeian literature if the Architect-Director of the excavations, Carlo Bonucci, had not referred to it in his own popular guidebook of 1827. Bonucci's pleasantly written description of the house was to influence, among others, Sir Edward Bulwer-Lytton:

From the garden one passes into a subterranean gallery, which was well lighted and intended for summer walks. There were found some amphorae in which the wine of Vesuvius and the equally famous wine of Pompeii was aging. In this cellar were found, one next to the other, twenty skeletons, among which two were children. With them were found, in gold, one necklace, one string of blue stones, and four finger rings with incised stones; in silver, two finger rings, one hairpin, one furniture leg, and thirty-one coins; of bronze, one candelabrum, one vase, forty-four coins, and one bunch of keys. They belonged, perhaps, to the family of Aufidius and had sought refuge in this site, but they were overcome by the ash and the water, which formed a kind of mud, enveloping their bodies and accurately preserving their forms. Many fragments of this hardened ash can be seen in the Royal Museum in Naples. One preserves the form of a beautiful breast; another the contour of an arm and its adornments; another a portion of the shoulders and of the back. All show that these women were young, slim, and well proportioned but that they did not flee almost nude, as Dupaty claims, since not only the impressions of their blouses but also those of [other] clothing still remain quite visible in the impressed ash. There is also preserved the skull of one of these girls with a residue of blond hair, her back teeth, and the bone of an arm.³⁶

Another famous Pompeian victim who emerged at the end of the eighteenth century was the so-called sentinel: a Roman soldier who died at his post beside the Herculaneum Gate.³⁷ Sir William Gell explained this phantom most eloquently:

Within this recess was found a human skeleton, of which the hand still grasped a lance. Conjecture has imagined this the remains of a sentinel, who preferred dying at his post to quitting it for the more ignominious death, which, in conformity with the severe discipline of his country, would have awaited him.³⁸

While the evidence for this extraordinary discovery consisted of no more than an empty niche in Pompeii, the legend gained strength from his supposed remains in the Royal Museum. Visiting the museum in 1851, Benjamin Silliman saw “the helmet and skull of the Roman sentinel found at his post in the city gate at Pompeii, with his short sword by his side.”³⁹ A guide of the same period mentions “a helmet of a very plain shape, with a skull in it,” which “was that of a sentry” whose “arms were found alongside of him.”⁴⁰ With time this myth was exploded and the sentry dismissed. A later, more critical guidebook explained: “This helmet was long shown as the one found upon the sentry who died at his post at Pompeii. It is certain however that the story is not worthy of credit, and that the so-called sentry-box was merely a tomb with a seat for the public.”⁴¹

The story of the sentinel depended on an erroneous understanding of the volcanic eruption that caused Pompeii and its victims to be destroyed. Before the late nineteenth century, it was thought that Pompeii was destroyed in one great cataclysm during which the inhabitants either fled or died in the attempt to flee. Today we know that Vesuvius erupted in two major phases.⁴² The first, “Plinian” phase consisted of an explosive emission of mostly inert material that rained down on Pompeii for about eighteen hours. Much of the city was buried under a layer of cinders (*lapillo* or *lapilli*), which collapsed roofs and filled the streets to a level of several meters. Some victims were struck by large stones cast off by the volcano, and some died when buildings collapsed during this phase. Certainly, no sentry would have stood at his post while being gradually buried during this phase.⁴³ Many people, however, may have tried to wait out the eruption in what they considered a safe place. The second, “Pelean” phase of the eruption occurred when the column of

material thrown off by the volcano collapsed under its own weight and descended across open country between the volcano and the city, flattening and carrying along with it everything in its path. When this “pyroclastic surge” arrived at Pompeii, it was oven-hot, oxygen depleted, and permeated with moisture. It covered the earlier layer and also penetrated anywhere that was not airtight—that is, all of the city’s remaining hiding places—leaving a layer of sediment that resembled mud (*fango*). Victims unlucky enough to be caught in this mud, or hardened ash, became naturally made body casts. When the site was discovered 1,800 years later, their bodies had long vanished, but their impressions (and their bones) remained. The victims in the cellar of the Villa of Diomedes had been sheltered from the cinders but died in the surge. Only a correct understanding of the volcanic eruption permits a correct interpretation of the remains that were discovered.

The French decade, 1805–15, saw radical changes to the administration of the excavations. Pompeii and the other sites were placed under a central administration headed by Michele Arditi, who was also director of the new Naples Museum. At the behest of Interior Minister Miot, Arditi devised a plan to uncover the organic city of Pompeii. Together with the circuit of the walls, the street that was presumed to form the north-south axis of the town became the focus of a greatly expanded workforce beginning in 1807.⁴⁴ The plan was to excavate the entire area between the Villa of Diomedes (variously known as the “*casa di campagna*,” the “*villa pseudurbana* of M. Arrius Diomedes,” or the “*villa of Aufidius*”) to the north and the theaters and the associated Barracks of the Gladiators and Temple of Isis to the south. Some structures along this route had already been uncovered. The Herculaneum Gate itself and several houses near it within the city—namely, the House of Ac-taeon (later known as the House of Sallust), the House of the Vestals, and the House of the Surgeon—were the most famous of these. In front of (i.e., to the north of) the Herculaneum Gate, the street was known as the Street of Tombs, with such prominent features as the Guardhouse (or Tomb of M. Cerrinius Restitutus), the Mammia exedra (where Goethe’s patroness, duchess Anna Amalia, was famously portrayed by Tischbein), and the tomb of the Istacidii.

Great finds were promised by Arditì, though, in fact, Pompeii had often disappointed the authorities in Naples with its poverty as compared with Herculaneum. Nevertheless, the French administration and Queen Caroline herself held a more “topographical” interest in the excavations than had their Bourbon predecessors and were more likely to be pleased with the opening of new perspectives. Perhaps this attitude reflected a new scientific approach to archaeology, or perhaps it reflected expectations that were more attuned to the experience of tourism. In any case, the reigning paradigm had begun to shift toward the viewing of archaeological sites and contexts and away from antiquities collecting *per se*.

At the end of the year 1811, the excavators were working in the Street of Tombs at the place where it begins to divide into two streets each leading to the west. Here three skeletons were found, one with a sizable collection of gold and silver coins.⁴⁵ In what must have been a first in the history of the excavations, the director of the excavations at Pompeii, Pietro La Vega (brother and successor to Francesco as director of the excavations at Pompeii), was ordered by Naples to give more precise details concerning the archaeological context. In his revised report of 1 February, La Vega wrote:

In my report of [11 January 1812] I noted that a skeleton had been found together with 69 gold and 121 silver coins. I was then directed by a letter of 25 Jan. to make a description of how this discovery was made and of all the circumstances. Hence, I say to you that in the excavation that we are now making of the street that leads from the gate of the city to the so-called “country house,” at a distance of 270 palms [71.5 m] from the gate along said street and precisely 12 palms above the pavement, just at the point where the stratum of lapilli ends and that of water mixed with ash begins, were found two human skeletons, one in front of the other by a few palms. The first [skeleton] lay on its stomach, with feet toward the city gate. The other was found on its back, and with both arms extended. At the right thigh of the latter were found the 69 gold and 127 [*sic*] silver coins previously reported. The coins were mixed together. The feet of the second skeleton were also toward the city gate.

Subsequently, there was found another [skeleton] 5 or 6 palms ahead of the first, still in the same stratum of the lapilli, in a position similar to the others but with the body lying exactly in reverse. It appears that the first two men were attempting to enter the city from the country or from houses in that direction. I do not know how to explain these two skeletons' being found having fallen with their heads in the direction of Vesuvius, from which would have come the flood of water and ash. All reason would have it that they ought to have been found [lying] in the opposite direction. *All three skeletons left the imprint of their bodies in the ash, but it was impossible to save this because it disintegrated immediately upon lifting it.* (emphasis mine)⁴⁶

For the next discovery of a skeleton, La Vega reverted to his usual style.⁴⁷ He was similarly laconic about the circumstances of the discovery of another three skeletons in approximately the same area later in the summer.⁴⁸

The most affecting group of fleeing victims, however, that of a mother and three children, was found in November 1812 and uncovered in the presence of Queen Caroline.⁴⁹ The painter Joseph Franque was present at the excavation and subsequently represented the victims in an ambitious history painting now in the Philadelphia Museum of Art (fig. 2).⁵⁰ In the words of Donald Rosenthal, "Franque's use of material directly derived from the excavations of 1812 makes him one of the earliest artists to draw on the archaeology of Pompeii in composing a picture."⁵¹ Exhibited in the Salon of 1827, the painting was described in the catalog as follows:

A mother, terrified by the eruption of Vesuvius, flees in a chariot with her two daughters, bearing a young child in her arms. This unfortunate family is surprised and enveloped by a rain of fire, the fury of which increases moment by moment. The older of the two girls has already fallen; the other tries to rush to her mother who, no longer able to support herself, falls dragging the girl with her.⁵²

Carlo Bonucci, who wrote a well-known guide in French, must have collaborated with Franque in his description. The two were colleagues

in the Neapolitan Academy of Fine Arts, both the painting and the guidebook date from 1827, and Bonucci wrote of the same scene:

Vesuvius had for an instant suspended his fury, when an unfortunate mother bearing an infant in her arms, and with two young daughters, endeavoured to profit by the opportunity, and to fly from their country-house to Nola, the city least threatened by this unspeakable catastrophe! Arrived at the foot of the above-mentioned hemicycle, the volcano recommenced its ravages with redoubled fury. Stones, cinders, fire, melted and boiling substances, rained from all sides, and surrounded the miserable fugitives. The unfortunates sought refuge at the foot of a tomb, where reposed perhaps the ashes of their fathers; and invoking in the most frightful despair the gods, deaf to their prayers, they closely embraced their mother as they breathed out their last sigh, and in this situation they remained—In the same way has a successor of Phidias depicted Niobe, who embraces her last remaining children, turns her face to the heavens, and expires in pain with them.⁵³

In addition to (correctly) alluding to a pause in the volcano's activity, Bonucci, in explaining the victims' intentions in their flight, touched on something that clearly had disturbed La Vega in his official account of the victims found in the same location a few months earlier: where were the individuals headed when they met their deaths on this street that led out of Pompeii in the direction of Vesuvius? La Vega assumed, quite logically, that they would have been headed away from the volcano. His observation that the feet of two of the victims pointed in the direction of the Herculaneum Gate and the city beyond it, however, would not have persuaded the most incompetent of police inspectors that they had been headed toward the gate. Yet Bonucci was no doubt equally wrong in suggesting that the victims had been headed toward Nola on the other side of Vesuvius, even if that city did escape the rain of lapilli. To approach Nola from the northwestern gate of Pompeii would have meant heading into even worse conditions. Bonucci's account indicates that excavators, guides, and visitors were beginning to puzzle out forensic details of the sort that would not have been known to earlier students of Pompeii. Reading his description in

conjunction with Franque's painting shows the important influence of antique sculptural prototypes like the Florence *Niobe* in the contemporary process of visualizing the victims' fate.

The fate of a mother and her children was without a doubt the most piteous spectacle among the victims of Pompeii found up until that point. In the spring of 1826, another moving discovery was made. During a customary excavation in the presence of some distinguished visitors in a house known as the House of Queen Caroline, a portion of the escarpment collapsed, revealing some columns on one side of a peristyle and, above them, the skeleton of a man crushed between the capitals and a vault. Near him was the skeleton of a woman and a purse with gold and silver coins in it. Both were obviously fugitives who had sought shelter under the vault. Further excavation revealed the bodies of another couple, also fugitives, who had also been buried by the vault. Unlike the first couple, these were not killed instantly by the fallen ceiling but must have survived the first accident as they lay together wrapped in each other's arms. Guglielmo Bechi wrote:

The sight of these two skeletons still lying in that embrace, which was the last movement of their life, testified so movingly to those around them that the terrible phenomenon that had cut short their days had not sufficed to quench their love for each other.⁵⁴

Bonucci envisioned the fate of four skeletons found in the alley next to the House of Sallust quite differently, showing little sympathy for their fate:

A young woman fleeing with her three slaves. Might she not have been the pretty girlfriend of Sallust, who, expelled from the lap of luxury by hostile fate, tried to save herself by traveling this street and there found her death? The unfortunate woman may have left behind her in her bedroom her perfume jar, her Penates, and her money. All of these items were of gold. Next to the bodies were collected thirty-two coins, a disk of silver that might have been a mirror, some gold rings adorned with engraved stones, two earrings, a necklace, and five bracelets, all of gold.⁵⁵

In this case, the author condemns not the manner in which the victims fell but the vanity of the mistress in lingering to collect her precious treasures or “woman’s world” (*mundus muliebris*)—a theme that appears again and again among those who read the bodies of the victims.⁵⁶ The poor mistress of the House of Sallust has been held up as a negative example: she died because she went back for her possessions, while her husband got away.⁵⁷

The discovery of seven skeletons along with an enormous hoard of gold and silver coins in a cellar several weeks later, on 29 May 1826, led Bechi to conclude in the same publication:

The error of many Pompeians was to seek safety from the eruption underground. Those most prepared to save themselves in this manner have been found, together with their provisions, in the cellars and the basements (as demonstrated by the many skeletons found in [the Villa of Diomedes], [in the House of the Emperor Joseph II], behind the basilica, and elsewhere), while in the piazzas, in the streets, and in the houses have been found but few skeletons.⁵⁸

The aqueous nature of the surge layer at Pompeii had become clear to most investigators, particularly in the wake of the evidence from the Villa of Diomedes. Carmine Lippi had gone so far as to suggest in his book of 1816 that Pompeii had been destroyed by a flood unrelated to the eruption of AD 79.⁵⁹

On 30 January 1829, the skeleton of a woman was found opposite the door of the House of the Dioscuri. She had been about to flee when she was struck down. With her was a purse containing a pair of gold earrings in the form of scales with pearls in the balance, five gold rings and five more engraved stones, some coins, and a tiny glass perfume bottle.⁶⁰ The circumstances of her death are oddly reminiscent of that of the mistress of the House of Sallust, and it may be assumed that the guides made similar remarks about her character and lack of discretion.

An American, Thomas Gray, adapted Bonucci’s description of the victims found in 1812 into a tableau of the death of principal characters in his novel *The Vestal, or A Tale of Pompeii*, published in Boston in 1830. Gray relocated the site of the unfortunate mother’s last moments

from the crossroads to the Mammia hemicycle just outside the Herculaneum Gate. Although he does not give his source, it is likely that Gray also used a description of the embracing skeletons of 1826 for his characters Lucius and Lucilla, who met their end lying “side by side beneath that deadly and burning mass, their arms twined around each other’s neck, united at last only in death.”⁶¹

The author who most successfully appropriated the lives and the deaths of the victims of Pompeii was, of course, Edward Bulwer-Lytton, who wrote *The Last Days of Pompeii*, first published in 1834. For his knowledge of Pompeii, Bulwer-Lytton was indebted to the English resident Sir William Gell and to the director and author of the standard guidebook, Carlo Bonucci. In the manner of the professional guides of the day, Bonucci’s guide was strong on anecdotes, and many of his anecdotes related to the discovery of bodies. For Romantics, Pompeii was nothing if not the “city of the dead.”

While digging along the flank of the Temple of Jupiter in the Forum in 1818, the excavators discovered two skeletons. Despite using the greatest possible care, they found nothing near the first but a single large bronze coin attached to an encasement of bone, and they found nothing at all near the other, who lay under a column of marble. Between the two victims was found a bronze helmet.⁶² Aside from the gruesome fate of being crushed by a falling column, there seems nothing remarkable about this discovery. Yet something remarkable must have interested Bulwer-Lytton in this victim, since he appropriated him for his character the diabolical Arbaces in his novel *The Last Days of Pompeii*:

... the skeleton of a man literally severed in two by a prostrate column; the skull was of so striking a conformation, so boldly marked in its intellectual, as well as its worse physical developments, that it has excited the constant speculation of every itinerant believer in the theories of Spurzheim who has gazed upon that ruined palace of the mind. Still, after the lapse of the ages, the traveler may survey that airy hall within whose cunning galleries and elaborate chambers once thought, reasoned, dreamed, and sinned, the soul of Arbaces the Egyptian.⁶³

Not only did Bulwer-Lytton use the skull in his novel, but tradition holds that he brought it back to England and kept it in his study.⁶⁴

Bulwer-Lytton was indebted to Bonucci not only for his character of Arbaces, fated to be crushed by a column in the Forum, but for others of his characters as well. He appropriated the hungry priest of Isis for his character Calenus and the priest with the axe for Burbo. The Roman sentry stands at his post at the Herculaneum Gate, revealed to Diomed and his company as they head for his cellar, well-stocked with food, where a slow and terrible death awaits them. All these persons were by now familiar from other sources available to many of Bulwer-Lytton's readers. Bulwer-Lytton's hero and heroine escape, however, with the help of an ingenious invention, the blind girl Nydia, who alone is not confused by the darkness of the eruption.

At the time Bulwer-Lytton published *The Last Days of Pompeii*, antiquaries were still fairly optimistic in their estimates of those who had survived the eruption. In a note accompanying the novel of 1834, Bulwer-Lytton noted that though "three hundred fifty or four hundred skeletons" had been discovered and "a great part of the city is yet to be disinterred," there was "every reason to conclude that they were very few in proportion to those that escaped."⁶⁵ From Pliny's letters, it is clear that some had indeed survived to tell the tale. Although Pliny's uncle was fated to die on the beach at Stabiae, accompanied by his slaves, others of his party were able to escape the fatal surge on foot by reaching the heights above the city. These, when they returned, recovered the body of their commander and brought the younger Pliny the news of his uncle's death. As Bulwer-Lytton implied, antiquaries of his time made their calculations by estimating a reasonable number for the population of Pompeii and subtracting the number of those killed, increasing the latter by a proportional amount based on the unexcavated area of the city. No one ever claimed much accuracy for this method, and the range of estimates varied greatly. Yet this method and the conclusion that most of the Pompeians had survived suited those like Bulwer-Lytton who fictionalized accounts of the destruction, since each needed someone to survive to tell the tale; and they all adhered to the prevailing belief of the time that the only escape during the final hours

lay by the sea.⁶⁶ The hopelessness of escape by sea was only made evident by excavations undertaken in 1881.⁶⁷

Authors like Gray and Bulwer-Lytton were not always able to distinguish good information from bad. Carlo Bonucci's guidebook, an important source for both, was a case in point. Published in both French and Italian editions, it was full of information but also full of idiosyncratic conjectures. Sir William Gell's *Pompeiana* was not much better. Both Bonucci and Gell suffered from the fact that what passed for scholarship in Naples was to some extent isolated from that of the rest of Europe.⁶⁸ Important information concerning the excavations was officially treated as if it were a state secret. Controversies were waged between one Neapolitan scholar and another.⁶⁹ The excavations of Pompeii and other sites were quite naturally reflective of the general condition of scientific discourse in Naples. In order to understand how this affected the recovery and ultimately the exploitation of human remains at Pompeii, it will be useful to take a brief overview of how the state and the academy influenced the excavations.⁷⁰

Despite an influx of scholars from Florence and Rome, the Neapolitan academies, including the Accademia Ercolanese and the Accademia di Belle Arti, which exercised a certain degree of institutional control over the excavation, exhibition, and publication of the archaeological sites, had become somewhat inbred by the middle of the nineteenth century.⁷¹ To some extent, this was, for better or for worse, a reflection of the interest taken in antiquities by the reigning monarch. The first modern king of Naples, Charles of Bourbon, who reigned from 1734 to 1759, conceived and maintained an active interest in the excavations. Although his main concern was in the collection of antiquities for the museum in his palace in Portici, he instituted the practice of attending special excavations.⁷² Most important, he founded the Accademia Ercolanese, in 1755, for the purpose of publishing the paintings, statues, and other artifacts in his museum. After he ascended the Spanish throne in 1759, he made a point of leaving all of his antiquities to his son and successor, Ferdinand.

The native-born Ferdinand was not very interested in the archaeological sites, although he recognized their value in enhancing his

standing among other European monarchs. During the Napoleonic era, Ferdinand was forced to flee to Sicily, where he lived under English protection. In 1805 Joseph Bonaparte assumed the throne in Naples and took an active role in founding a museum on the French model. In 1807 he was succeeded as king by Joachim Murat, who reigned together with Queen Caroline, sister of Napoleon. With the fall of Napoleon and the death of Murat in 1815, Ferdinand was restored as King of Naples. The Royal Museum and the expanded excavations at Pompeii survived the change in regime, with some significant modifications. The Royal Museum became the Royal Borbonic Museum, and its collections (which included both the Farnese Collections inherited by Ferdinand through his father's family and the antiquities garnered from Herculaneum and Pompeii) were declared to be the personal property of the monarch, independent of the kingdom. This last condition was, of course, contested by some where it concerned the antiquities from Herculaneum and Pompeii. As for the excavations at Pompeii, the budget was cut back drastically, and much of the land that had been purchased for future excavation was sold back into private hands.⁷³

Ferdinand's successor, Francis I (1825–30), who had himself conducted excavations in Torre Greco before the beginning of the French decade, showed more interest in the antiquities than his father. During his brief reign, open-air excavations were begun in Herculaneum, and an impressive series of illustrated volumes devoted to the collections of the Naples Museum and the excavations of Pompeii was successfully begun.⁷⁴ His early death in 1830 and the succession of his son Ferdinand II (1830–59) saw the beginning of a difficult period for Naples that included epidemics of cholera (1836–37 and 1854–55) and rebellion (1847–49). Under Ferdinand's reign, the Naples Museum was obliged to remove "immodest statues" from display and actually to immure the notorious pornographic collection. Periods of civil disorder disrupted the excavations of Pompeii in 1821, 1848, and 1860.⁷⁵

From the first discovery of the buried cities, tension arose between the Neapolitan "owners" and foreign visitors. In the beginning, King Charles was hard pressed to secure his patrimony—understood to consist of the artifacts from beneath the soil—from leaving the kingdom.

His own antiquarian interests eventually led him to employ experts who were able to conduct the excavations, collect and conserve the artifacts, and publish those that might be of artistic or antiquarian interest. Of course, many mistakes in each of these areas were made before the king was able to claim a certain measure of success. From the beginning, Charles and those he employed in this endeavor were subjected to withering criticism from abroad. Nevertheless, he persisted in his effort not only to claim all of the artifacts for his and his successors' collection but also to exercise control over the copyright of this material.

In the matter of intellectual property, Charles and his successors were ultimately unsuccessful in controlling discourse on the buried cities and their art. Though the eight folio volumes of engravings published under the title *Le Antichità di Ercolano* (1757–92) were an artistic success, their texts were less satisfactory.⁷⁶ Reckoning came during the Napoleonic era, when the English gained control over the Herculaneum papyri and when the French regime in Naples enabled the publication of Mazois' authoritative study of architecture and topography, *Les Ruines de Pompéi*.⁷⁷ In the 1820s, the epicenter of archaeological studies in Italy became the Istituto di Corrispondenza Archeologica in Rome, under the patronage first of the Prussian ambassador and then of the German state. The regular reports from Naples published in the *Bullettino* of this institute from 1829 on proved to be the most reliable source of information on the excavations in Naples. The period 1850–1900 saw the publication of important monographs on Pompeii in French, German, and English.⁷⁸ German mastery of color printing made Wilhelm Zahn's elephant-folio plates of Pompeian wall painting an indispensable tool for scholars and artists, and W. Helbig's monograph published in 1868 gave archaeologists a fully documented catalogue raisonné of the ancient paintings.⁷⁹

It was in the study of epigraphy that foreign scholarship, particularly that of the German professors, truly excelled during the second half of the nineteenth century. That was the age of the *Corpus Inscriptionum Latinarum*, a creation of Theodor Mommsen and the Prussian Academy. Mommsen envisioned the work as an autopsied (i.e., eyewitnessed) transcription of all known inscriptions from the lands of the

Roman Empire. While collecting inscriptions in Naples in the fall of 1845, Mommsen had met the director of the Naples Museum, Francesco Maria Avellino, and his protégés Giulio Minervini and Giuseppe Fiorelli.⁸⁰ Like Mommsen, Fiorelli was a student of pre-Roman Italic languages and epigraphy and numismatics. A professional and personal friendship between the two dates from this period. By a strange twist of fate, Fiorelli was instrumental both in opening the field of Neapolitan scholarship to foreigners, particularly Germans, and in regaining international prestige for Neapolitan archaeology. A look at his eventful life and works is warranted before moving to his most famous discovery.

Giuseppe Fiorelli (1823–96) was born and educated in Naples (fig. 3).⁸¹ Although he achieved a degree in legal studies at age eighteen, he chose a career in archaeology, as he was “inclined by the nature of his peaceful and tranquil spirit to prefer to the tumultuous occupations of the forum the placid and austere study of archaeology and to live more among the ancients than his contemporaries.”⁸² Fate had something rather different in store for him, though he began his archaeological career modestly enough. Two years later, at the age of twenty, he published an article on numismatics in the *Bullettino dell’Istituto di Corrispondenza Archeologica* that won him membership in Italian and foreign academies, including the Accademia Ercolanese and the Istituto di Corrispondenza Archeologica itself. In 1844, at the age of twenty-one, he was appointed to the post of Inspector in the Soprintendenza Generale degli Scavi (becoming Inspector of the Pompeii excavations in 1847). His brief was to safeguard the antiquities and to see that the administrators of the excavations followed regulations issued by the Soprintendenza. His post put him in direct conflict with Carlo Bonucci, who, though demoted from the post of Architect-Director for dishonesty in 1831, was in control of the excavations due to the illness of his successor. In 1846 Fiorelli had served as vice president of the Archaeological Session of the Congress of Italian Scientists. During the brief period in 1847–48 when, pressed by the democrats, King Ferdinand agreed to a constitution for Naples, Fiorelli also participated in a committee to reform the Royal Borbonic Museum and the archaeolog-

ical service. The report of this committee recommended, among other reforms, the creation of a site museum devoted to human remains, an idea that was ultimately realized under Fiorelli's direction in 1875.

With the collapse of the constitutional government following riots on 15 May 1848, repression followed. Fiorelli was arrested on 24 April 1849 on the accusation of Carlo Bonucci, who had sensed his opportunity to act against the young upstart.⁸³ Fiorelli was imprisoned for about two months, during which time he began to edit for publication manuscripts of the *Giornale degli scavi di Pompei*. Immediately upon the appearance of the first fascicle, the police entered his home and seized the printed copy and his manuscripts.⁸⁴ This time, it was the complaint of a member of the Accademia Ercolanese, Bernardo Quaranta, that brought the police down on him. Fiorelli was imprisoned until January 1850, when his case was dismissed. He remained unemployed until 1853, when Leopold, Count of Syracuse, the brother of King Ferdinand II, hired him as his personal secretary. Leopold also made it possible for Fiorelli to return to archaeology as excavator of Cuma. Under Leopold's protection, Fiorelli was able to resume publishing on Pompeii, including a work on the Oscan (i.e., pre-Roman) inscriptions (1854) and a great plan of the city at a scale of 1:333 (1858).

It was as Leopold's secretary, however, that Fiorelli was to achieve even greater fame than as a Pompeianist. Upon the death of the much disliked and much feared King Ferdinand II in 1859, Ferdinand's son Francis succeeded to the throne as the second Bourbon king of that name. In May 1860, in the wake of popular uprisings in Sicily, Garibaldi invaded that island with the intention ultimately of uniting Italy under King Victor Emmanuel of Savoy. He crossed the Straits of Messina on 18–19 August, took Reggio on the twenty-third, and turned his attention toward Naples. Victor Emmanuel's minister Cavour suggested that, in order to gain some control over events, Leopold write to his nephew and suggest a graceful abdication. On 24 August, a letter from Leopold to Francis, written by Fiorelli, urged the monarch to avoid civil war by his own noble self-sacrifice.⁸⁵ The letter was widely admired, and Fiorelli's star was once more on the rise. In late 1860, Fiorelli was made Inspector-Director of Excavations and installed in the chair of ar-

chaeology in the University of Naples. In his *Appunti autobiografici*, he noted with satisfaction under the year 1861:

The complete reorganization of the administration of the excavations and the continuation of those resumed in Pompeii do not prevent me from lecturing three days of the week in the university or, as president of the faculty of letters and philosophy, from participating in the many searches for new chairs, from reviewing many works presented for adoption in the schools, or from joining in the plans for new university legislation.⁸⁶

One more person needs an introduction before proceeding to the events of the next chapter. Luigi Settembrini (1813–76) was to play an important role in announcing Fiorelli's discovery and legitimizing his success. In 1863, at the time of Fiorelli's first casts, Settembrini was Professor of Italian Literature at the University of Naples. Ten years older than Fiorelli, Settembrini had been attracted as early as 1837 by Mazzini's republican idea of a united Italy. In 1847 he had published anonymously a devastating pamphlet, *Protest of the People of the Two Sicilies*.⁸⁷ Under the short-lived Constitution of 1848, Settembrini served as Minister of Public Instruction. After the revolution in Naples collapsed, he was tried and sentenced to death, commuted to life at hard labor. During eight years of imprisonment, his case became celebrated internationally. In 1859 he was finally ordered deported to the United States, but the captain of the ship that was to take him and his fellow patriots was persuaded to land them in Ireland. He returned to Italy in time for the unification.

The next chapter will deal with the progressive reforms introduced at Pompeii after 1860 under Fiorelli. Without these reforms, the discovery of the casts would hardly have been possible. It should be recognized at this point, however, that some reforms had taken place during Fiorelli's earlier tenure between 1844 and 1849 and during his absence from the excavations—though it is impossible to estimate how much *indirect* influence he may have had even during the period of his banishment, 1850–60.⁸⁸

Although it has often been credited to Fiorelli—and deservedly so from the point of view of the rigorous application of principle—the practice of excavating sites in horizontal layers in order to preserve the upper parts of the structure was first applied consistently in the excavation of the House of the Russian Princes (VII.I.25), begun in March 1852.⁸⁹ More mundane alterations in the routine signal a desire to “survey and control.” References to the use of a twenty-four-hour day, sporadic at first, began to appear in the *Giornale* in 1844.⁹⁰ Linear measurements, which had earlier been recorded by halving fractions, began to be recorded in tenths of a *palmo Napoletano* in 1847 and then in hundredths at the beginning of 1851, with fractional notation still the norm. In 1853 decimal notation (e.g., “pal. 0.10”) became standard. Each of these changes added to the ability of Pompeii’s administration and that of the Soprintendenza in Naples to protect the antiquities of Pompeii and to control theft, which had more or less systematically plagued that rich site. The most effective control, however, was to be found in the system of topographical notation devised and published by Fiorelli in 1858—while he was still in banishment.⁹¹ Fiorelli divided the plan of Pompeii into nine *Regiones*, each of which was comprised of *insulae*. The entryways of the houses and the other buildings in each *insula* were then numbered, usually in a clockwise direction. According to Fiorelli’s system, each entryway in the entire city received a unique reference number.

Scientific progress also affected the treatment of human remains at Pompeii during this period. Between the relatively relaxed atmosphere of winter 1832–34—when Bulwer-Lytton stayed in Naples and befriended Bonucci (who presumably gave him the skull of “Arbaces”)—and the 1850s, important changes took place that, among other things, affected the study of human remains at Pompeii. Naples experienced serious outbreaks of cholera in 1836 and 1837, resulting in thousands of deaths.⁹² One of the consequences of these outbreaks was the growth of popular suspicion of medical doctors. The committee on the reform of the Royal Borbonic Museum and the archaeological excavations of which Fiorelli had been a member under the Constitution of 1848 had recommended the creation of a museum at Pompeii for keeping arti-

facts and skeletal remains that would not otherwise be sent to Naples.⁹³ King Ferdinand, for political and religious reasons, was strongly opposed to the suggestion. The scientific study of the skeletons foreseen in this ill-fated proposal was eventually taken up by Stefano Delle Chiaje, who made a collection of available specimens in the 1850s for his anatomical museum at the University of Naples. He studied the pathology and the evidence of ancient surgical procedures on the skeletal remains but was not above noticing that the physiognomy of the victims betrayed a “relaxed and libidinous lifestyle.”⁹⁴ As Delle Chiaje’s data indicate, he was obliged to work with disintegrated skeletons. The *Giornale* shows that an effort was at last being made to secure the human remains uncovered in the course of excavations. As early as 1855, skeletons discovered in the excavations were collected in the secure storage depot located in the (so-called) Tempio di Mercurio.⁹⁵

This introduction must close, unfortunately, on a note of mystery. In the *Annali dell’Istituto di Corrispondenza Archeologica* (the companion publication to the *Bullettino*) for December 1859, Serge Ivanoff published an article that discussed, inter alia, folding house doors from Pompeii.⁹⁶ In his article, he referred to two doors represented by gesso casts “in the small Museum of Pompeii.”⁹⁷ “They were cast, as they were discovered,” he wrote, “from the impressions left in the ashes hardened by so many centuries. The memorable disaster found the door half-closed, and thus have the wooden leaves left their architectural design in the ashes.” These items are close enough in date to raise the question of their relationship to the casts of human victims made in 1863. Naturally, they move us to ask who made the casts of the doors and when.

By an interesting coincidence, this plaster cast that must have been made prior to 1859 (and before Fiorelli’s appointment as Inspector-Director)—and which must be considered as a forerunner of the casts of victims—is the very first item to be illustrated in Fiorelli’s new journal.⁹⁸ When Fiorelli took control of the excavations on 20 December 1860, he made clear his intention of proceeding one insula at a time, declaring in the *Giornale* entry for that day: “This morning the excavations of Pompeii were reopened, and work was concentrated on clearing

the insula that remains as yet untouched between the Temple of Isis and the new baths."⁹⁹ He initiated the publication of his excavations with a systematic description of the insula, beginning with the first shop (VIII.4.1/53) along the north side of the insula as one comes from the Forum.¹⁰⁰ Because the shop seems to have been used by a dyer, Fiorelli designated it "Taberna Offectoris," explaining that the *offectores*, or dyers, had been mentioned elsewhere in a painted inscription. In his discussion of the cast of the door, Fiorelli makes no mention of Ivanoff's publication or the "Small Museum" and even implies that his own drawing is original. Breton, who described the shop ("Boutique du teinturier") in the third edition of his Pompeian monograph (1869), even attributed the discovery to Fiorelli.¹⁰¹ Fiorelli's own text, however, is ambiguous.

From Ivanoff's article, we know that the cast had been removed from the shop. Consequently, it is not surprising that Fiorelli simply launches into a description of the door without giving its exact location in the shop. Later in his description, he risks confusing the reader by referring to another (similar?) shop door: "The Pompeian door recently discovered, . . . which belonged to the fifth shop of the second insula to the right in the *vicoletto* to the north of the Forum, toward the west [i.e., VII.6.29], exhibits for the first time an example of such closure (namely, *clostrum*)." ¹⁰² The shop is no doubt the same one referred to in the *Giornale* for 14 February 1859, which "contains the impression of a door [and is] in the *vicoletto* that runs alongside the Prisons of the Forum."¹⁰³ Fortunately, this part of the mystery has been solved by Mario Pagano, who discovered that the idea to make a cast of the door published by Ivanoff first occurred to Domenico Spinelli, Principe Sangiorgio, in November 1856.¹⁰⁴ At that time, Sangiorgio wrote to the Minister of Public Instruction:

In a tour I made yesterday together with the Commission in Pompeii I observed an impression of a double door that was discovered recently in the current excavations. Since it is a matter of great importance to have a model of it, I have accordingly made it a matter of urgency that the modeler (*il formatore*) De Simone be called immediately to the spot

to make an impression in gesso, since the ground in which the impression is to be found is the next to fall.¹⁰⁵

Although it is still unclear when and by whom the cast was made, it is highly probable that Sangiorgio saw the impression of the door in the shop (VIII.4.1/53) described by Fiorelli, since the excavators were working in just that location in November 1856.¹⁰⁶ It is difficult to understand how Fiorelli could have failed to give credit to Ivanoff and to Sangiorgio, especially since the latter was still technically his boss in 1861.¹⁰⁷ With time and success, Fiorelli probably had second thoughts about his own conduct in the matter of the shop door. The description of the "Shop of the Dyer" in his *Descrizione di Pompei* of 1875 contains no mention of the door, an indication that he later had reservations about the earlier description.¹⁰⁸ Fiorelli's errors in 1861 may have been due to having too much on his plate. On the bright side, the cast of the door may have given him the idea for his later casts.