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Taste and the Antique: Visiting Pompeii in the Nineteenth Century

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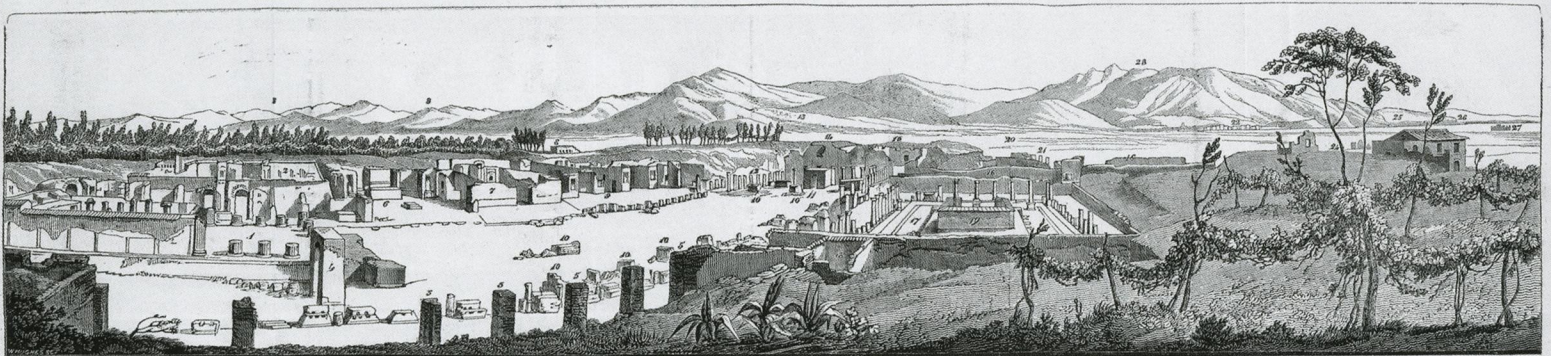
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MARY BEARD

*Taste and the Antique: Visiting Pompeii  
in the Nineteenth Century*



EXPLANATION of a VIEW of the CITY of POMPEII, exhibiting in the PANORAMA, STRAND.



1. Temple of Jupiter.
2. Pantheon.
3. Appennines.
4. Triumphal Arch.
5. Remains of Public Granaries.

6. Court of Justice.
7. Temple of Mercury.
8. Wall of great Theatre.
9. Portico of Eumachia.

10. Pedestals for Statues in the Forum.
11. Arch called a Janus.
12. Street leading to Queen Caroline's Excavation.

13. Town of Lettere.
- 14 and 15. Treasury, Record Offices, &c.
16. Basilica.
17. Temple of Venus, or Bacchus.
18. Ancient Painting of Bacchus and Silenus.

19. Cells of the Temple.
20. Site of Stabia.
21. General Championet's Excavation.
22. Castell' a Mare.
23. Mount Lactarius.

24. River Sarnus.
25. Vico.
26. Sorrento.
27. Rivegliano, or the Rocks of Hercules.



28. Point of Minerva.
29. Island of Capri.
30. Peasants celebrating a Festival.
- A. Pifferari, or Pipers.
31. Island of Ischia.
32. Island of Procida.

33. Road leading to the Street of the Tombs.
34. Torre dell' Annunziata.
35. Point Scassata.
36. Cape Misenum.
37. Mount Selvaggi.
38. Heights of Poulipo.

39. Mount Barbaro.
40. Canalicoli near Naples.
41. Canalicoli near Torre del Greco.
42. Bosco Tre Case.
43. Extinct Craters at the Foot of Vesuvius.

44. Behind these Trees is the Street of the Tombs, intercepted by them.
45. Herculean Gate.
46. Ruins of an Inn.
47. Part of the Town-Wall.
48. Street with Ruins of ancient Chariot-wheels.

49. Fountain.
50. Baker's Shop.
51. Kitchen in Pansa's House.
52. Tower on the Town-Wall.
53. House of Pansa.
54. Crater of Vesuvius.

55. Somma and Ottavianus.
56. Bosca Reale.
57. Ancient Shops.
58. Milk Shop.
59. Top of Prisons.
60. Gate of the Forum.

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In May 1884 Pompeii was brought back to life in three days of reenactments, staged at the site by a group of local antiquaries, artists, and aristocratic benefactors, to raise money for the victims of a recent earthquake on the island of Ischia. The first day featured chariot races held in a newly built circus, opening with a procession in which the priests of the goddess Isis took a starring role among five hundred senators, praetorian guardsmen, lictors, tripod bearers, and other assorted participants (fig. 1). Presiding over the events was a look-alike Emperor Vespasian, who watched from his imperial box—“the crowning success” of the celebrations, according to one account, “surmounted by eagles and trophies, decorated with statues and palms and shaded by the typical awning.” After the races (marred, some of the audience felt, when two of the chariots lost wheels in the second round) ordinary race-goers could relax with wine, served in replica “antique vessels” and bought from the original Pompeian bars and shops. The proceedings ended with a mock marriage procession, to the accompaniment of a surviving nuptial hymn by the poet Catullus—presumably either Poem 61 or 62—set to music (fig. 2). On the second day, there were more races in the circus, followed this time by a funeral cortege, which made its way from the House of the Faun to the cemetery in the Street of the Tombs (fig. 3). On the third day, gladiatorial games were held in the Roman amphitheater, before the emperor departed in another grand procession, by torchlight.<sup>1</sup>

Reactions to these spectacles in the British and American press were mixed. There was considerable admiration for their historical veracity of the display: “Under the careful

superintendence of Signor de Petra, the Director of the Naples Museum ... all was arranged with strictest adherence to truth.” Particularly striking, for this correspondent in the *Graphic*, were the taverns: “Skilful restorers have transformed the skeletons of wine-shops into a semblance of their old selves, and therein thirsty visitors were served with rich Falernian by waiters clad in veritable classic garb.”<sup>2</sup> But there was still something disconcerting about the whole affair. The regular “Notes from Naples” column in the *Athenaeum* had good things to say about the reconstructed musical instruments, specially made “after models long disinterred,” and about the imitation Roman music (“very unlike that to which our ears are now accustomed”), specially composed to be played on the specially constructed instruments. But, like others, it wondered about the “questionable ... taste of converting the city of the dead into an overcrowded and gossiping theatre.”<sup>3</sup>

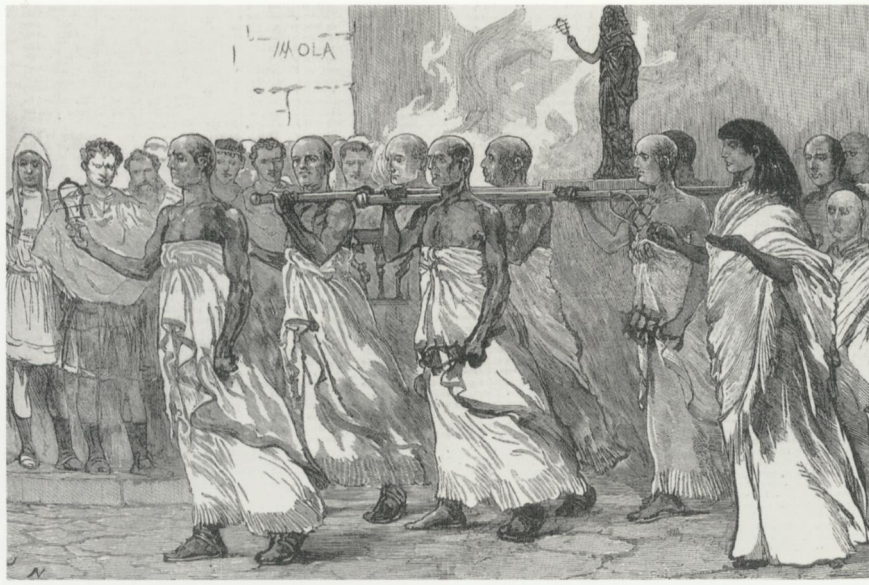
Jane Ellen Harrison, who was then just making her name as an archaeologist (and earning a living as a private tutor and part-time journalist), had some characteristically acerbic observations. Writing of the occasion in the *Magazine of Art* early the following year, she referred to the “streets of the little city ... alive not merely with the footsteps of tourists, but with the tread of dead men’s ghosts charmed back to life by archaeology.” “Some of us,” she went on, “have perhaps felt that all this, amusing and archaeologically interesting though it is, is just a trifle out of tune. We may study the dead past to our profit, but we need not call it back to life and bid it dance for us.”<sup>4</sup>

Perhaps that was the view of many Neapolitans too. For, although there was consid-

*Explanation of a View of the City of Pompeii Exhibiting in the Panorama, Strand*, from Robert Burford, *Description of a View of the Ruins of the City of Pompeii* (London, 1824)

The Getty Research Institute, Los Angeles (1362–941)





1. *The Procession of the Goddess Isis*, from *The Graphic*, May 17, 1884

Cambridge University Library, NPR. C53; reproduced by kind permission of the Syndics of Cambridge University Library

2. *The Marriage Procession*, from *The Graphic*, May 17, 1884

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erable interest in the spectacles among foreigners (and the local hotels were apparently booked up well in advance), the attendance was disappointing, and the losses incurred by the event turned out to be considerable. Some three thousand people bought tickets, raising a total of twenty-eight thousand francs; but the costs amounted to one hundred thirty-two thousand francs, so the earthquake victims received nothing.<sup>5</sup>

## Representing the Past at Pompeii

What version of the past was on display at Pompeii in the nineteenth century? How did visitors understand and process what they saw? How far, or how often, did history “dance” for them? The reactions of travelers and tourists to the buried city over the course of the century were many and various, ranging from enthusiasm and wonder to disappointment and irritation.<sup>6</sup> But can we detect any broader patterns? What determined the way the ancient city was received or enjoyed? Were there significant changes over the nineteenth century?

My focus is, for the most part, on British and American visitors, though their experiences must necessarily be seen against the developments on the ground and the changing policies of the Neapolitan and, later, Italian authorities who controlled the site. Most obviously, of course, the area of excavation was gradually extended: at the beginning of the century Pompeii was more a buried street than a buried city (fig. 4); by the 1890s over half of what we now see had been excavated.<sup>7</sup> But there were also significant changes in the practicalities of visiting. From the 1840s onward the most convenient transport to the site was by rail, disembarking at the station on the south side of the city (and even the most illustrious visitors arrived in this way, including Pope Pius IX in 1849). Before that, most visitors came by carriage from Naples and entered the town by way of the Street of the Tombs and the Herculaneum Gate, to the north (fig. 5).<sup>8</sup> And, although it was more or less obligatory throughout the century to be conducted around the site by a guide, or *cicerone*, the system was strictly regularized in the 1860s when the excavations came under the control of the new Italian state, after the fall of the Bourbon monarchy. An entrance fee of two francs was imposed (except on Sunday), which included the services of a guide; no tipping was allowed (although the guides were permitted to sell souvenir photographs); and the number of guides increased and they wore uniform and numbered badges indicat-



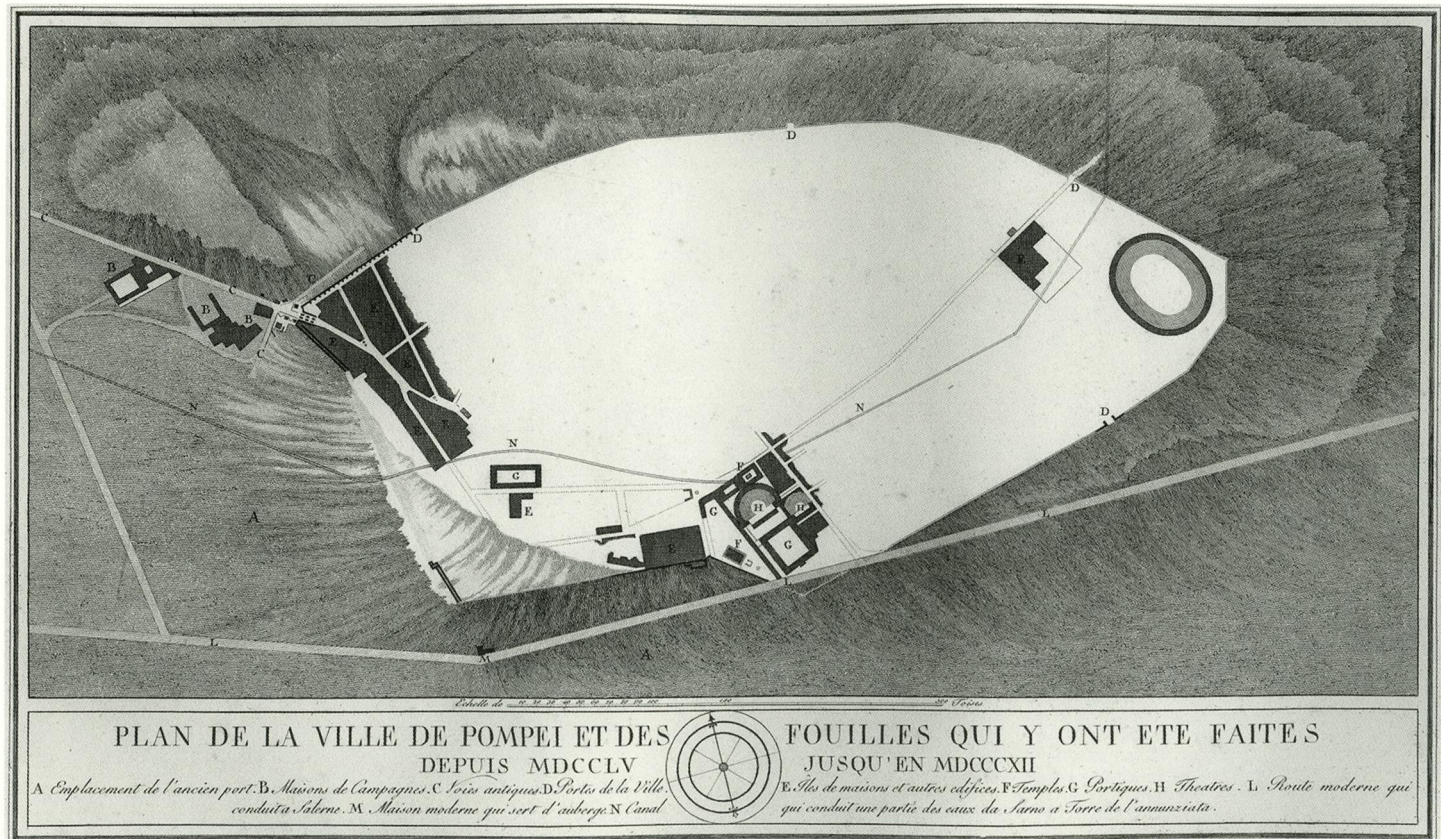
3. *The Funeral Procession in the Strada delle Tombe*, from *The Graphic*, May 17, 1884

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4. *Plan of the City of Pompeii*, engraving, François Mazois, *Les Ruines de Pompéi*, volume 1 (Paris, 1824), plate 2

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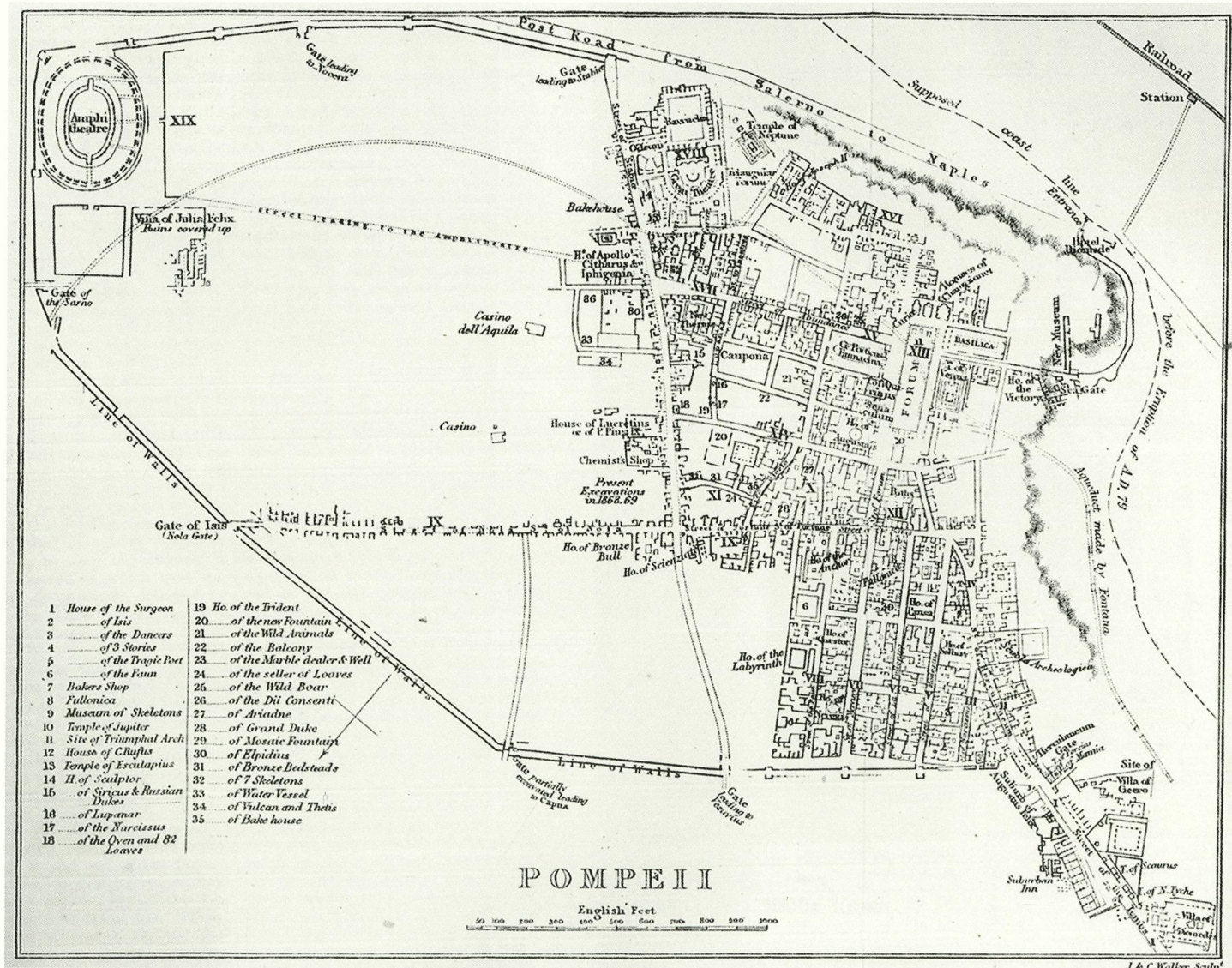




By the end of the century there were nearly fifty thousand visitors to the site of Pompeii each year.<sup>10</sup> Even more, of course, flocked to Pompeii's many far-flung re-creations and simulacra—from the Pompeian Court at London's Crystal Palace or the commercial panoramas displayed in other London locations (see essay frontispiece), to pyrodrasmas of the destruction of the city, staged by the James Pain fireworks company on Manhattan Beach in Brooklyn and elsewhere. Others discovered Pompeii in painting (fig. 6), opera (fig. 7), or in its many fictional versions, the

most famous, and best selling, being Edward Bulwer-Lytton's *The Last Days of Pompeii*, first published in 1834.<sup>11</sup> These re-creations, although they are not the main subject of this essay, must have some part to play in my argument, for one simple reason. Long before travelers set foot on the shores of the Bay of Naples, most of them would have been familiar with the images of the buried city offered by its various replicas and imitations. These would have been visitors' first encounter with Pompeii and the standard by which they judged the city. More often than we care to imagine, perhaps, the hot, dusty, and confusing ruins would have failed to

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6. Sir Lawrence Alma-Tadema,  
*A Roman Flower Market*, 1868,  
 oil on panel  
 Photograph © Manchester City Gall-  
 eries, Manchester, United Kingdom

match up to the city as represented by a clever architect, showman, or novelist.<sup>12</sup> It would have taken considerable mental effort to reconcile the sheer mess and disarray of the excavations with a painter's artful vision of the Roman world, whether as a city restored and reanimated or as a carefully composed romantic ruin.

I shall concentrate on two themes in particular. The first is the tension, through most of the nineteenth century, between the representation of Pompeii as a city of the dead and its representation as a city of the living; in other words, between Pompeii as a memento mori on a grand scale, a reminder of destruction and human mortality, and Pompeii as an open-air museum, offering a precious glimpse of Roman life in the first century CE. The idea of Pompeii as a living city was strikingly evoked in the spectacles of 1884—though, even on that occasion, the “dead men's ghosts,” in Jane Harrison's words, seem not to have been far from the imagination of the onlookers.

The second theme, which I shall explore more briefly, concerns the different ways in which visitors to the site engaged with the history they found there. I shall suggest that, through most of the century, visitors came to Pompeii to view not simply the traces of the

Roman past (from the temples to the bread still in the baker's oven), but also the very processes by which those traces were brought to light. The allure of Pompeii lay, in part, in seeing *how* history was revealed, or (to put it more strongly) in watching history *being made*. It was only at the very end of the nineteenth century that this particular type of historical engagement changed—a change that was itself closely connected with new strategies in the presentation of the site by its directorate.

One consequence of my arguments in this essay is to bring to the fore some relatively neglected characters in the history of Pompeian archaeology. The key figure in the nineteenth-century excavations is usually taken to be Giuseppe Fiorelli (director from 1863 to 1875), who not only devised the now-standard division of the site into “regions” and “insulae” (that is, blocks) but is also credited with inventing the technique of casting the bodies of the dead and dying by filling with plaster the vacuums left in the volcanic debris by the decaying flesh.<sup>13</sup> He will certainly have his part to play in what follows—for, in fact, the display of realistic corpses from the 1860s on was one of the most significant developments in the “visitor experience” on the site. But we also see the impact of directors Michele Ruggiero (1875–1893) and, especially, Giulio de Petra (1893–1901, 1906–1910)—his flagship project being the excavation and restoration of the House of the Vettii.

### “The City of the Dead, the City of the Dead”

It is hard not to be struck by the contrast between the reenactments of daily life at Pompeii in 1884 and some of the most famous encounters with Pompeii earlier in the nineteenth century, which emphasized the theme of “the city of the dead.” The most famous formulation was that of the novelist Sir Walter Scott, who visited Pompeii on February 9, 1832, just six months before his death. He was—according to his guide, Sir William Gell (long-term British resident in Naples and author of the first systematic





7. Alessandro Sanquirico, *The Forum of Pompeii Festively Decorated*, 1827, scene from Giovanni Pacini's opera *L'ultimo giorno di Pompei*, from *Raccolta di varie decorazioni sceniche: Inventate ed eseguita per il R. Teatro alla Scala di Milano*

The Getty Research Institute, Los Angeles (93-B15110)

English-language handbook to the site<sup>14</sup>)—old, frail, and lame, and to save his legs was lent a sedan chair to be shown around. Thanks to the sedan, Gell wrote, Scott could “pass through the city without more fatigue, and I was sometimes enabled to call his attention to such objects as were the most worthy of remark. To these observations, however, he seemed generally nearly insensible, viewing the whole and not the parts, with the eye not of an antiquary but of a poet, and exclaiming frequently ‘The City of the Dead’ without any other remark.” How far this account was embellished by Gell is not clear (Scott’s own journals give a more spritely, less dreamy picture of the visit); but the image of the dying novelist being carried around the ruined town quickly became famous, and the story grew that Scott had actually coined the phrase “the City of the Dead” to refer to Pompeii.<sup>15</sup>

Whether or not that exact phrase had been used before, the idea behind it was certainly a commonplace. It is found in many accounts of visits to Pompeii in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. Hester Lynch Piozzi, for example, who visited the site in 1786, captured and lightly parodied the reactions of many when she wrote of the

reflections on mortality—her contemporaries’, as well as the Romans’—that were prompted by seeing the ruins of the buried city: “How dreadful are the thoughts that such a sight suggests. How *very* horrible the certainty that such a scene might be all acted over again tomorrow; and that we, who today are spectators, may become spectacles to travelers of a succeeding century.”<sup>16</sup> But already a few years before, John Moore, a Scotsman who traveled to Italy in the 1770s in his capacity as tutor to the dukes of Hamilton, had subverted the conventional image of Pompeii as bound up with death and destruction. Reflecting on his visit, he wondered what criteria had to be fulfilled before something could count as a city of the dead (though he did not use the phrase itself). The dead of Pompeii, he insisted, were very visible to us. But should we not think of all those others who had died, more naturally maybe, but no less painfully, in similar, ordinary ancient towns? “The balance of suffering,” he goes on to suggest, “might not be found with the inhabitants of Pompeia [sic], but rather with those of the contemporary cities who, perhaps at that time, as we do now, lamented its severe fate.”<sup>17</sup> This can only be a pointed response to the standard visitors’ clichés of the time.

It is very tempting to explain the contrast between the reactions of these early visitors and the living spectacles paraded in 1884 as part of a cultural paradigm shift: from a romantic regime of viewing, with its stress on the ruination of the city and the tragedy of human mortality, both ancient and modern (not unlike the haunting vision offered by many eighteenth-century paintings of Roman ruins), to a strongly historicized re-creation of the past; from an image of Pompeii as a city of the dead to its image as a city of history. To put it another way, the traveler of the earlier period who saw in the city a memento mori had been replaced by the end of the nineteenth century by the archaeological tourist keen to discover there—and to reconstruct—the life of the ancient Romans.<sup>18</sup>

Tempting, but misleading. There were, of course, significant changes over time in the



8. Pompeii after Allied bombing, 1944  
 Conway Library, Courtauld Institute of Art, London

9. View of a House Lately Discovered at Pompei, and Now Being Excavated, from *The Graphic*, January 28, 1893

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visitor experience at Pompeii. And certainly by the very end of the century, the archaeological authorities on the site had invested much more heavily in the idea of archaeological reconstruction than ever before (as shown by their involvement in the 1884 displays, among other things). I shall consider some of these aspects below. It is more important at this point, however, to stress that throughout the nineteenth century—or,

for that matter, from almost as soon as the city was unearthed in 1748 right up to the present day—visitors have been torn between those two competing versions of Pompeii: as a graveyard and as a museum. It is not a question of one approach to the ancient city gradually giving way to another; there was (and remains) a constant tension between different ways of seeing and understanding the site, between mourning the loss of the ancient dead and striving to conjure them back to life.

### The Desire to Reconstruct

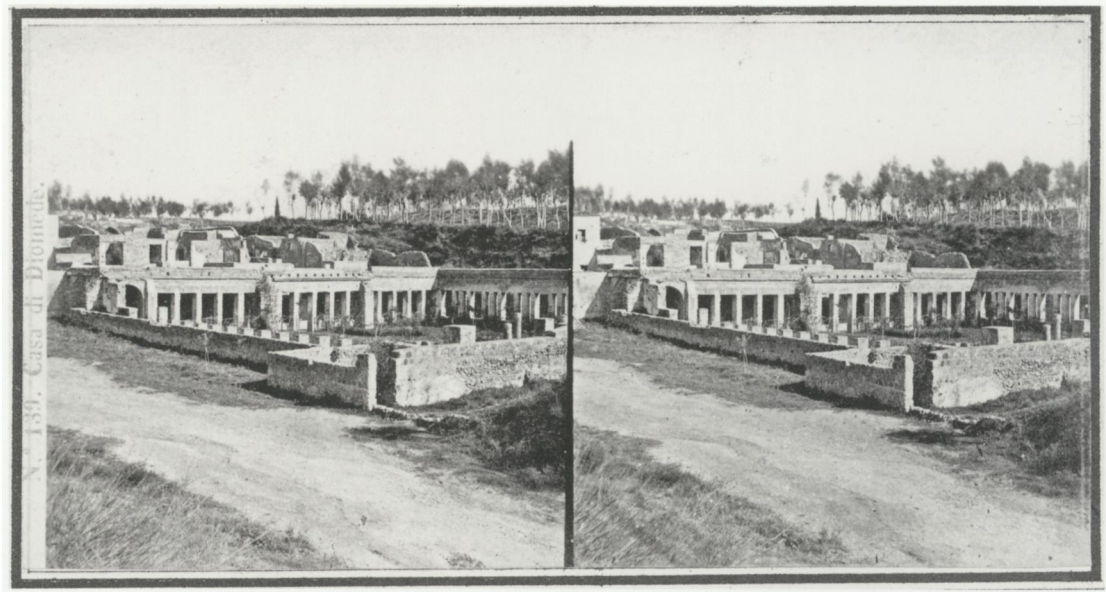
It is easy to forget just how dilapidated Pompeii must have appeared to most nineteenth-century visitors. Our own impression of the city derives from later rebuilding operations, which restored and reroofed many of the major buildings—including a major campaign of restoration after the Allied bombing of the site during World War II (fig. 8).<sup>19</sup> These interventions have delivered to us, not a pristine city to be sure, but something much more substantial than a ruin. The fact is, however, that Pompeii was destroyed by a devastating volcanic eruption, and so indeed it appeared when first excavated, before the roofs went back on and walls back up (fig. 9). Unlike us, the nineteenth-century visitor saw the city in its true guise: it was the wreckage of a Roman town.

What is more, for much of the century, it was impossible to see unencumbered the full extent of what *did* remain. Until the early twentieth century the amphitheater was separated from the main part of the city by unexcavated farmland.<sup>20</sup> If the fictional characters in *The Last Days of Pompeii* could stroll along the streets from the forum to the amphitheater, this was not so for the real-life tourists of Bulwer-Lytton's day. These were usually urged by their guidebooks to take a carriage from the Hotel Diomedea (near the southern entrance to the city), along the road that ran outside the walls, to the amphitheater. It was possible to walk rather than ride, though it was generally agreed to be a hot, dusty, and unpleasant hike. Even in the main





10. *Villa of Diomedes*, souvenir  
stereoscopic photoprint  
*Author collection*



excavated area, the view of the ancient townscape was often interrupted by piles of earth and by volcanic debris that had been thrown up in the process of digging, and the perimeter of the city was ringed by these cumuli. Although early photographers usually contrived, for obvious reasons, to exclude these from their souvenir pictures (fig. 10) and commercial artists carefully omitted them from their sketches, visitors to the site vividly describe the problem. One fellow of St. John's College, Cambridge, writing in 1840, explained that you could hardly see the famous Villa of Diomedes from the outside because it was "so heaped around with earth and ashes."<sup>21</sup> A small train installed by Fiorelli to remove the debris in the early 1860s may have been a step in the right direction, but in practice it was too little, too late.<sup>22</sup>

None of this dented the enthusiasm of many visitors, who sometimes wrote in extravagant terms about the excitement of it all.<sup>23</sup> But it does account for the (to us) strange comparisons and rather more low-key responses that we also find. To some, Pompeii looked like a city destroyed by war. In the late 1830s, one visitor wrote (topically) that an ignorant soldier might even take it for "a city destroyed by the French last year."<sup>24</sup> The same fellow of St. John's

remarked that "the houses did not look ... as if their owners had just stepped out of them; nor had the city at all the appearance of a place that had been recently inhabited: it was more like the ruin of a town over which the storm of war had swept, blasting every thing with fire and destruction, and leaving nought but blackened ruins and desolate naked walls." He was frankly disappointed: "I had always pictured Pompeii to myself as now subsisting in the precise identical state in which it stood in the time of Titus."<sup>25</sup> Others too found that the place simply did not come up to their expectations. For example, James Fenimore Cooper admitted: "I think that we were all a little disappointed with Pompeii. Perhaps our expectations were wrought up too high."<sup>26</sup>

Related to this was the frustrating absence from the site of the objects that had been found in the course of excavations, and in some cases of the paintings on the walls, which had been removed, first, to the royal museum at Portici, and later, in the early years of the nineteenth century, to the new museum in Naples. This was a provocation to theorists, such as François René Auguste de Chateaubriand, who resisted in principle the separation of museum and monument behind the rallying cry of "Everything in its



place.”<sup>27</sup> It was also a disappointment to those who came to experience the Roman city in its entirety. So, for example, in one satirical account of the 1860s, parodying the visit of a London cockney to Pompeii, “Mrs. Brown” no doubt spoke for many others when she complained that there was not enough to see:

“I can’t make out now what they’ve been and done with heverythink, for that place is that empty as you couldn’t believe as any one lived in it.”

“Why,” says [Mr.] Brown, “you’ve seen it all, I tell you, in that museum.”

“Well then,” I says, “in my opinion I thinks it would ‘ave looked more nat’ral if they’d left a somethink ‘ere, and not gone and put it all in a museum.”<sup>28</sup>

There was, of course, an obvious solution to the visitor’s disappointment with the ruination of Pompeii. Why not reconstruct the place? From as early as the 1770s some visitors were advocating exactly that. After his own visit to the site, the Scots traveler John Moore envisaged a full-scale reinstallation of a house:

It is to be wished they would cover one of the best houses with a roof, as nearly resembling that which originally belonged to it as they could imagine, with a complete assortment of the antique furniture of the kitchen and each particular room. Such a house fitted up with accuracy and judgment, with all its utensils and ornaments properly arranged, would be an object of universal curiosity, and would swell the heart of the antiquarian with veneration and delight. Only imagine ... what those gentlemen must feel, when they see the venerable habitations of the ancients in their present mournful condition.”<sup>29</sup>

Chateaubriand was of the same mind in urging restoration of the city, complete with some inhabitants and, indeed, it seems that some members of his circle did briefly take up residence in the houses of the city.<sup>30</sup> So was James Fenimore Cooper, who observed that “it would be possible to render Pompeii immeasurably more interesting than it is at present, by roofing a few of the houses; or by covering them with arches, and using them as places in which to exhibit the different

articles found there.”<sup>31</sup> In his short period as honorary director of the excavations after Garibaldi’s victory in 1860, Alexandre Dumas (who had himself lived for a while in the House of the Faun, while writing *Caligula*) planned to reconstruct the first impressive Pompeian house uncovered in the new campaign of excavation as part of his bid for the social and cultural reconstruction of southern Italy: “This house restored and newly furnished in the ancient style will become a local museum to serve as a model for the work of archaeologists, architects and painters, as well as an attraction for the curious general public.”<sup>32</sup>

Nothing came of these plans. But more modest attempts to bring the ancient city to life were made in different ways throughout the century. In 1837 the *Times* of London carried a brief notice of what we might today call a “heritage reenactment”:

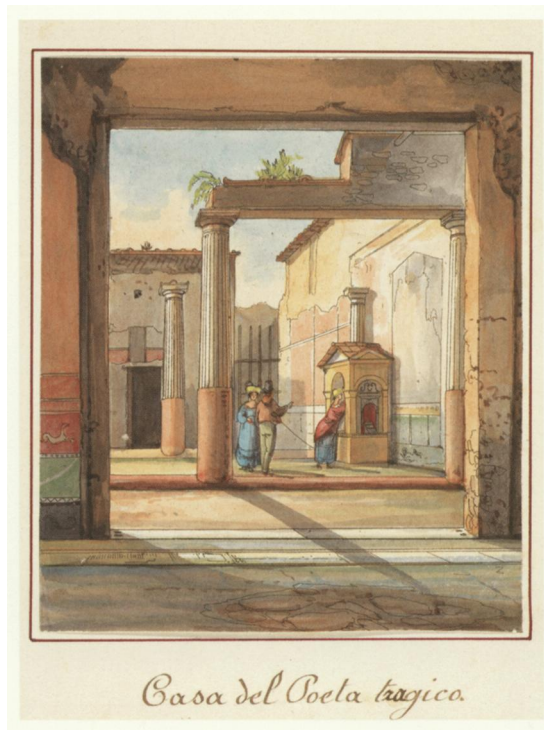
A correspondent of the German journals at Naples states that an Englishman, having lately obtained permission to live for a fortnight in one of the houses recently cleared at Pompeii, had it completely restored in its original style and, with his family and servants, having assumed the ancient Roman costume, lived there during the whole period like a citizen of the republic, making the perusal of the classics his sole amusement.<sup>33</sup>

This is perhaps a suspiciously anonymous account, reported in the style of so many urban myths. Yet it is not so very different from other, more fully documented, reconstructions.

The excavated theater of the city was restored in 1862, “after being closed for the long period of 1,800 years,” as one account jokingly put it, to host a performance of Douizetti’s opera *The Daughter of the Regiment*.<sup>34</sup> And during the earlier years of the century, various other buildings on the site were reconstructed or given some new lease on life, usually by private arrangement between a visiting dignitary and the authorities of the Bourbon court. An account in the *New Monthly Journal* in 1835 described an occasion “some years ago” when “a Prince of the royal house of Bavaria” arranged a spe-



11. Anonymous, *House of the Tragic Poet*, c. 1840, watercolor  
The Getty Research Institute, Los Angeles (83-B6897)



cial visit to Pompeii by night and laid on a gala dinner in the House of the Faun. It featured lavish feasting, music, and dancing—but not in this case any historical reenactment. In fact, the account ran, “it were almost a profanation upon the Apician feasts of the former lords of these palaces to find half-a-dozen respectable gentlemen in long-tailed coats, boots, and beaver hats, seated at supper in the same hall where many a guest had centuries before lolled in luxurious ease upon his couch, wrapped in the full and graceful folds of their picturesque costume.”<sup>35</sup> The occasion described by Gérard de Nerval, however, at the start of his story “Isis” (first published in 1845) seems to have involved a full-scale historical pageant at Pompeii:

Some years ago, one of the ambassadors resident in Naples hosted a rather clever party. Obtaining all the necessary permits, he had a considerable number of people dress up in ancient Roman costume. His guests went along with this idea and, over a day and a night, they tried out different re-enactments of daily life in the ancient city.... [C]hariots drove through the streets, shop-keepers manned the shops, refreshments served at various times in the principal houses of the town, brought together different groups of the guests.<sup>36</sup>

No doubt relatively few visitors ever actually participated in, or even witnessed, these reenactments. Yet many accounts make clear that, from the 1830s at least, prior experience of other forms of reconstruction—physical or fictional—often framed the experience of a visit to the ruined city itself. Sometimes, as I have already suggested, this could lead to disappointment, as the dilapidated ruins on the ground hardly lived up to the more familiar reproductions. Sometimes the image of the re-created city turned out to be more powerful than the original, so that visitors could see and understand the archaeological remains only in terms of their re-creations. Pompeii, in other words, reminded the English tourist of the Pompeian Court at the Crystal Palace, rather than vice versa. As one account put it in 1884: “Everyone knows what a Pompeian house is like. You may see one at the Crystal Palace, and this may serve you as a model to imagine half-a-score.”<sup>37</sup> Even in the most prosaic and practical terms, the Crystal Palace could set the standard. In 1865 a writer in the *Pall Mall Gazette* pointed out that English visitors were on familiar territory when they arrived at Pompeii, for “you pay your two francs at a wicket just like at the Crystal Palace.”<sup>38</sup>

Even more often it was Bulwer-Lytton’s *The Last Days of Pompeii* that came to the visitor’s mind. This was the most influential re-creation of the ruins of the city ever, drawn from careful observation on the site and using the House of the Tragic Poet as a model for the young hero’s residence (fig. 11). In fact, like Scott, the author had been initiated into the remains by Sir William Gell, who was the nearest thing to a British “specialist” in Pompeian archaeology at the time.<sup>39</sup> Already in 1840, the fellow of St. John’s admitted after his somewhat disappointing visit, “Indeed I must honestly confess, at the risk of losing all reputation as a classic, that while traversing the streets of Pompeii, the admirable fiction of our great novelist occupied more of my thoughts than Pliny or Cicero.”<sup>40</sup> And at the end of the description of the torchlight dinner, the



writer for the *New Monthly Magazine and Literary Journal* reflected on the reanimating impact of *The Last Days*: “in lieu of darkness and desolation, I find light and life.” So powerful, in fact, was the picture created by the novel that “I have been unable ... to separate my own recollections of what actually exists, from the vivid reality his book has imparted to them.”<sup>41</sup> It was thanks to its “vivid reality,” no doubt, that *The Last Days* became used (and keenly recommended) as a guidebook to the site.<sup>42</sup> In a nice instance of the complex interweaving of fiction, re-creation and archaeology, the novel—with its extravagant tale of the clash of religions and love in the shadow of disaster—was used to explicate the real ruins that were fictionally restored on its pages. Some editions were even illustrated with careful archaeological drawings and reconstructions.

The desire to bring the Roman city back to life had been a common response of visitors almost as soon as the city began to be unearthed. If anything was new toward the end of the nineteenth century, it was not a new paradigm of viewing, but the policy of the archaeological authorities on the site, who for the first time began actively to invest in reconstruction as a way of presenting Pompeii to a general audience. This is clear enough in the celebrations of 1884 (in part devised by Giulio De Petra, then director of the Naples museum, who would become overall director of the site in 1893), and also in the earlier festivities in September 1879 to mark—a month late in a vain attempt to avoid the worst heat of the summer—the eighteen-hundredth anniversary of the destruction of the city. These festivities involved not only speeches given in the Basilica (mostly inaudible, as it turned out), the recital of Latin verses composed in honor of the occasion, a commemorative volume, and some specially timed (and no doubt carefully orchestrated) excavations—but also, on a smaller scale, the same kind of fancy-dress performance that would be laid on in 1884.<sup>43</sup>

A more lasting development of this period, however, heralding a permanent change in the presentation of the city, was a new inter-

est in the reconstruction and restoration of the ancient buildings themselves, on the part of the successors of Fiorelli, especially De Petra.<sup>44</sup> This was nicely summarized by Antonio Sogliano in a lecture delivered in 1901.<sup>45</sup> Sogliano sharply criticized Fiorelli for many aspects of his management of the site, including his failure to solve the problem of the cumuli or to acquire for the state more of the land beneath which ancient Pompeii lay buried. But he also referred to a new policy on the display of the archaeological remains themselves. For De Petra’s aim was to restore life to the site of the ancient city, by conserving and rebuilding the ancient structures, by leaving in place as many as possible of the finds made in the excavations, and by returning objects from the Naples museum to the site whenever possible.

The jewel in De Petra’s crown, and the first major achievement of his new policy, was the House of the Vettii, excavated in 1894–1895 and fully restored from garden to roof (fig. 12). It was an instant tourist attraction—a key factor, according to Sogliano, in almost doubling the number of visitors to the site. And it remained a major attraction and favorite destination of tour guides until the early twenty-first century, when it was closed to the public in order for the restorations themselves to be restored, a century or so after they had been installed. “You only need to have spent a few hours there,” Sogliano observed, “to understand the complete fascination that this resurrection of ancient life exercises over the civilized mind.”<sup>46</sup>

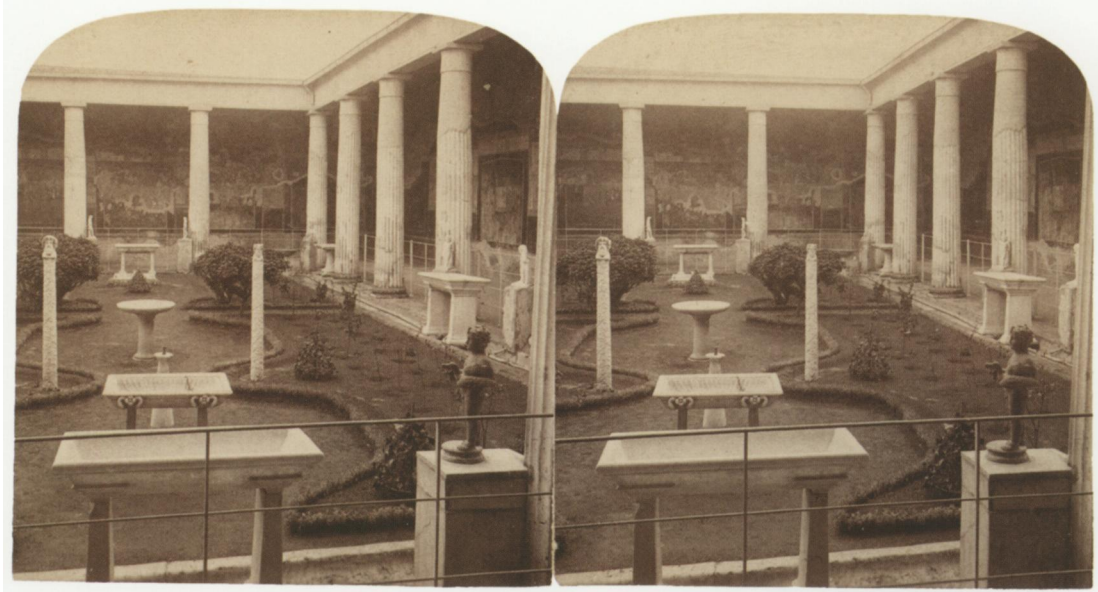
The planned “restitution” of objects from the museum in Naples to the site did not have such a notable outcome. According to Sogliano, only one work of art was sent back; but this was, appropriately enough, the *Cave Canem* mosaic from the House of the Tragic Poet, which had been made famous by Bulwer-Lytton’s *The Last Days*. It had not shown up well in the museum, in comparison with the other, exquisite mosaics there, he explained. “Put back in its original position it regained its importance.”<sup>47</sup>

De Petra’s reconstructions gave Pompeii its familiar modern appearance as less a ruin



12. *Beautiful Home of Vettiorum*  
[House of the Vettii] (Buried August  
24, A.D. 79), 1897, souvenir stereo-  
scopic photoprint

Library of Congress, Prints and Photo-  
graphs Division, Washington, DC



than a living city. His policy, which has continued ever since, has been just as influential as Fiorelli's work for our vision and understanding of the site today. It is ironic to reflect that, in moving in this new direction, De Petra was in fact responding (whether he knew it or not) to the wishes of generations of tourists who had visited the site since the 1770s, many of whom longed to see the place restored to its Roman appearance. Moore and Chateaubriand would have been delighted.

#### From the Street of the Tombs to Plaster Casts

Pompeii was, however, always a "city of the dead" as well as of the (once) living, and so it remains even now, as anyone can attest who has seen the throngs of visitors peering at the casts of the ancient dead and dying (most of them displayed inside grimy glass cases on spindly legs to bring them up to waist height). The lamentations on human mortality that might seem so typical of eighteenth- and early nineteenth-century reactions to the buried city are found right through the nineteenth century, and beyond. In fact, the practical arrangements for visiting Pompeii throughout the 1800s usually ensured that visitors began their Pompeian experience with the experience of death.

As I have already noted, the standard entry point to the site before the advent of the railway from Naples in the early 1840s was from the north, through the Herculaneum Gate. Visitors therefore approached the city along the so-called Street of the Tombs (fig. 13), or, in other words, through one of the major graveyards of Pompeii. What more appropriate way could there have been to enter the City of the Dead? The usual procedure was to walk through the site to the south side, where your carriage would have gone to pick you up and drive you round to the amphitheater (with lunch at the Hotel Diomede possibly thrown in).<sup>48</sup>

From the early 1840s on, most visitors arrived directly at the railway station near one of the southern entrances to the site (where a small group of hotels grew up to cater to railway trade). From here, one option, which eventually became the norm, was to enter the site on foot, via the so-called Marine Gate, which is now the principal tourist entrance. Strikingly, however, British guidebooks continued to recommend that visitors approach the city via the Street of the Tombs—despite the inconvenience of taking a carriage from the train station to that entrance. Not until the edition of 1873 did Murray's *Handbook for Travellers in South-*





13. Anonymous, *Street of the Tombs*, c. 1840, watercolor  
The Getty Research Institute, Los Angeles (83-B6897)

ern Italy recommend that its readers take the new way into the city. Part of the reason for this delay may have been the generic conservatism of the guidebook; maybe it seemed simpler to send visitors on a circuitous route than to rewrite the whole description of Pompeii to take account of the new entrance.<sup>49</sup> But surely there must also have been a continuing sense that a visit to the site *ought* to start with this memorable encounter with the monuments of the dead. As one visitor made the connection in 1869, “Having entered by the Herculaneum Gate, we are literally in a city of the dead; we are in ‘The Street of Tombs.’”<sup>50</sup>

In many respects, this encounter with death took a new and yet more dramatic form beginning in the 1860s. The effect of Fiorelli’s technique of casting the shapes of bodies was to confront the visitor to Pompeii with an even more vivid image of human mortality. In fact, in 1873, when Murray’s *Handbook* started to recommend entering the city via the Marine Gate, it was not encouraging its readers to avoid the old, lugubrious associations they would have found in the Street of the Tombs. Far from it. For just next to the Marine Gate, Fiorelli had established a site museum, which was to be

the first stop on most tours of the ancient town. The star attraction, laid out prominently in the middle of the display space, were those plaster casts, which captured the dying moments of Pompeian men, women, children, and animals. It was now, in other words, not somber tombs (of those who may well have died peacefully in their beds) that welcomed visitors to the city, but the death agonies of the victims of Vesuvius.

The point was not lost on visitors. In a drawing of 1893 Christian Wilhelm Allers captured (or imagined) a party of English tourists in the museum, gazing sadly at the famous cast of the dying dog (fig. 14). The conversation between the young girl and her mother, inscribed at the foot of the drawing, runs: “Oh Mamma look, Oh the poor poor dog,” “Yes dear, he is as dead as a doornail, he must be old—very very old indeed.” It is a nice joke, and more complicated than it seems at first sight, satirizing simultaneously the ghoulish interest of visitors in the dead of Pompeii, the average tourist’s ignorance, and the white lies told by parents to protect their children from uncomfortable truths. The impact of these bodies as a prelude to the experience of the ruins themselves is well made in a sharply observed account of a visit from 1884:

I fancy one of my first thoughts, after passing through the gateway, was that the museum was befittingly well placed. Being just within the entrance to the city, it forms a sort of prelude to the march one has to make. The sight of those black bodies, of Nature’s own embalming, lying there as they lay living, and alive were slowly buried eighteen centuries ago, may set the mind a thinking ere yet a step is set upon the silent streets. Here they lie, just as they died, uncoffined and unshrouded, choked suddenly to death.... If a man have any heart more human than the one which is contained within a cabbage, he may hardly see unmoved such mournful sights as these.<sup>51</sup>

The casts ensured that Pompeii in the late nineteenth century was no less a “city of the dead” than it had been for Sir Walter Scott in 1832.

In fact, reflections on Pompeii right through the century rarely entirely banished





14. Christian Wilhelm Allers, *Pompeii*, from Christian Wilhelm Allers, *La bella Napoli* (Stuttgart, 1893)  
Wikipedia Commons

thoughts of death. These came in increasingly varied forms—from a curious short story of archaeological discovery, whose climax turned on the appearance of a ghost, to a futuristic fantasy, which took the destruction of Pompeii as a model for the end of our own world—and asked how our own culture might appear centuries hence.<sup>52</sup> And, as we have already seen, even the most enthusiastic reconstructions of ancient life often conjured up thoughts of the very corpses they were attempting to revitalize. In discussions of the reenactments of 1884, life and

death went closely together: the “skeletons of wineshops” were transformed, the musical instruments “disinterred,” the “dead men’s ghosts charmed back to life.” Likewise the privileged guests at the eighteen-hundredth anniversary celebrations “found themselves on that day not only on the site of the city disinterred from its silent tomb ... but walking about its streets and exploring its houses, vivid with almost undimmed hues.”<sup>53</sup>

The City of the Dead and the city of living history were two sides of the same coin. In fact it is almost as if the cultural power of Pompeii in the nineteenth century (and perhaps still today) derived from precisely that ambivalent view of the past that it offered, more clearly perhaps than anywhere else. That is to say, the city of Pompeii was the one place in the world where visitors could almost believe that they were stepping back into the daily life of ancient Rome; it was also the place where the connection of the historical past with death and dying could not, and still cannot, be avoided.

That connection is nicely summed up in those curious finds that especially captured the late nineteenth-century imagination: the Roman eggs (or at least the eggshells) still preserved after almost two millennia, or the bread found still in the baker’s oven, forgotten as the volcano exploded. The appeal of such objects was partly the vivid sense of Roman daily life, almost like our own, that they conveyed. As one account enthused, “These things make a bridge over the gulf of Time which separates us from Pompeian life.”<sup>54</sup> Yet they simultaneously evoked the tragedy of life cut short and the death of those who were interrupted before they could remove the bread from the oven or finish their meal. In a discussion of the pageant of 1884 that (characteristically) combined intellectual acuity with dreadful snobbery, Jane Harrison referred to “the tourist gazing admiringly on half a mouldered egg because the other half was eaten by a dead Pompeian.” She was determined not to sympathize with the popular appeal of Pompeii (note the patronizing use of the word “tour

ist"). But at the same time she saw right to the heart of the interpretive dilemmas raised by Pompeii and the integral connection of the life and death of the city.<sup>55</sup>

### History in the Making

One of the best-known "tricks" presented to nineteenth-century visitors to the site of Pompeii was the staged excavation. A dig would be started in front of some visiting dignitary and, miraculously, a splendid discovery (best of all, perhaps, a skeleton<sup>56</sup>) would be made, to the satisfaction of all concerned. It was a show that might be given to more ordinary visitors, too. In her semifictional *Diary of an Ennuyée*, Anna Jameson describes a rather down-market version of the performance, which took place in the recently excavated "Pantheon" (the building known today as the Macellum, or market), off the forum:

While I lingered here a little behind the rest, and most reluctant to depart, a ragged lazzarone boy came up to me, and siezing [sic] my dress pointed to a corner, and made signs that he had something to show me. I followed him to a spot where a quantity of dust and ashes was piled against a wall. He began to scratch away this heap of dirt with hands and nails, much after the manner of an ape, every now and then looking up in my face and grinning. The impediment being cleared away, there appeared on the wall behind a most beautiful aerial figure with floating drapery, representing either Fame or Victory: but before I had time to examine it, the little rogue flung the earth up again so as to conceal it completely, then pointing significantly at the other workmen, he nodded, shrugged, gesticulated, and held out both his paws for a recompense, which I gave him willingly.<sup>57</sup>

This mixture of ethnocentric disdain and sincere delight at the spectacle choreographed by the boy was, I imagine, typical of the encounters between visitors and locals at Pompeii.

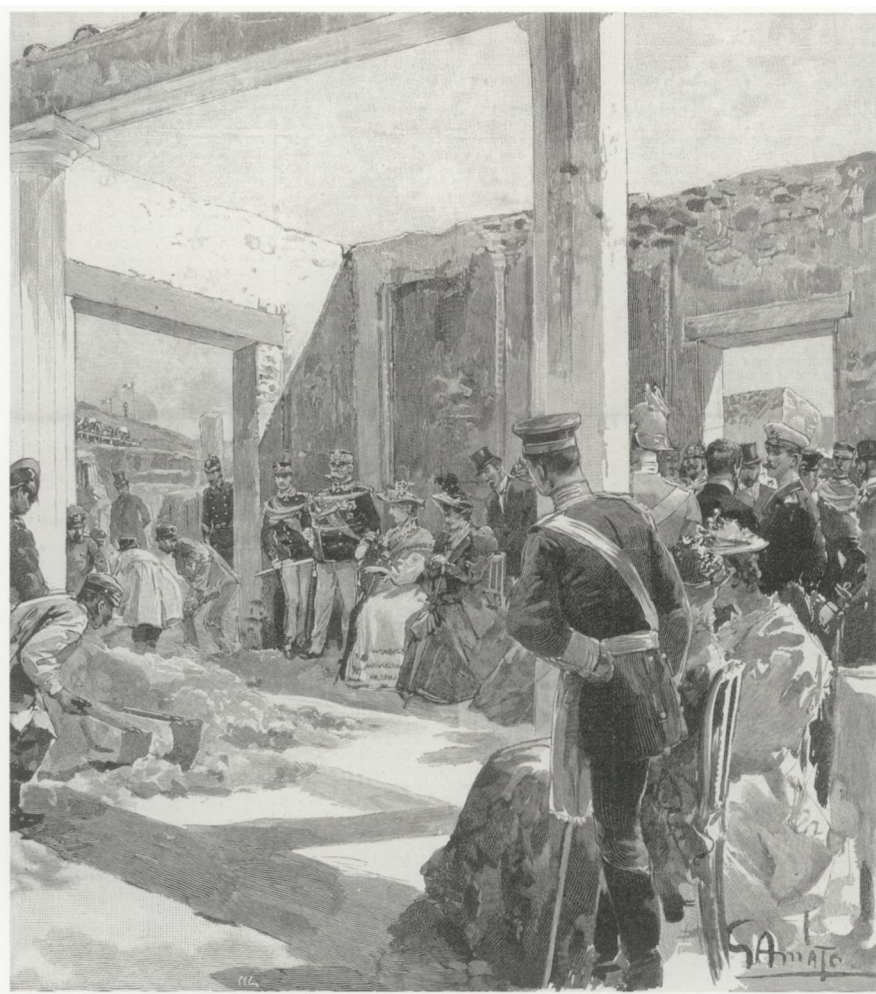
Staged excavations of this kind are often considered a distinctively eighteenth- or early nineteenth-century charade. In fact, they continued throughout the nineteenth century and into the twentieth, orchestrated after

1860 by the archaeological authorities of the state.<sup>58</sup> They may not have involved much outright fabrication or "planting" of finds. More often than not, the discoveries are reported to have been relatively insignificant. But certainly a good deal of "preparation" (as it was called) was done in advance of the "excavation." In March 1861, a correspondent to the *Athenaeum* explained that these "preparations" were undertaken "to gratify the curiosity of those whom it delighted the Director [of the site] to honour." And he went on to describe the excitement of being honored in this way himself:

"We reserve these for distinguished families," said one of the inspectors to me; and I took flattering unction to my soul that I was one of the class ... and stood higher in my shoes than I had done for many a day. Imagine us, then, all seated round a room, or what was once a room, whilst the workmen are advancing towards us.... Every neck is stretched over, and every eye is intent on the operation.... At last there is turned up, what? A part of the lower jaw of an old man, so said two medical men who were present; and now, said Fiorelli, we shall find the remains of the body, and perhaps some precious objects near at hand; ... but nothing was found except three rusty nails with some charred wood attached.<sup>59</sup>

There are numerous descriptions in the British and American press of celebrities enjoying the excavations that had been "prepared" for them. When Admiral David Faragut toured the site in 1868, "some specially interesting excavations" had been "reserved" for him—and three skeletons were uncovered before his very eyes.<sup>60</sup> William Gladstone was not so lucky. After he had been shown around the city and had taken lunch in the Temple of Jupiter in the forum, "an excavation was specially made for Mr Gladstone's delectation." The finds were not spectacular. "Although everyone anxiously watched to see what would be discovered, nothing beyond a few earthen oil lamps, some valueless vases, and household utensils were brought to light. These were very good specimens of their class, but not in any way remarkable."<sup>61</sup> Similarly disappointing results ("bits of iron and bronze, nails or hinges") had come out of an excavation prepared a





15. After a life drawing by Gennaro Amato, *House of the Silver Wedding, Excavation of Region v, Pompeii, in the Presence of the Sovereigns of Italy and Germany*, from *Illustrazione italiana*, May 1863  
Mary Evans Picture Library

quarter of a century earlier for Austen Henry Layard, the excavator of Nineveh. On this occasion, the eyewitness reporter made the best of the poor haul by drawing a moral: “An excavation is all a lottery; for there is no knowing where those poor frightened wretches concealed or threw away their valuables in their hasty flight.”<sup>62</sup>

The letters and documents of the Pompeian authorities themselves give us a vivid glimpse of these occasions from the other side, as they orchestrated excavations for an increasingly far-flung range of celebrities, from the king of Siam to the king of Serbia.<sup>63</sup> They had to respond to a range of very different demands: the insistence, for example, of a grand duchess of Russia in 1888 that she remain incognito while on the site, or the express hopes of the Italian government that the excavation carried out in front of the

emperor of Germany in 1893 would be a “lucky one” (which presumably meant even more careful “preparation” than usual).<sup>64</sup> Particularly delicate negotiation was required when the grandees decided that they would like to take the objects discovered before their eyes back to their palaces, or when the Italian government thought such a gift might be appropriate (fig. 15).<sup>65</sup>

It is easy to find these prepared excavations slightly comic. Even if they were not wholly staged, and even when whole and perfectly preserved objects were not “miraculously” pulled out of the ground, there was surely some element of charade about them.<sup>66</sup> So, how could the visiting bigwigs be so gullible as not to recognize that? How could they not have spotted the pretense? The answer is, of course, that they probably did spot it, but that it did not much matter to them. For the point of a visit to Pompeii was not merely to see the physical remains of the past, but to see the processes by which those remains could be brought to light. The act of uncovering the ancient world—charade or not—was what you came for. Alongside the idea of Pompeii as a place of both death and life was the idea of Pompeii as a place where the processes of historical discovery were laid bare—before your very eyes.<sup>67</sup>

It is a theme found widely in nineteenth-century discussions of Pompeii, and it was embedded in the visitors’ view of the city. Until the 1870s, Murray’s *Handbook* systematically gave its readers the date of the excavation of every major monument in the city and discussed the date of its original construction. It is as if the visitor were expected to view the city bifocally, keeping in mind both its ancient history and the modern history of its rediscovery. That point was reinforced by the conventional names given to the houses of the city: sometimes, admittedly, derived from their distinctive features or from the presumed ancient occupants, but sometimes from the circumstances of the excavation or even from those in whose presence they were uncovered (House of Goethe, House of the Empress of Russia). We can see

this interest in the process of discovery reflected also in one of the questions about the city most frequently posed by nineteenth-century tourists: namely, how long was it going to take to excavate the rest of the town, which still lay buried?<sup>68</sup>

Did this emphasis change over the nineteenth century? Excavations went on being performed in front of visiting dignitaries into the twentieth century (as when in 1908 King George of Greece witnessed the excavation of the kitchen of a modest house<sup>69</sup>). But there are, nevertheless, hints of a different attitude during the closing decades of the nineteenth century. At roughly the same time as the archaeological authorities, under De Petra and others, were beginning to invest in the reconstruction of the ancient city, the stress on the processes of discovery seems to have weakened: the “how” of history began to give way to the “what.” After 1890 Murray’s *Handbook* no longer noted the dates of excavation of the major buildings in the city, but only recounted its ancient history.<sup>70</sup> And there was a noticeable change of emphasis in the descriptions of staged excavations, for example, increasing interest in the celebrities themselves as the object of attention, rather than in the excavation.

This change is particularly clear in the two visits of William II, emperor of Germany, in 1888 and 1893. Superficially, many aspects of the procedure followed the now-traditional pattern, though on an unusually grand scale. “Several chambers were *prepared*, as it is called, and made ready for excavation. No fewer than twenty-one rooms were cleared out,” explained the *Glasgow Herald* in October 1888. And the reporter went on to capture the excitement and anticipation of the dig. “There is an intensity of expectation that is almost painful; there is a tremor which takes possession of one at beholding the resurrection, as it were, of an object which had been buried for over eighteen centuries, and during all that time had never been seen by mortal eyes.”<sup>71</sup> But there is a sense that the focus of attention was as much the royal party as the archaeological discoveries. (“Tell the German people that you have seen the

Emperor of Germany sitting amidst the ruins of Pompeii,” begins the article in the *Glasgow Herald*.) And the whole organization, which involved detachments of soldiers to keep the public out and the royal party safe, is reminiscent of a state visit in the modern sense.<sup>72</sup>

But the most telling indication of change is found in the correspondence of De Petra in 1896, on the occasion of the marriage of Victor Emmanuel of Savoy, prince of Naples, to Princess Elena Petrovich of Montenegro. Previously, such royal occasions had been marked by special excavations. This time a very different form of celebration was envisaged. The Italian minister of public education (*istruzione pubblica*) hoped that Pompeii might mark the occasion with the opening of a reconstructed garden in the town. De Petra was far from sure that it would be possible, but he replied diplomatically: “[I]f, on the occasion of the royal wedding of His Royal Highness, the Prince of Naples, it proves impossible to reconstruct another Pompeian garden ... during the visit which the royal couple will make to Pompeii I hope to present some other resurrection of ancient life, no less attractive.”<sup>73</sup> De Petra’s vision of the reconstructed, living city had here taken the place of the prepared excavation and its revelation of the past.

### Coda: Faking It

At Pompeii, as anywhere, there is a fine—and sometimes disturbing—line between restoration and fraud, between dramatic spectacle and fake, between preparation and charade. It is hard even now to know quite how to judge those reroofed houses, or the Marine Gate—which was almost completely destroyed by Allied bombing during World War II, and later rebuilt as new (or old). Are they careful exercises in conservation and reconstruction? Or are they theme-park Pompeii? In 1884 the question was whether the Pompeian reenactments were an authentic way of bringing the ancient world back to life or tawdry amateur dramatics.



These anxieties had already been pushed to the limit (albeit humorously) in 1815, in a period when, on the site at least, reconstruction mostly took place in the imagination and fantasy of the visitor. In a series of wry, fictionalized accounts, collected together under the title *Naples and the Campagna Felice: In a Series of Letters*, Lewis Engelbach crafted a wonderful *reductio ad absurdum* of the fictionalization of Pompeii. In one letter, he claims to have visited Pompeii in the company of a free-thinking Neapolitan, Don Michele, who has maverick views on the ancient city. In fact, he insists that the whole thing is a modern fake:

All you here behold has been fabricated (at immense expense to be sure) by our Neapolitan government ... chiefly to attract travellers from all parts of Europe, and to make them spend their money in the kingdom.... Whenever any of these pretended excavations were carrying on, the greatest care was taken not to admit anyone but those that were absolutely necessary to the execution of the work: much was done by night; sculptors, architects and painters were sent for from Rome to further the cheat; in short, the greatest secrecy and mystery was used in the whole operation, and is so to this day.<sup>74</sup>

Pompeii, in other words, was not merely a reconstruction or a charade; it was a fake.

## NOTES

I am very grateful to the audience at the symposium on which this volume is based for their comments and suggestions when this paper was first given. Since then, I have had generous advice, suggestions, and help of various kinds from Melissa Calaresu, Raphael Cormack, Ken Lapatin, Claire Lyons, Peter Mandler, Michael Reeve, and, especially, Debbie Whittaker; my thanks to them all.

Newspapers and magazines cited were published in London unless otherwise indicated.

1. The proceedings are described in, for example, the *New York Times*, May 4, 1884, 4 (citing “antique vessels” and based on British newspaper accounts); “The Pompeian Festival,” *New York Daily News*, May 8, 1884, 6; “The Classics Fêtes at Pompeii,” *New York Daily News*, May 12, 1884, 5 (with details of “the crowning success” and the mishap at the races); and “Pompeii Revivified,” *Graphic*, May 17, 1884, 478. Slight discrepancies in these accounts (particularly with regard to the timing of the wedding procession) almost certainly result from last-minute changes of plan; indeed, the whole occasion was rescheduled, postponed for some days on account of bad weather.

2. “Pompeii Revivified” 1884, 478. Not all were so impressed. One correspondent observed that “an injudicious mixture of antique and modern waiters made the latter look especially mean and ugly” (“The Classic Fêtes at Pompeii” 1884, 5). For other enthusiastic reactions to the spectacles, see *Western Mail* (Cardiff), May 12, 1884, 3, and *Chicago Daily Tribune*, June 6, 1884, 6 (based on British newspaper accounts).

3. “Notes from Naples,” *Athenaeum*, May 24, 1884, 670. For other criticisms, see *Bristol Mercury and Daily Post*, May 13, 1884, 5, which commented, “[W]e scarcely think the sober British mind is of the same texture as that of the giddy Neapolitans who can hold a sort of travelling circus pageant in the streets of Pompeii”; and *Leeds Mercury*, April 18, 1884, 4 (“At best the whole thing is a meretricious sham”).

4. “Pompeii in Black and White,” *Magazine of Art* 8 (1885): 98–105 (quotation, 98).

5. *Pall Mall Gazette*, May 2, 1884, 2; *Ipswich Journal*, May 20, 1884, 4; *Western Mail* (Cardiff), May 12, 1884, 3: “The natives hereabouts seem to take but a very languid interest ... in the affair, for very few of them were to be seen at Pompeii today, the spectators consisting chiefly of foreigners, amongst whom, by the way, I noticed the famous Russian General, Tchernnieff, late Governor of Turkestan.” I have found no reference to the occasion in the multivolume series of documents of the Soprintendenza Archeologica: Paola Poli Capri, ed., *Pompeii: Letters and Documents*, 10 vols. (Rome, 1996); Paola Poli Capri, ed., *Pompeii: More Letters and Documents*, 12 vols. (Rome, 1998); Paola Poli Capri and Halsted B. Van der Poel, eds., *Pompei, Ercolano, Napoli e dintorni: Lettere e documenti*, 6 series, 40 vols. (Rome, 2002–2005).

6. I shall not be concerned here with the potentially loaded contrast between “travelers” and “tourists,” on

which see James Buzard, *The Beaten Track: European Tourism, Literature and the Ways to "Culture," 1800–1918* (Oxford, 1993), 18–79.

7. A report, titled "Recent Visit to Pompeii" in *Mirror of Literature, Amusement, and Instruction*, April 25, 1829, 276–277, records common disappointment at the small size of the place even in the late 1820s, describing it as "rather to be considered the model of a town, than one in itself. In fact, it is merely an Italian villa, or properly, a collection of villas." See also *Literary Gazette*, April 25, 1846, 384. The progress of the excavations between 1748 and 1860 is the subject of Antonio D'Ambrosio, ed., *Pompei: Gli scavi dal 1748 al 1860* (Milan, 2002).

8. The pope's visit is well documented in *Pio IX a Pompei: Memorie e testimonianze di un viaggio*, Le Mostre/Soprintendenza archeologica di Pompei, vol. 2, ed. Baldassare Conticello and Gina Carla Ascione (Casina dell'Aquila, Pompeii; Naples, 1987), and briefly in Judith Harris, *Pompeii Awakened: A Story of Rediscovery* (London, 2007), 178–179. For the implications of transport arrangements, see below.

9. The possibility of a one-franc charge is mooted in a letter of L. Settembrini to Ministero dell'Istruzione Pubblica, August 21, 1861 (Poli Capri 1998, 1:26–27); the decree establishing a two-franc charge was issued September 18, 1862. For a hilarious account of the guides in the 1840s, see "Dumas in His Curricule," *Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine* 55 (March 1844), especially 354–356. The impact of fixed charges is discussed in the *Athenaeum*, December 27, 1862, 847. The various rules for visiting are laid out in the standard European guidebooks, notably Murray's *Handbook for Travellers in Southern Italy*, regularly reissued and revised from 1853 on, and Baedeker's *Southern Italy (and Sicily)*, in English from 1867. From these we can plot the rising number of guides from fifteen in 1858 to thirty in 1865. Interestingly, the 1871 Neapolitan census registered, under professions, forty guides (*guide per forestieri*); see Giuseppe Galasso, *Napoli capitale: Identità politica e identità cittadina* (Naples, 2003), 328.

10. The figure of fifty thousand is derived from Antonio Sogliano, "Di un nuovo orientamento da dare agli scavi di Pompei," *Rendiconti della Reale Accademia dei Lincei, classe di scienze morali, storiche e filologiche* 10 (1902): 375–390, who claims that the revenues from admission had recently increased to 100,000 francs a year, with a full-ticket price of two francs per head. We need to bear in mind the "free day," but also (and perhaps in compensation) that Sogliano was probably exaggerating the revenue. In comparative terms, fifty thousand is a modest figure. The British Museum had more than five hundred thousand visitors annually in 1842, and almost a million by 1900 (David M. Wilson, *The British Museum: A History* [London, 2002], 99, 186). In 1861 the local Pompeian authorities estimated an average of one hundred visitors a day (letter of Principe di San Giorgio to Ministero dell'Istruzione Pubblica, September 9, 1861, Poli Capri 1998, 1:29–32), though he reports takings of only 1,668 francs for the month of January 1863, the equivalent of 834 paying visitors (letter of Principe di San Giorgio to Ministero dell'Istruzione Pubblica, February 6, 1863, Poli Capri 1998, 1:102). It is claimed (for

example, *Athenaeum*, January 18, 1868, 94) that the majority of visitors were non-Italian—but we can only guess at the proportions of different nationalities.

11. On reconstructions of various types, see (for example) Margaret Malamud, *Ancient Rome and Modern America* (Oxford, 2009), 122–128, 150–185; Shelley Hales, "Re-Casting Antiquity in the Crystal Palace," *Arion* 14 (2006): 99–133; Eric M. Moormann, "Evocazioni letterarie dell'antica Pompei," in *Storie da un'eruzione: Pompei, Ercolano, Oplontis*, ed. Pier Giovanni Guzzo (Museo Archeologico Nazionale, Naples; Milan, 2003), 15–33. The re-creation of Pompeii by Lawrence Alma-Tadema and others in the late nineteenth century is the subject of Eugenia Querci and Stefano De Caro, eds., *Alma-Tadema e la nostalgia dell'antico* (Museo Archeologico Nazionale, Naples, 2007); eighteenth-century re-creations, by artists such as Hubert Robert, are the focus of Joselita Raspi Serra and François de Polignac, eds., *La fascination de l'antique, 1700–1770: Rome découverte, Rome inventée* (Musée de la civilisation Gallo-Romaine, Lyon, 1998).

12. As George Scharf observed in his explanatory booklet on the Pompeian Court, visitors to Pompeii itself were often "discontented at finding things in opposition to their own conceptions"; that it might be better to see a replica was the obvious message (*The Pompeian Court in the Crystal Palace* [London, 1854], 72).

13. Fiorelli's career and achievements are the subject of Stefano De Caro and Pier Giovanni Guzzo, *A Giuseppe Fiorelli nel primo centenario della morte* (Naples, 1999), and clearly summarized in Halsted B. Van der Poel and Paola Poli Capri, eds., *Scavi di Pompei: Giornale dei soprastanti*, 9 vols. (Rome, 1994), 1:xv–xvii. In 1863 Fiorelli was formally made director of the excavations and of the Naples museum, though he had actually been in charge of the site (as *ispettatore degli scavi*, while also professor of archaeology at the University of Naples) from late 1860, after the debacle of the appointment of Alexandre Dumas as honorary director by Garibaldi in September 1860. The confusions surrounding the appointment and departure of Dumas are discussed by Ronald T. Ridley, in "Dumas père, Director of Excavations," *Pompeii, Herculaneum, Stabiae* 1 (1983): 259–288; Annie Collet, *Alexandre Dumas et Naples* (Geneva, 1994), 139–171; and Marjan Schwegman, "Pompeii and the Last Days of the Italian Risorgimento: Giuseppe Garibaldi, Alexandre Dumas and Giuseppe Fiorelli in Naples," *Fragmenta* 2 (2008): 7–8. For documented accounts of the casting of the human (and animal) figures, see Eugene J. Dwyer, *Pompeii's Living Statues* (Ann Arbor, 2010), and Eugene J. Dwyer, "Science or Morbid Curiosity? The Casts of Giuseppe Fiorelli and the Last Days of Romantic Pompeii," in *Antiquity Recovered: The Legacy of Pompeii and Herculaneum*, ed. Victoria C. Gardner Coates and Jon L. Seydl (Los Angeles, 2007), 171–188; and Estelle Lazer, *Resurrecting Pompeii* (London, 2009), 247–264.

14. William Gell and John P. Gandy, *Pompeiana: The Topography, Edifices and Ornaments of Pompeii* (London, 1817).

15. Gell's account of the visit can be found in John G. Lockhart, *Memoirs of the Life of Sir Walter Scott, Bart.*



2nd ed., 10 vols. (London, 1839), 10:158, and William Gell, *Reminiscences of Sir Walter Scott's Residence in Italy*, 1832, ed. James C. Corson (London, 1957), 8. For the origin of the phrase, as attributed to Scott, see Edward Bulwer-Lytton, *The Last Days of Pompeii*, 3 vols. (London, 1834), 1:276; William Henry Davenport Adams, *The Buried Cities of Campania; or, Pompeii and Herculaneum: Their History, Their Destruction and Their Remains* (London, 1872), 255. Scott's own account is in his diary, *The Journal of Sir Walter Scott*, ed. William Eric Kinloch Anderson (Oxford, 1972), 699–700.

16. Hester Lynch Piozzi, *Observations and Reflections Made in the Course of a Journey through France, Italy, and Germany*, 2 vols. (London, 1789), 2:35.

17. John Moore, *A View of Society and Manners in Italy, with Anecdotes Relating to Some Eminent Characters*, 2 vols. (London, 1781), 2:185.

18. I am therefore arguing against the different paradigm shifts suggested in the rich and stimulating studies by Göran Magnus Blix (*From Paris to Pompeii: French Romanticism and the Cultural Politics of Archaeology* [Philadelphia, 2009]), which argues for a transition from a neoclassical mode of viewing to an archaeologically informed “Romantic” mode in the early nineteenth century; and by Eugene Dwyer (Dwyer 2007), who argues for a transition from a Romantic mode of viewing to an archaeologically informed mode in the 1860s.

19. Full documentation of the bombing and subsequent rebuilding is given by Laurentino García y García, *Danni di guerra a Pompei: Una dolorosa vicenda quasi dimenticata* (Rome, 2006).

20. For the full story of the acquisition of the land see Stefania A. Muscettola, “Problemi di tutela a Pompei all’ottocento: Il fallimento del progetto di esproprio murattiano,” in *Pompei: Scienza e società*, ed. Pier Giovanni Guzzo (Milan, 2001), 29–49.

21. “Letters from the Continent,” *Monthly Chronicle*, October 1840, 305; see also J. Anderson, “Visit to Pompeii,” *Wesleyan-Methodist Magazine* 5 (1849): 404 (“you see at first nothing but a long rampart or embankment of earth facing the sea”).

22. Throughout the century, numerous documents of the site authorities discuss the problem of the cumuli. For example, a letter to Fiorelli from the Ministero dell’Istruzione Pubblica notes that two million cubic meters of rubbish needed to be removed (June 26, 1862, Poli Capri 1998, 1:73–74); one estimate for this work came to more than a million francs (letter of Fiorelli to Ministero dell’Istruzione Pubblica, March 20, 1863, Poli Capri 1998, 1:106–110). The train is noted in the *Athenaeum*, March 14, 1863, 365 (“trains are continually running with the debris”).

23. Note, for example, the effusions of Selina Martin, *Narrative of a Three Years' Residence in Italy*, 1819–1822 (London, 1828), 66: “Yesterday we visited Pompeii, the place which appears to me the most interesting in the world. How shall I relate to you the wonders of this town?” See also the enthusiastic report on Pompeii (though not Herculaneum, which was “grievously disappoint[ing]”) in *Reynolds's Miscellany of*

*Romance, General Literature, Science, and Art*, July 8, 1854, 376.

24. Moyle Sherer, *The Imagery of Foreign Travel; or, Descriptive Extracts from Scenes and Impressions in Egypt, India &c. &c.* (London, 1838), 225.

25. “Letters from the Continent,” *Monthly Chronicle*, October 1840, 303–304, 306.

26. James Fenimore Cooper, *Excursions in Italy*, 2 vols. (London, 1838), 1:212.

27. This is well discussed (in relation to French responses to Pompeii) in Blix 2009, 60–71. The key texts by Chateaubriand are *Génie du christianisme*, 5 vols. (Paris, 1802), and *Voyage en Amérique et en Italie*, 2 vols. (Paris, 1827).

28. Arthur Sketchley, *Mrs Brown on the Grand Tour* (London, 1870), 115. This is one of a series of Mrs. Brown books (deriving from stage shows), in which the eponymous “heroine” offers a humorous and ignorant response to a variety of works of art, cultural highlights, and historical events (from Cleopatra’s Needle to the Tichborne case)—but a response, needless to say, with which many of us will secretly agree. As is often the case with such satire, it is not entirely clear whom we are laughing at: the ignorant, lower-class Mrs. Brown, or her “betters” who fail to see through the veneer of their own cultural superiority. Here Mrs. Brown cuts through to the heart of the matter. These Pompeian houses are empty. The British and American press reported similar reactions. A writer for the *New York Times* commented: “[M]ost visitors are apt to be disappointed by the bareness and meagreness of the ruins.... The beautiful frescoes ... have been ingeniously taken from the walls. You will find them in the Naples Museum” (May 26, 1895, 25). See also *Liverpool Mercury*, Weekly Supplement, February 26, 1847, 1 (comparing what remained on the site to “houses whose builders have been stopped at the first floor, for want of funds to finish the ceilings”), and “Pompeii by Torchlight,” *New Monthly Magazine and Literary Journal*, January 1835, 66 (“the insatiable Museum had swallowed up those specimens of art which the eruption had spared”).

29. Moore 1781, 2:178–179.

30. Chateaubriand 1827, cited from *Œuvres romanesques et voyages*, 2 vols. (Paris, 1969), 2:1474–1475. A letter dated November 1824 from “M. Taylor” to Charles Nodier, first published in *Nouvelles annales des voyages de la géographie et de l’histoire* 24 (1824): 424–425, explains: “Herculaneum et Pompéi sont des objets si importants pour l’histoire de l’antiquité, que pour bien les étudier, il faut y vivre, y demeurer. Pour suivre une fouille très curieuse, je me suis établi dans la maison de Diomède: elle est à la porte de la ville, près de la voie des Tombeaux, et si commode que je l’ai préférée aux palais qui sont près du Forum. Je demeure à côté de la maison de Salluste” (Herculaneum and Pompeii are so important for the history of antiquity that, in order to study them well, one must live there, stay there. In order to follow a very curious excavation, I have settled into the House of Diomedes: it is at the gate of the city, near the Street of the Tombs, and so convenient that I preferred it to the palaces near the Forum. I am next to

the House of Sallust). The writer is almost certainly Baron Isidore Justin Séverin Taylor, commissioner of the Comédie-Française (who must have visited Pompeii on his return from Spain and North Africa in 1824: see Juan Plazaola, *Le Baron Taylor: Portrait d'un homme d'avenir* [Paris, 1989], 85–98). The letter was much reprinted, including—in a not wholly accurate translation—in *Kaleidoscope; or, Literary and Scientific Mirror* (Liverpool), January 25, 1825, 255.

31. Cooper 1838, 1:222.

32. Collet 1994, 161, quoting Dumas's article in *Indipendente* (Naples), November 15, 1860. See further Schwegman 2008, 11.

33. *Times*, October 20, 1837, 1, and almost identically in *Literary Gazette*, October 21, 1837, 676. On this and other reenactments, see Virginia Zimmerman, *Excavating Victorians* (Albany, NY, 2008), 112.

34. *Athenaeum*, July 12, 1862, 53. The “revivalist” joke goes on: “The speculative manager adds in his quaint bill that he trusts that the favour and patronage which were liberally accorded his late predecessor, Marcus Quintus Martius, will be continued to him.”

35. “Pompeii by Torchlight” 1835, 64–69 (quotations, 64, 66–67).

36. Gérard de Nerval, quoted from the republication of “Isis” in *Les filles du feu*, ed. Claude Pichois (Paris, 1957), 223 (my translation). It is not clear how far this is a fictionalizing account, evoking a fantasy of reconstruction rather than documenting an actual event. (I have so far found no other reference to any such occasion.) Yet, even if it is a total fantasy, it still reflects the *desire* to reconstruct the living city of Pompeii.

37. “A Last Day at Pompeii,” *All the Year Round*, October 18, 1884, 41–45 (quotation, 44).

38. *Pall Mall Gazette*, May 4, 1865, 11.

39. The importance and popularity of this novel are a story I hope to tell elsewhere. It was a huge bestseller in Victorian Britain. William St. Clair has shown that in the late nineteenth century Bulwer-Lytton's novels were selling some eighty thousand copies a year in cheap paperback editions: “Following up *The Reading Nation*,” in *The Cambridge History of the Book in Britain*, vol. 6, 1830–1914, ed. David McKitterick (Cambridge, 2009), 717. It was quickly and widely translated and spawned all kinds of parodies, imitations, and adaptations, from burlesque to opera—not to mention its role as the inspiration for the Pompeian Court at the Crystal Palace, for which see Hales 2006, 100–109. Bulwer-Lytton was not the first to re-create Pompeii in fiction; for the anonymous, and unsuccessful, *The Vestal of Pompeii* (Boston, 1830), see Eric M. Moormann, “Jews and Christians at Pompeii in Fiction and Faction,” *KALATHOS: Studies in Honour of Asher Ovadiab*, ed. Sonia Mucznik, special issue, *Assaph* 10–11 (2005–2006): 53–57.

40. “Letters from the Continent,” *Monthly Chronicle*, October 1840, 307 (he has just referred to the house “which Bulwer has made the abode of his hero Glaucus”).

41. “Pompeii by Torchlight” 1835, 69.

42. For example, Murray's *Handbook for Travellers in Southern Italy*, 9th ed. (London, 1890), 106 (“For a graphic description of the life of the city ... there is nothing like Bulwer's ‘Last Days of Pompeii’”).

43. For evocative—though not always favorable—accounts of the proceedings, see the *Times*, September 29, 1879, 5; *Hartford (CT) Daily Courant*, October 20, 1879, 2; *Leeds Mercury*, October 16, 1879, 8; *Saturday Review*, October 4, 1879, 412–413. Illustrations were published in the *Graphic*, October 11, 1879, 352. Ernst Renan's speech on the occasion is discussed in Blix 2009, 231–232.

44. The cause célèbre of De Petra's career was the loss of the Boscoreale treasure to France, for which he was blamed, and on account of which he temporarily lost his position. This incident is discussed by Ann L. Kuttner in *Dynasty and Empire in the Age of Augustus: The Case of the Boscoreale Cups* (Berkeley, 1995), 6–9.

45. Sogliano 1902. The celebration of De Petra's initiatives in this lecture can hardly be unconnected with the disputes over his role in the Boscoreale scandal.

46. Sogliano 1902, 381. He does go on to wonder if this “luminosa visione” might also be accompanied by an “ombra”—that is, how well would the magnificent paintings in the house survive if not in the museum? Nevertheless, he reassured his listeners and himself, “I am of the view that this happy experiment must continue.” The visitor figures (or rather the takings at the gate) are cited rather loosely (382).

47. Sogliano 1902, 381–382.

48. See, for example, Catharine M. Sedgwick, *Letters from Abroad to Kindred at Home*, 2 vols. (London, 1841), 2:263 (the tombs made a “fitting entrance”). Though this was the standard route, it was not the only one taken by visitors to the site. Mariana Starke, in *Travels on the Continent: Written for the Use and Particular Information of Travellers* (London, 1820), 466–467, describes taking the reverse path and ending, rather than beginning, in the Street of the Tombs.

49. The first edition sets the tone: “The best plan ... is to walk or ride from the station to the old road, which will enable [the traveler] to enter the city by the Street of the Tombs, quit it by the modern entrance at the barracks, and then proceed to the amphitheatre” (Murray's *Handbook for Travellers in Southern Italy*, 1st ed. [London, 1853], 316).

50. “A Peep at Pompeii,” *Chambers's Journal of Popular Literature, Science, and Art*, September 25, 1869, 609–611 (quotation, 609). The writer had in this case chosen to travel by carriage, not to take the train, “in order not to be hampered as to hours of arriving and departure.”

51. “A Last Day at Pompeii” 1884, 43. For lengthy reflections on the casts themselves, see *Athenaeum*, March 14, 1863, 365–366.

52. Henry F. Abell, “The Rival Collectors,” *Gentleman's Magazine*, December 1887, 521–528. Frederic Harrison's “A Pompeii for the Twenty-Ninth Century,” *Nineteenth Century*, September 1890, 381–391, was a particularly famous, and much discussed, exercise in



futurism: "The problem is this—to preserve for the next ten (or even twenty) centuries a small museum in which we may store a careful selection of those products of today which we think will be most useful and instructive to our distant descendants" (383). But it is not so very far in spirit from the reflections of Mrs. Piozzi a century earlier.

53. "The Pompeii Commemoration," *Chambers's Journal of Popular Literature, Science and Art*, November 22, 1879, 743.

54. "The Buried Cities," *Chambers's Journal of Popular Literature, Science and Art*, January 17, 1885, 38–41 (quotation, 41). See also, among many accounts, Howard Hopley, "Pompeii," *The Leisure Hour*, October 1870, 630–634: "They have been cooking ever since the 23rd of November A.D. 79" (631)—referring to a then-popular date for the eruption.

55. "Pompeii in Black and White" 1885, 98.

56. Lazer 2009, 5.

57. Anna Jameson, *Diary of an Ennuyée* (London, 1826), 244.

58. A brief history of these excavations, rightly stressing their longevity, is given by Luciana Jacobelli, "Ospiti illustri e falsi scavi a Pompei," in *Pompei: La costruzione di un mito*, ed. Luciana Jacobelli (Rome, 2008), 43–57.

59. *Athenaeum*, March 16, 1861, 363–364.

60. *New York Times*, May 3, 1868, 3.

61. *Birmingham Daily Post*, January 15, 1889, 5. The occasion was written up more positively in the *Pall Mall Gazette*: "Many interesting objects were brought to light, especially well preserved amphoral vases, &c. Mr. Gladstone watched proceedings with the greatest interest" (January 9, 1889, 5).

62. *Athenaeum*, October 31, 1863, 573. Layard saw another more productive excavation in 1880, documented in a letter from Ruggiero, December 23, 1880 (Poli Capri 1996, 5:663–665).

63. The visit of the king of Siam in 1890 is recorded in a telegram from De Petra, November 2, 1890 (Poli Capri 1996, 8:1196); the visit of the king of Serbia was on November 28, 1896 (Poli Capri 1996, 9:1383).

64. Fiorelli to Ruggiero, October 20, 1888, in Poli Capri 1996, 8:1118–1119; letter from the Ministero dell'Istruzione Pubblica to Ruggiero, March 16, 1893, in Poli Capri 1996, 9:1251.

65. For example, the visit of Queen Victoria's son Prince Leopold in 1878 was followed by the consignment of selected objects to Britain (documented in several letters reprinted in Poli Capri 1996, 3:431–432, 447–448, 461–462); in 1881 objects discovered in the presence of a grand duke of Russia were presented to him "in nome del Governo del Re" (Poli Capri 1996, 5:724–725). The enthusiasm of European grandees for Pompeian antiquities is well documented in the case of Josephine Bonaparte by Martine Denoyelle and Sophie Descamps-Lequime; see "Josephine's Greek and Roman Antiquities: A Rediscovered Collection," in *The Eye of*

*Josephine: The Antiquities Collection of the Empress in the Musée du Louvre* [exh. cat. High Museum of Art, Atlanta] (Atlanta and Paris, 2008), 11–23.

66. The fine line between fraud and lucky finds is captured by the attendance of William and Emma Hamilton at the excavation of tombs in South Italy; the excavations were real enough but the discoveries sometimes implausibly spectacular. See Ian Jenkins and Kim Sloan, *Vases and Volcanoes: Sir William Hamilton and His Collection* (British Museum, London, 1996), 144.

67. Or, as one Italian account puts it, describing the reaction of the cardinals in the pope's party in 1849 to a prepared excavation, "sotto i loro occhi" (under their eyes): Conticello and Ascione 1987, 18.

68. For example, *Liverpool Mercury*, July 12, 1862, 8 (optimistically estimating five years to uncover the whole city). The correspondent to the *Athenaeum* (March 14, 1863, 365) more cautiously estimated twenty years.

69. Jacobelli 2008, 55.

70. There is, in fact, a gradual sidelining of the date of excavation. Up to the sixth edition (of 1868), it appears at the head of the entry on most buildings; in the seventh edition (1873), it is relegated to the foot of the entry; with the ninth (1890), it disappears entirely.

71. *Glasgow Herald*, October 23, 1888, 9.

72. Another, different change of emphasis is seen in a report of the visit of the crown prince of Sweden to Pompeii in 1890: "Occasion was taken of the presence of HRH to open an area behind the shop of No 1 of the same *Insula*" ("Pompeii Revisited," *Antiquary*, September 1891, 97–99 [quotation, 97]). Here the visit of a bigwig is treated as an excuse for an excavation.

73. Ministero dell'Istruzione Pubblica to De Petra, October 3, 1896; De Petra to the Ministero dell'Istruzione Pubblica, October 9, 1896 (Poli Capri 1996, 9:1375–1376, 1376–1379).

74. Lewis Engelbach, *Naples and the Campagna Felice: In a Series of Letters, Addressed to a Friend in 1802* (London, 1815), 61.