

## William Gell and *Pompeiana* (1817-19 and 1832)\*

### Abstract

This article offers an analysis of the preparation, publication and reception of the two separate versions of *Pompeiana*, texts which exercised a formative influence over Victorian understanding of not just Roman Pompeii, but of domestic Roman life more broadly throughout the nineteenth century, and which highlight a transition from eighteenth-century antiquarianism to a more ‘archaeological’ approach to the past in the nineteenth century. Using unpublished correspondence that has been overlooked by other scholarship on Gell, it argues that the form and content of the volumes responded to both contemporary fascination with the history of domestic life and the need for an affordable volume on Pompeii. But the volumes also reflected many of Gell’s more personal interests, developed in a career of travelling in Greece, Asia Minor and Spain, and were a product of his circumstances: they were conceived in order that Gell (and his co-adjutor Gandy in the first edition) might earn much-needed additional income and were a means through which Gell could consolidate his social position in Naples by establishing his authoritative expertise on Pompeii.

William Gell’s *Pompeiana*, which comprises two separate texts, published in 1817-19 and 1832 respectively, was the first English language account devoted solely to describing the remains of Pompeii. As such it represents a mile stone in the development of the commodification and consumption of Pompeii as a historical site.<sup>1</sup> As Lazer has recently observed of Gell, ‘His contribution to the dissemination of knowledge

---

\* Research for this article was supported by a grant from the Society of Antiquaries and by a period of study leave awarded by the University of Leicester. I am grateful to both institutions. I would also like to thank the staff of Derbyshire Record Office and Valerie Scott of the British School at Rome for their assistance, and Penelope Allison, Katy Layton Jones, Phillip Lindley and Sarah Scott for commenting on earlier drafts of this article.

about Pompeii in a period of poor documentation cannot be overrated'. Exercising a direct influence upon the artist John Martin and the novelist Edward Bulwer Lytton, *Pompeiana* has traditionally been seen as a foundational text for the Victorians' fascination with the buried city and nineteenth-century recreations of ancient Rome.<sup>2</sup> However, despite being accorded significant influence in the wider narrative of nineteenth-century imaginings of the Roman past, less attention has been paid to either the author and his collaborator, J.P. Gandy, or the relationship between Gell's account of Pompeii and that of many other travellers of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries.<sup>3</sup> Moreover, Gell's account is rarely discussed in its own terms<sup>4</sup> and he is often inaccurately portrayed.<sup>5</sup> Little thought has hitherto been given to the actual content and the

---

<sup>1</sup> E. Lazer, *Resurrecting Pompeii* (London, 2009), 8.

<sup>2</sup> See for example, A. Easson, "At home" with the Romans: domestic archaeology in *The Last Days of Pompeii?*, in A.C. Christensen (ed.), *The Subverting Vision of Bulwer Lytton: Bicentenary Reflections* (Cranbury NJ, 2004), 100-15; S. Goldhill, 'A writer's things: Bulwer-Lytton and the archaeological gaze: or, what's in a skull?', *Representations*, 119 (Summer 2012), 92-118; S. Harrison, 'Bulwer Lytton's *The Last Days of Pompeii*: recreating the city', in S. Hales and J. Paul (eds), *Pompeii in the Public Imagination from its Rediscovery to Today* (Oxford, 2011), 70-90; W. St Clair and A. Bautz, 'Imperial decadence: the making of myths in Edward Bulwer-Lytton's *Last Days of Pompeii?*, *Victorian Literature and Culture*, 40 (2012), 359-96

<sup>3</sup> An exception is B. Desrochers, 'Images de Pompéi', *Canadian Art Review*, 27, pt.1/2 (2000), 59-72, but Desrochers focuses exclusively upon the images, excluding the text and the images' relationship to the text, in her analysis.

<sup>4</sup> There is some discussion of Gell's depiction of the wall paintings in C.L. Lyons and M. Reed, 'The visible and the visual: Pompeii and Herculaneum in the Getty Research Institute Collections', in V.C. Gardner Coates and J.L. Syedl (eds), *Antiquity Recovered. The Legacy of Pompeii and Herculaneum* (Los Angeles, 2007), 133-56

<sup>5</sup> See, for example, J. Harris, *Pompeii Awakened: a Story of Rediscovery* (London, 2009), 160-1 where, among other inaccuracies, he is incorrectly identified as the representative of the Dilettanti Society from 1820. See also M. D. Bridges who refers to him as a 'geologist' and attributes the illustrations solely to Gandy: 'Objects of

novelty or originality of his observations in either edition, how his views of Pompeii developed between the different texts, or to the motives behind the publication. Even the relationship and division of labour between Gell and Gandy in the production of the first edition has been misunderstood. Given the influence of *Pompeiana* on Victorian culture and its widespread popularity in the nineteenth century, a closer analysis of the preparation, publication and reception of the two different versions of *Pompeiana* will not only offer a sharper insight into the motivations of Gell, and of his co-author Gandy, but will also provide a revealing perspective from which to examine early nineteenth-century engagement with the remains of Roman antiquity.

This article will consider how Gell's interpretation of Pompeii was informed by his wider knowledge of the Mediterranean and classical antiquity and by his own personal interests. Using personal correspondence between Gandy and Gell, and between Gell and his family which has thus far been overlooked by researchers, it will analyse the process by which *Pompeiana* was put together, how it was shaped by the authors' perception of the market and potential competition and by pragmatic issues of long distance collaboration, and will analyse how Gell's understanding of Pompeii had evolved by the time of the publication of the second sole-authored edition. It will argue that more credit needs to be given to Gell's own perceptive analysis of Pompeii and how it reflected upon and modified what was known about classical antiquity, from the private lives of the Romans to the interpretation of Vitruvian precepts of architecture. Through *Pompeiana* Gell arrived at a more intimate version of Roman society, but also one that was more sensitive to the

---

affection: necromantic pathos in Bulwer Lytton's *City of the Dead*' in Hales and Paul (eds), *Pompeii in the Public Imagination*, 92 (above, n. 2). E. Dwyer, *Pompeii's Living Statues. Ancient Roman Lives Stolen from Death* (Ann Arbor, 2010), 22 dismisses Gell as out of touch with archaeological opinion beyond Naples and *Pompeiana* as full of 'idiosyncratic conjectures' (without providing examples).

peculiarities of place and the discrepancies between the ideals of prescriptive literature, which had up until then shaped the image of classical antiquity, and a lived reality of pragmatism and compromise.<sup>6</sup>

Gell himself always represented the *Pompeiana* phenomenon as a jeu d'esprit: the result of a few mornings spent sketching on the spot in Pompeii with his camera lucida, involving only the cost of the carriage and a bribe to the custode to turn a blind eye whilst he made the sketches.<sup>7</sup> He made a very clear differentiation between this and the more serious archaeological work in which he was involved for most of the time that he was settled in Italy, that is the preparation of the map and accompanying text of the Roman campagna, eventually published as the *Roman Topography* (1834).<sup>8</sup> Such self-deprecation is entirely consonant with the

---

<sup>6</sup> As noted, there were two distinct and different texts called *Pompeiana: the Topography, Edifices, and Ornaments of Pompeii* published 1817-19 and 1832 respectively. *Pompeiana* (1817-19) was printed in a new edition in 1821, when the text was slightly re-ordered in the interests of internal coherence and an appendix added; the 1825 impression was textually unchanged. It was reissued again in 1852 and in 1875. *Pompeiana* (1832) was reprinted only once in 1837.

<sup>7</sup> E. Clay (ed.), *Sir William Gell in Italy* (London, 1976), 64. The conditions of secrecy imposed by the restored Bourbon monarchy prohibited taking notes or sketches in situ. Gell's observations therefore (as he was aware) have considerable value for classical archaeologists and art historians today as few other observations were taken on the spot and many finds were subsequently allowed to disintegrate through exposure to the elements. The unusual accuracy of his drawings in a period before the advent of photography, rendered possible by his use of the camera lucida, also enhances their value. See, for example, *Pompeiana* (1832), i, xxiii.

<sup>8</sup> This volume was the one on which, above all others, Gell seems to have staked his scholarly identity and reputation: he prided himself on his accuracy and for having broken genuinely new ground in surveying territory and archaeological sites that had not previously been recorded, and for having documented the physical evidence of locations of many sites recorded in the early history of Rome which were in danger of disappearing altogether. For a recent and positive evaluation of this publication, see A. Wallace Hadrill,

witty and sociable persona that he cultivated amongst the expatriate circle in Italy – he always refused to adopt the pose of a serious antiquarian scholar, allowing his critics to dismiss him as a coxcomb and a dilettante – but it obscures the depth of detail and accurate observation to be found in both editions of *Pompeiana* and underplays the extent to which Gell’s own identity was bound up with his role as the interpreter of Pompeii for his contemporaries.<sup>9</sup>

### **The eighteenth-century background**

Recent work on the reception of Pompeii has tended to be weighted more heavily towards the period after the publication of *Pompeiana* and particularly the later nineteenth century – with good reason, given that this was when the bulk of the archaeological activity took place – but arguably this has led to a tendency to overlook the tenor and content of eighteenth and early nineteenth-century accounts, in both their confusion and misapprehension, and in what was correctly identified.<sup>10</sup> It is important to evaluate the early phases of

---

‘Roman topography and the prism of Sir William Gell’, in L. Haselberger and J. Humphrey (eds), *Imaging Ancient Rome. Documentation, Visualization, Imagination* (Portsmouth RI, 2006), 285-96.

<sup>9</sup> See for example the original entry by W. Wroth on Gell in the *Dictionary of National Biography* and J. Ramsay, ‘A sketch of the character of Sir William Gell’, in F.F. Madden (ed.), *The Literary Life and Correspondence of the Countess of Blessington*, 3 vols (London, 1855), ii, 15-21. For a recent and more positive assessment of Gell’s scholarly reputation see the revised entry in the *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* by Jason Thompson and his evaluation of his contribution to Egyptology in J. Thompson, *Sir Gardner Wilkinson and his Circle* (Austin, 1992). The Italians, French and Germans with whom he engaged on an antiquarian rather than sociable basis, such as Nibby, Champollion and Bunsen, appear to have had a higher estimation of his contribution to scholarship. Amongst the honours that he received were membership of the Royal Academy of Berlin, the Institut de France and the Instituto di Correspondenza Archaeologica.

<sup>10</sup> See for example, M. Beard, ‘Taste and the antique: visiting Pompeii in the nineteenth century’ in C. Mattusch (ed.), *Rediscovering the Ancient World on the Bay of Naples, 1710-1890* (New Haven CT, 2013), 205-28; the essays in Hales and Paul (eds.), *Pompeii in the Public Imagination* (above, n. 2); I. Rowland, *From Pompeii: the*

the reception of Pompeii, if only to recognise what, if anything, was qualitatively new in approach and interpretation in *Pompeiana*.

In the first instance, there are some obvious differences: the most obvious being that until the excavations carried out under the auspices of the French from 1811, far less had been excavated and publication of images of the finds had been strictly limited by the Bourbons. This meant that in terms of the visitor experience, viewing the collections of artefacts, mosaics and paintings that had been transferred to the Royal Museum at Portici featured far more prominently than would be the case in the nineteenth century.<sup>11</sup>

Similarly, Herculaneum, which receded into the background in comparison with Pompeii in the nineteenth century, was given greater prominence having been discovered first and having furnished much of the contents of the museum at Portici. Herculaneum had offered the experience of exploring the tunnels dug out by excavators, and early accounts dwelt on the excitement of descending underground by torchlight to a hidden subterranean city.<sup>12</sup> But there was no opportunity to gain any sense of the town as a whole, not least because tunnels were filled in as the excavators worked their way through them. Pompeii was much more accessible and, particularly with the excavation of readily comprehensible sites such as the Temple of Isis

---

*Afterlife of a Roman Town* (Harvard, 2014); and six of the essays in Coates and Syedl (eds.), *Antiquity Recovered* (above, n. 4). Göran Blix's study of French interpretations of Pompeii in the context of romanticism's engagement with the past, which highlights the role of Pompeii in the shift from neo-classical to archaeological approaches to antiquity, is a valuable exception to this pattern: G. Blix, *From Paris to Pompeii. French Romanticism and the Cultural Politics of Archaeology* (Philadelphia, 2009).

<sup>11</sup> See for example A. Miller, *Letters from Italy*, 2 vols (London, 1776), ii, 252-85 on Pompeii and *ibid.*, 285-301 on Portici, or the diary of Sir James Hall, National Library of Scotland (NLS) MS 6327 fos 47-58.

<sup>12</sup> For an overview of eighteenth- and early nineteenth-century comments on Herculaneum, see C. Parslow, *Rediscovering Antiquity: Karl Weber and the Excavation of Herculaneum, Pompeii and Stabiae* (Cambridge, 1995) and A. Wallace Hadrill, 'Ruins and forgetfulness: the case of Herculaneum', in Hales and Paul (eds.), *Pompeii in the Public Imagination*, 367-79 (above, n. 2).

(first discovered in 1764), began to take precedence over Herculaneum in tourists' observations from the 1780s onwards.<sup>13</sup>

However, thematic preoccupations also emerged which continued to resonate through the nineteenth century: from the very start, British travellers appreciated that Pompeii offered a wholly unprecedented insight into the everyday life of a Roman city. Rather than triumphal arches and temples or the overwhelming magnificence of the giant bath complexes of Rome, Pompeii offered a vision of urban life which any visitor could relate to on a personal level. Whereas the descriptive tropes that dominated accounts of Rome concentrated on the grandeur and scale and the gulf separating past and present, in Pompeii that gulf was bridged with the smallest imaginative leap. It was as if – as so many visitors expressed it – the owner of one of the houses might turn up at any minute to welcome you.<sup>14</sup> Pompeii seemed familiar, personal and intimate: the antithesis of the faceless expressions of power found in the public monuments of Rome.

Due to the limited extent of the city that had been excavated, comments necessarily focussed upon individual buildings, such as the house of the surgeon and the thermopolium, or easily recognisable features such as the deep ruts in the streets created by wheeled traffic. Houses were invariably found to be small and poorly lit while similarities between the design of ancient and modern shops in Naples were always noted. The repertoire of comments was, in fact, quite restricted and frequently derivative, either of standard antiquarian or topographical texts, such as William Hamilton's essay on Pompeii in *Archaeologia* published in 1776 or Saint Non's *Voyage Pittoresque* (itself dependent upon Hamilton) to which many British travellers referred when recapitulating their own experiences. More prosaically many accounts simply relayed the information provided by guides, who were less than scrupulous in relaying the kind of stories that travellers wished to

---

<sup>13</sup> A. Cooley, *Pompeii* (London, 2003), 73-9. See for example the five plates and accompanying discussion in J.C. Richard de Saint Non, *Voyage pittoresque ou descriptions des royaumes de Naples et de Sicilie*, 5 vols (Paris, 1781-6), ii, 115-24.

<sup>14</sup> J. Chetwode Eustace, *A Classical Tour through Italy*, 4 vols, 4<sup>th</sup> edn (Leghorn, 1818), iii, 69; R. Sweet, *Cities and the Grand Tour: the British in Italy, c. 1680-1820* (Cambridge, 2012), 47-50.

hear.<sup>15</sup> Information of dubious authenticity was repeated in various diaries and travelogues, such as the claim that the cella of the Temple of Isis was used to conceal a priest who would pronounce oracles to the credulous public. Such stories confirmed eighteenth-century scepticism of superstition and affirmed implicit assumptions about the continuity of practice and belief between Roman Catholicism and paganism, inherited from Conyers Middleton.<sup>16</sup> This was advanced by ostensibly reliable guides such as Mariana Starke and John Chetwode Eustace, although the latter with a dose of scepticism, observed that Pompeii had never been noted for oracles which had, in any case, ceased long before the temple was built: ‘the whole contrivance too gross to dupe the dullest peasant, let alone the polished inhabitants of Pompeii’.<sup>17</sup> Other accounts simply provided a series of sensory impressions, individually calculated to provoke some kind of sentimental or intellectual response, but which did not promote any attempt to understand or interpret how Pompeii’s inhabitants lived in their city.<sup>18</sup>

The re-opening of Italy to general tourists after Waterloo led to a flurry of activity amongst travel writers who were keenly aware that the British would be flooding across the Channel once more, having been largely debarred for the best part of twenty years. There was a need to report on the changes that had taken place under Napoleon. These included the negative (such as the loss of antiquities to the French or Venice’s subordination to Austria Hungary), but also the positive: considerable improvements had been made to the transport infrastructure, which the British noted with approval, such as the construction of the Simplon Pass,

---

<sup>15</sup> W. Hamilton, ‘An account of the discoveries at Pompeii’, *Archaeologia*, 4 (1776), 160-75; Saint Non, *Voyage pittoresque*, ii, chapter 10 (above, n. 13).

<sup>16</sup> Sweet, *Cities and the Grand Tour*, 148 (above, n. 14).

<sup>17</sup> M. Starke, *Letters from Italy between the Years 1792 and 1798*, 2 vols (London, 1800), ii, 101; Chetwode Eustace, *Classical Tour*, iii, 54-5 (above, n. 14). Bulwer Lytton drew on these stories in his account of the cynical exploitation of the cult of Isis by the Egyptian priest Arbaces in *The Last Days of Pompeii*.

<sup>18</sup> See for example, R. Gray, *Letters during the Course of a Tour through Germany, Switzerland and Italy, in the Years MDCCXCI and MDCCXCII* (London, 1794), 410-11.

but more importantly for those interested in antiquities, extensive excavations had taken place under French direction in both the Roman forum and at Pompeii, the latter under Michele Arditì at the behest of the Murats. The British had traditionally been highly critical of the very slow progress made under the Bourbon kings and had deplored the practice of seeking out only objects of virtù for the royal collection rather than adopting a more systematic approach.<sup>19</sup> Under French direction, however, the circuit of the walls was laid bare, most of the Street of the Tombs was excavated, as were the forum and the basilica and neighbouring streets, and the amphitheatre was cleared.<sup>20</sup> For the first time it was possible to estimate the size and extent of Pompeii and to reconstruct elements of the city's ground plan, rather than simply isolated buildings. The excavations opened up a much larger area for visitors to view, facilitating not only a better sense of the town as an urban space, but also, as not all the wall paintings and artefacts had been carried off to the museum, a stronger sense of contact with the past: 'an enchanting beguilement', which, as the *Eclectic Review* noted, had been much diminished in those parts of the city subject to earlier excavations, where all the objects had been removed to enrich the royal collections.<sup>21</sup>

There was, then, clearly a need for a better guide for visitors, which took account of the new discoveries and which also emancipated the visitor from the unreliable authority of the local guides. The general trend amongst visitors to Italy by this time was for a movement away from reliance on the valets de place and the antiquaries, who had traditionally shown their predecessors around the sites of Italy, towards greater independence in sightseeing. This was accompanied by a demand for guidebooks which included more emphasis upon the actual process of finding one's way around and not simply the provision of specialist antiquarian knowledge: thus maps and plans which permitted the visitor to navigate a city on their own were

---

<sup>19</sup> J. Moore, *A View of Society and Manners in Italy*, 2 vols (London, 1781), ii, 176; Journal of Sir James Hall, March 1785, NLS MS 6237 fos 24, 26; journal of William Forbes, 7 Mar. 1793, NLS MS 1542 fol. 4; journal of Sir Richard Colt Hoare, December 1789, Cambridge University Library (CUL) Add MS 3550 fol. 5.

<sup>20</sup> *Pompeiana* (1819), x. See also Cooley, *Pompeii*, 80-2 (above, n. 13).

<sup>21</sup> *Eclectic Review*, 14 (Sept. 1820), 146.

becoming increasingly common in such publications.<sup>22</sup> Gell and Gandy would have been aware that there would be market for a well illustrated but relatively affordable volume offering a comprehensive introduction to all that was to be seen, rather than selected highlights or a collection of impressions and observations.

Their appreciation of this point was no doubt enhanced by their awareness that the Italians and the French had already awoken to this gap in the market: Domenico Romanelli, author of a popular guide to Pompeii and its environs first published in 1811, observed in his introductory remarks that ‘Io desiderava da gran tempo di fare altre ricerche sui monumenti di Pompei, giacchè non è possibile di poterne trovare ne’ libri una descrizione completa, e di avere un dettaglio di tutte le cose finora scoperte.’<sup>23</sup> Romanelli’s guidebook was not illustrated, however, and the relative rarity of its appearance in British library catalogues suggests that it was not necessarily a common purchase for British visitors.<sup>24</sup> Shortly before Gell and Gandy commenced publication the French architect Francois Mazois began to publish his major study of Pompeii, *Les Ruines de Pompéii* (1812-38). Gell clearly used Mazois for his own research and in turn was later to donate plans for subsequent volumes (which went unacknowledged, much to his annoyance), but Gell and Mazois were embarked upon very different enterprises. Mazois’s interest was primarily architectural, and in his analyses of buildings he was certainly the superior of Gell.<sup>25</sup> But although he emphasised the value of Pompeii for a historical understanding of the Romans’ private houses and the development of domestic architecture, any analysis of domestic life as it would actually have been experienced by the Romans was missing from his work. The plates were largely comprised of elevations cross sections and floor plans of individual buildings, providing minutely detailed measurements; there were a number of prospect views, but these were relatively

---

<sup>22</sup> See Sweet, *Cities and the Grand Tour*, 104-7 (above, n. 14).

<sup>23</sup> D. Romanelli, *Viaggio a Pompei a Pesto e di ritorno ad Ercolano ed a Pozzuoli* (2<sup>nd</sup> edn Naples, 1817), 12. The first edition of Carlo Bonucci’s widely consulted *Pompei descritta* did not appear until 1824.

<sup>24</sup> COPAC provides details of 5 copies of the 1811 edition and 7 of the 1817 edition in British research libraries.

<sup>25</sup> Desrochers, ‘Images de Pompéii’, 63-4 (above, n. 3).

few and far between. The one image of a domestic interior in the first volume, for example, was actually a composite of different elements rather than an effort to reconstruct the original form and appearance of a particular building.<sup>26</sup> Mazois' Pompeii was uninhabited and, for the most part, lacked the human detail which rendered the site so compelling to visitors. The prose was ponderous and bloated with references to classical authorities, and for long sections, as much a commentary on Vitruvius as a study of Pompeii. 'Mazois' work', observed Cockerell to Gell 'is too slow and heavy and he has contrived to deaden one's interest about Pompeia by the long laborious much-about-nothings that he has given and very few people have been induced to purchase it'.<sup>27</sup> Gell and Gandy would offer something very different.

### **Motives for publication**

William Gell (1777-1836), was the younger son of Philip Gell of Hopton, a minor gentry family in Derbyshire. His widowed mother had remarried the family's agent, the topographer and antiquary, Thomas Blore; Blore may have influenced the young Gell's interests in surveying and antiquarianism, although there is no surviving evidence to indicate that this was the case. Gell's interest in genealogy and family history can, however, be dated back to his teenage years.<sup>28</sup> He was educated at Derby Grammar School and then at Emmanuel College, Cambridge, where he was elected a fellow in 1798, later migrating his fellowship to Jesus College in the same year.<sup>29</sup> At Cambridge he was part of the circle of Grecians including William Wilkins,

---

<sup>26</sup> F. Mazois, *Les ruines de Pompeii dessinées et mesurées par F. Mazois pendant les années MDCCCIX. MDCCCX.* MDCCCXI, 4 vols (Paris, 1812-38), i, part 2, plate 1. For a discussion of Mazois' approach to domestic life amongst the ancient Romans, and his reliance on Vitruvius, see A. Wallace Hadrill, 'Case e società', in P.G. Guzzo (ed.), *Pompeii Scienza e Società* (Milano, 2001), 113-17.

<sup>27</sup> British Library (BL) Add MS 63617 fol. 57, Cockerell to Gell 13 Feb. 1817.

<sup>28</sup> Derbyshire Record Office (DRO) D258/50/146 Gell wrote to his brother 30 Mar. 1831 regarding a collection of pedigrees which he described as having been completed by him by 1795. See also D258/50/134 on the same subject, 15 Apr. 1830. Gell suggested that Blore had appropriated some of his own collections.

<sup>29</sup> <http://venn.lib.cam.ac.uk/Documents/acad/enter.html> accessed 2 Oct. 2014.

Charles Long, Frederick Robinson and the earl of Aberdeen.<sup>30</sup> His antiquarian credentials were established early: he was elected FSA in 1800 at the age of twenty-three at the same time that he embarked upon his first tour to Greece and Asia Minor (1800-3).<sup>31</sup> This was followed by a diplomatic mission to the Ionian islands in 1803; a further journey to Ithaca and the Morea in 1804-5;<sup>32</sup> and trips to Spain, with a brief excursion to the Moorish cities of Tangiers and Tetuan in 1808-9 and Portugal in 1810.<sup>33</sup> The first three expeditions occasioned a series of publications on the Troad, Ithaca and Greece and ensured his election to the Society of Dilettanti in 1807.<sup>34</sup> On the basis of this experience, and his own networking, he was selected to lead the Society of Dilettanti's Ionian mission that took place 1811-13, accompanied by John Peter Gandy, Francis Bedford and his close friend, Richard Keppel Craven. Although the Gells were not a particularly wealthy or socially distinguished family, it is clear that William Gell was skilful at building social connections: his early travelling career was evidently assisted by family connections to the dukes of Devonshire, given that his first book, the *Topography of Troy*, was dedicated to the duchess, a consequence, presumably, of the proximity of the

---

<sup>30</sup> R. Winsor Liscombe, *William Wilkins, 1778-1839* (Cambridge, 1980), chapter 1.

<sup>31</sup> University of Bristol Special Collections MSS 7-8.

<sup>32</sup> Bodleian Library Oxford MS Eng misc e. 154.

<sup>33</sup> As Gell never published anything relating to his travels in Spain and Portugal, his interest in the Iberian peninsula and Moorish history and culture has hitherto been overlooked. His notebooks with sketches relating to these tours survive at the British School at Rome and in sketchbook 12 from Keppel Craven's bequest of Gell's sketchbooks at the British Museum. His correspondence with the Countess of Blessington shows that he returned to these Spanish notebooks, and the history of the Moors in particular, towards the end of his life, when he was trying to identify new topics on which to write which would appeal to a wider audience and would earn him additional income. See Madden (ed.), *Literary Life and Correspondence*, ii, 5-6, 53, 81, 91 (above, n. 9). See also DRO 258/58/3/1-4 (extracts from various books relating to the Moors of Granada).

<sup>34</sup> W. Gell, *The Topography of Troy, and its Vicinity* (London, 1804); *The Geography and Antiquities of Ithaca* (London, 1807); *The Itinerary of Greece* (London, 1810).

Gells' seat near Wirksworth and Chatsworth House. Membership of the Society of Dilettanti and a circle of antiquaries, travellers and scholars around Sir Henry Englefield led to further opportunities, as through it he became a member of Princess Caroline's informal court, gaining an entrée into the fashionable political and social circles of London.<sup>35</sup> His knighthood, awarded after the Dilettanti Mission, was in itself evidence of the friends he had made in high places, even if he did have to borrow money from his brother to pay the necessary fees.<sup>36</sup> Gell was therefore sufficiently well connected to harbour ambitions for further preferment and for much of his life was casting about (unsuccessfully) for postings – such as Governor of the Ionian Islands or travelling consul in Greece – and in the interim was dependent upon wealthy patrons and what he could earn by capitalising upon his travels in the Mediterranean to support a lifestyle on the fringes of fashionable society.<sup>37</sup> By the time of the publication of *Pompeiana* he had already acquired a name and reputation as a pioneering traveller in Greece and Asia Minor – Byron's famous soubriquet of 'Classic Gell' was coined in 1810<sup>38</sup> – but his longer term future was insecure. *Pompeiana*, as we shall see, was an effort to

---

<sup>35</sup> Lady Charlotte Bury, *Diary Illustrative of the Times of George IV*, 2 vols, 2<sup>nd</sup> edn (Paris, 1838), *passim*.

<sup>36</sup> DRO D258/50/ 71, D258/50/86, D258/100 and D258/101 letters to his brother dated 12 May 1814, 20 Sept. 1815, 1 Feb. 1819 and Mar. 1816 respectively. His brother, Phillip Gell, was MP for Penryn, and was known to the Home Secretary, Lord Sidmouth, through the patron of his former seat of Malmesbury, Thomas Grimston Estcourt. William Gell clearly hoped that his brother might be able to exert some influence on his behalf. <http://www.historyofparliamentonline.org/volume/1790-1820/member/gell-philip-1775-1842>, accessed 31 Dec. 2014.

<sup>37</sup> DRO D258/50/99 Gell wrote to Sidmouth, through Philip Gell, petitioning to be appointed Governor of the Ionian Islands, 17 Dec. 1815. See also DRO D3287/4/5 Letters of Caroline of Brunswick to William Gell: a letter from October 1818 referred to commitments on Caroline's part to press Gell's interests with her daughter, Princess Charlotte, as a future Minister of Naples and a letter of 1820 shows that Gell was still angling to be appointed Governor of the Ionian Islands.

<sup>38</sup> G. Gordon, Lord Byron, *English Bards and Scotch Reviewers* (London, 1810), 90. Although they did not meet in Greece, Gell and Byron would certainly have encountered each other through Princess Caroline; Gell was

repair his finances and to attract the attention of potential patrons, as well as a vehicle through which to express his own growing fascination with the site.

In 1813 Gell and Keppel Craven had returned from the Society of Dilettanti's Ionian mission and were based once more in London with no particular object in view: it was at this point that they accepted the invitation of Princess Caroline to take on the role of vice-chamberlains in her travelling court when she left England for Europe in the autumn of 1814. Her itinerary was undecided: Brunswick, certainly, to see her family; then on to Italy, and then perhaps the eastern shores of the Mediterranean and the Levant – destinations that Gell harboured ambitions to visit throughout his life. The opportunity to travel in Europe and possibly further afield, even in the company of the unpredictable Princess Caroline, would clearly have been attractive to Gell, who lacked the financial means to travel to such destinations independently. However, it is evident that the two vice-chamberlains soon found their position intolerable as Princess Caroline's behaviour became ever more wayward and eccentric. Both men submitted their resignation in February 1815 although Gell continued to accompany her on her travels until the end of May, when she left Milan for Venice.<sup>39</sup> Gell was able to save face and reject allegations of disloyalty by pleading health problems which made it impossible for him to perform his role, although given that he had recently made the ascent of Vesuvius in February 1815, an ascent rendered particularly difficult, he noted, as a consequence of the eruption of the winter 1813-14,

---

well acquainted with Byron's friend and travelling companion John Cam Hobhouse: Bury, *Diary Illustrative of the Times of George IV*, i, 223 (above, n. 35).

<sup>39</sup> Beinecke Library Osborne d293 fol. 125, journal of William Gell, 31 May 1815. F. Fraser, *The Unruly Queen. The Life of Queen Caroline* (London, 1996), 271 mistakenly assumes that Gell remained behind in Naples after the departure of Princess Caroline in March 1815. On the contrary, he accompanied her north through Rome to Genoa and thence to Milan.

one wonders how plausible the princess found this explanation.<sup>40</sup> However, once he was relieved of his official duties, Gell was able to concentrate on his true interests: antiquities and topography.

The plan for producing a volume on Pompeii appears to date from the summer of 1815 when Gell spent ten days at Pompeii, between intervals of gout, in intensive sketching, accompanied by Charles Cockerell 'his great friend and Greek companion' who was returning to Britain from Greece, via Italy.<sup>41</sup> His letters home emphasise how powerfully he was struck by the extent to which the site had been transformed in the past ten years. The two friends apparently formulated the idea for a volume together, but at some point, Gell changed his mind and enlisted the assistance of his former travelling companion, the architect John Peter Gandy, with whom he was already collaborating on the *Itinerary of the Morea* (1817), the second edition of his *Itinerary of Greece* (1819) and on the publications arising from the Dilettanti Mission. Gell and Gandy were certainly working together on the project in April 1816, by which time the first number of *Pompeiana* had almost been completed. Gell seems to have acted naively, if not a little highhandedly, in replacing Cockerell with Gandy as his collaborator, not least because he apparently assumed that Cockerell, when back in London, would contribute plans and drawings anyway. As Frank Salmon has so effectively demonstrated, there was a febrile and competitive atmosphere amongst the architects returning from tours to Italy and Greece in this period, and sketches and plans made on the spot of the newly uncovered buildings at Pompeii represented important intellectual capital which these young men, Gell and Gandy amongst them, were keen to maximise and protect. Returning travellers jostled to make their name and if not their fortune, at least their reputation, as a

---

<sup>40</sup> Beinecke Library Osborne d293 fos 83-5, journal of William Gell 6-9 Feb. 1815; DRO D3287/4/5 Caroline of Brunswick to Gell, 8 Feb. 1815; D258/50/82 Gell to his banker, Stracey, 9 Mar. 1815 explained that he would not be joining the princess on her summer tour of Italy due to the problems he had experienced with gout over the winter. Lady Charlotte Bury, however, referred to a bitter quarrel between the princess, Gell and Craven: *Diary Illustrative of the Times of George IV*, ii, 134, 138 (above, n. 35).

<sup>41</sup> D 258/50/84 and 85 William Gell to his brother Philip Gell, 14 Jul. and 1 Sept. 1815; D258/50/107 Gell to Mary Polier, Jul. 1815.

means to securing future commissions by publishing engravings of their work.<sup>42</sup> ‘The fact is’, as Gandy wrote to Gell, ‘we are all jealous of one another’.<sup>43</sup> Nonetheless, Gell instructed Gandy, who had never met Cockerell, to introduce himself and request the plans, an instruction from which Gandy understandably demurred.<sup>44</sup>

Despite his reluctance to approach Cockerell directly, Gandy was in fact anxious to secure contributions from him. As a trained architect Cockerell’s plans were, as Gandy put it, ‘most desirable for their greater architectural precision’ in contrast to Gell’s hasty sketches, the vagueness and inaccuracy of which Gandy frequently lamented.<sup>45</sup> But when Cockerell did find out from Gandy that Gell was working on *Pompeiana* without him he was, understandably, piqued. Gandy tried to smooth his ruffled feathers, pleading for some architectural plans which would be ‘handsomely not to say puffingly acknowledged’. But Cockerell was having none of it and swore he would write to Gell, which he did in a letter implying that Gell had reneged upon an agreement made during their joint visit to Pompeii in 1815. ‘I proposed doing something with you when we were together and I could certainly have assisted you much.... I don’t remember how it failed for I proposed it to you then.’ However, he concluded loftily, the important thing was that the curious should be provided with an account of Pompeii, and Gell’s ‘little work’ was a ‘nice thing’ which would, he was sure, succeed.<sup>46</sup> Gell’s reply has not survived. But eventually Cockerell was mollified by Gandy’s flattery and promises that his contributions would be suitably puffed. He was persuaded to contribute a plan of the

---

<sup>42</sup> F. Salmon, *Building on Ruins. The Rediscovery of Rome and English Architecture* (Aldershot, 2000), 82.

<sup>43</sup> BL Add MS 63167 fol. 20, Gandy to Gell, 8 Jul. 1817.

<sup>44</sup> BL Add MS 63167 fol. 1v Gandy to Gell, 15 Apr. 1817.

<sup>45</sup> See e.g. BL Add MS 63167 fos 9-10, 23, 25 Gandy to Gell 8 Jan. 1817 and 15 Nov. 1817. Gell trained briefly at the Royal Academy before going up to Cambridge, but as he himself was the first to admit, he could never claim great skill as a draughtsman.

<sup>46</sup> BL Add MS 63617 fol. 57 Cockerell to Gell, 13 Feb. 1817.

House of Pansa and the House of Actaeon and even offered to provide four or five additional plates: ‘what a piece of vanity he is’, observed Gandy, ‘I intend to feed him to give him all the rope he can desire’.<sup>47</sup>

After his death, Gell was criticised by Madden for his ‘aristocratic’ approach to publishing (that is, large, expensive volumes, heavily illustrated and with small print runs, which depended upon patronage to cover costs),<sup>48</sup> but whilst Gell certainly did not produce the cheap, mass produced volumes that are typical of the Victorian era, *Pompeiana* was not an expensive, lavishly illustrated, folio antiquarian tome for the architect or antiquarian collector as were the Society of Dilettanti publications, or the architectural treatises of Mazois or Cockburn and Donaldson.<sup>49</sup> In fact few of his books fall into that category (the earlier volumes of Greek and Ionian travels were octavo publications aimed specifically at the active, rather than the armchair traveller).<sup>50</sup> The newspaper advertisement announcing *Pompeiana*’s publication explicitly differentiated it from architectural volumes that provided exact measurements.<sup>51</sup> The octavo edition was advertised at eight shillings per number, of which twelve were published, and the complete version was advertised at a cost of £5 12s, a price described, a little optimistically, by the *Eclectic Review* as ‘affordable’.<sup>52</sup> This was certainly not cheap,

---

<sup>47</sup> BL Add MS 63617 fol. 21v Gandy to Gell, 8 Jul. 1817.

<sup>48</sup> Madden, *Literary Life and Correspondence*, ii, 14 (above, n. 9).

<sup>49</sup> T.L. Donaldson, *Pompeii, Illustrated with Picturesque Views Engraved by W. B. Cooke, from the Original Drawings of Lieut. Col. Cockburn*, 2 vols (London, 1827).

<sup>50</sup> Gell’s publications on Greece were explicitly aimed at the traveller, and in the case of the itineraries, published in such a format as would easily fit in the pocket; the *Itinerary of the Morea* cost only 10s 6d and the *Itinerary of Greece* 14s.

<sup>51</sup> *Morning Chronicle*, 25 Mar. 1817, 2 col. 4. John Soane jun. was dismissive of Gell’s ‘paltry publication’, presumably because it did not meet his expectations of architectural detail and analysis. A.T. Bolton (ed.), *The Portrait of Sir John Soane RA (1753-1837) Set Forth in Letters to his Friends* (London, 1927), 286.

<sup>52</sup> *Eclectic Review*, 14 (Sept 1820), 147. Prices for the quarto edition, which also boasted proof plates, were not advertised: *Morning Chronicle*, 25 Mar. 1817, 2 col. 4.

but it was considerably more affordable, and in its smaller format, much more user friendly, than its expensive competitors, whilst still being richly illustrated.<sup>53</sup> Moreover, unlike the publications of Mazois or Donaldson and Cockburn, all twelve parts were published within two years: the more expensive volumes could take at least ten years to bring to completion, if indeed they were completed at all.<sup>54</sup> Gell and Gandy at this point were both in need of income and the format that they chose was determined by their need to produce something that would *sell* rather than simply advertise their skill as architectural draughtsmen. Beyond a pension from Princess Caroline of £200 pa and limited private income deriving from investments in annuities, as a younger son with expensive tastes, Gell was permanently short of money and laboured under a sense of unfulfilled expectations.<sup>55</sup> In the event, the publication of *Pompeiana* brought both authors a welcome lump sum: the subscription at the booksellers swiftly filled up within months of it being opened.

---

<sup>53</sup> The cost of the first of four parts of Donaldson's *Pompeii Illustrated with Picturesque Views* (above, n. 49), including 16 plates and 7 outlines, was £4 4s or £6 6s for proof impressions and £8 8s on India paper. The first part of George Townley's *Views of Pompeii with a Descriptive Account* was advertised at 12s 6d. See *Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine*, 2 (1818), 705.

<sup>54</sup> Donaldson's, *Pompeii Illustrated with Picturesque Views* (above, n. 49) was completed by 1827; Mazois's study of Pompeii stretched from 1812-38 and no more than three of the promised twelve parts of Townley's *Views of Pompeii* appear to have been published: see *Catalogue of the Curious and Valuable Library of Lieutenant General Dowdeswell* (London, 1828), 33.

<sup>55</sup> He inherited £4000 from his father (DRO D 258/45/39/14 discharge of trustees by William Gell for £4000 paid under his father's will's trust); the Brecknockshire property of his uncle Admiral John Gell (d. 1806) The National Archives (TNA) PROB 11/1456/3; and received the pension of £200 pa from Princess Caroline until her death in 1821.

Gandy estimated in 1817 that they would realise between £8-900 each, after the publishers had taken their cut.<sup>56</sup>

The first edition of *Pompeiana* was a great success: all 750 of the copies printed (500 octavo, 250 quarto) were sold before the final numbers were even published and it was favourably reviewed in journals such as the *Eclectic Review*.<sup>57</sup> A new edition was published in 1821 and reprinted in 1824, and in 1827 it was translated into French.<sup>58</sup> Gell's reputation was now securely established as the leading English authority on Pompeii; Gandy's role in the publication, by contrast, seems swiftly to have been forgotten by contemporaries. By 1826 Gell was planning a sequel or second edition which would cover the new material that had been excavated during the 1820s, but Gandy was no longer available to assist. In 1819 he had travelled out to Italy, presumably to visit both Gell and Pompeii,<sup>59</sup> but their surviving correspondence fizzles out that same year with the completion of *Pompeiana*. When it came to the preparation of the second series, Gell demurred from

---

<sup>56</sup> BL Add MS 63617 fol. 10 Gandy to Gell, 8 Jan. 1817; DRO D3287/3/1 in a letter to John Murray dated 3 Nov. 1828 he put the sum at £1,000 each for himself and Gandy and £2,000 for the publisher, i.e. a total profit of £4,000 clear of expenses. As he was trying to persuade Murray to take on the publication of the second series, he may have been somewhat generous in rounding up the final figures.

<sup>57</sup> *Eclectic Review*, 14 (Sept. 1820), 144-58.

<sup>58</sup> The text and illustrations of the 1821 and 1824 editions of *Pompeiana* were almost identical to the original 1817-19 edition, but a few additions were made to the text (including a key to the vignettes) and a revised map of the site as excavated in 1821 was provided. In the original version, as a result of the rather haphazard way in which Gell sent copy to Gandy, material on the House of Actaeon, for example, was located in two different sections. This was reordered for the 1821 edition.

<sup>59</sup> John Gandy signed the visitor's book for Queen Caroline when she took up residence briefly in Rome on the Aventine Hill, following the death of George III: Fraser, *Unruly Queen*, 344 (above, n. 39). John Soane jun. reported that he had met John Gandy in Naples 1819 in a letter to his father: Bolton (ed.), *Portrait of Sir John Soane*, 286 (above, n. 51).

asking Gandy to oversee the process of engraving the images and the printing of the text on the grounds that he was too taken up by his architectural commissions; he did, however, ensure that he was sent a complimentary copy on publication.<sup>60</sup>

This second edition of *Pompeiana*, written by Gell alone chiefly between 1826-8, was eventually published in 1832. Whereas the earlier volume had been essentially thematic in approach, discussing the different *types* of building to be found – tombs, temples, public architecture and domestic architecture – the second edition focussed upon individual buildings, and in particular the wall paintings and mosaics with which they were decorated.<sup>61</sup> Gell's thinking evolved, unsurprisingly, between the two editions: the second edition, building upon what had already been covered in the first version, was more antiquarian in tone and provided less in the way of contextual information, this having been provided in the earlier edition. His personal experiences in Spain, Greece and Asia Minor also shone through even more clearly in this volume, particularly in discussion of baths and bathing practices, and, perhaps because Gandy was no longer at his elbow, fewer concessions were made to the reader in terms of explanation or background.<sup>62</sup> Gell was deeply aware that much of what he had witnessed in the excavations had already disappeared and still more was exceedingly vulnerable to damage and decay. For all that the volume was conceived in order to make money, part of his motive was, unequivocally, to put on record a memorial of the fragile antiquities and their transient beauty before they were totally destroyed. Without Gandy to assist him in negotiations with publishers, Gell turned to another of his correspondents, the Egyptologist, Thomas Young, who on Gell's behalf, approached John

---

<sup>60</sup> Gandy himself inherited the Deering estate from a friend in 1828, changing his name and his lifestyle to that of a landed gentleman and MP. On Gandy see G. W. Burnet, 'Deering [Gandy], John Peter (1787-1850)', rev. A. Pimlott Baker, *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Oxford University Press, 2004; online edn, May 2006 [<http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/7420>, accessed 20 Aug. 2014]

<sup>61</sup> The preparatory notebooks are at the Getty 2002 M 16; the manuscript of the actual text at DRO D3287/3/1. The drawings for the third edition are at the Sir John Soane Museum.

<sup>62</sup> *Pompeiana* (1832), i, 86-7, 112, 121, 132, 140.

Murray, by then well known as a leading publisher of travel literature.<sup>63</sup> Murray turned the volume down, but recommended instead the firm of Jennings and Chaplin,<sup>64</sup> who responded to the proposal with enthusiasm.<sup>65</sup> Gell earned a further £500 for the sale of the copyright of this second edition: sufficient, as he noted with some satisfaction, to clear almost all the debts which were still hanging over him following the bankruptcy of his bankers Stracey, Sibbald and Marsh in 1824. This, he estimated, had cost him around £1,000 in total.<sup>66</sup>

*Pompeiana*, then, in both its editions, was a means of paying the bills, but by the 1820s it was also a means through which Gell maintained his social position amongst the expatriate community in Naples. He was very much aware of his reputation as the pre-eminent British authority upon Pompeii. This much is evident in his instructions to the editor and engravers of the second edition to *Pompeiana* where his concern for high production standards was directly related to the need to preserve and enhance his reputation as the resident expert on Pompeii. It was this that ensured so many visitors to the region were anxious to make his acquaintance, in order to be shown round the city by Gell himself.<sup>67</sup> Bulwer Lytton and Sir Walter Scott were the most famous of these tourists and their visits have already been well documented and discussed elsewhere, but there were many more.<sup>68</sup> Towards the end of his life, when incapacitated by gout and rheumatoid arthritis, Gell made a point of requesting his friend Lady Blessington to warn anyone whom she

---

<sup>63</sup> On the friendship between Young and Gell see Thompson, *Sir Gardner Wilkinson and his Circle* (above, n. 8). Young died in 1830 which caused Gell some problems in the remote supervision of the publication: see DRO 3287/3/1.

<sup>64</sup> BL Add MS 63618 fol. 13, Thomas Young to Gell, 30 Jan. 1829.

<sup>65</sup> BL Add MS 63618 fol. 19, Robert Jennings to Gell, 6 Aug. 1829.

<sup>66</sup> DRO 258/50/134 Gell to Philip Gell.,15 Apr. 1830.

<sup>67</sup> D3287/3/1 correspondence relating to *Pompeiana* (1832): 'Notes for the engraver' and 'Notes for the Editor'.

<sup>68</sup> J. C. Corson (ed.), *Reminiscences of Sir Walter Scott's Residence in Italy, 1832* (London, 1957); on Bulwer Lytton see above, n. 1.

furnished with a letter of recommendation, that he was effectively house-bound and could no longer provide a guided tour of Pompeii, explaining that ‘it only makes enemies, if the people will not recollect that I am lame’.<sup>69</sup> His social position, reputation and identity hinged around his role as the interpreter of Pompeii.

### ***Pompeiana* and domestic life**

Conventionally it has been assumed, on the basis of the preface, that whilst Gell provided the drawings for the *Pompeiana* of 1817-19, the literary part, with the exception of the first essay on the historical background of Pompeii and the Campania, was written by Gandy. This assumption is, in fact, misleading.<sup>70</sup> Whilst it is true that Gandy argued for and wrote the historical essay on Vesuvius (with the assistance of Sir Henry Englefield) and produced the actual text to accompany Gell’s images, the ‘literary part’ for which he was ostensibly responsible was heavily indebted to Gell’s researches. Gell had left his sketches and notes from his first visit with Gandy in England and sent him additional material in note form. This Gandy divided up, compiling thematic sections to be published by number, in consultation with Englefield. The relevant notebooks do not survive, but Gandy was clearly almost entirely reliant on Gell’s material, with occasional reference to other published sources, not least because at this stage he himself had not actually visited Italy, let alone Pompeii. Gandy’s letters to Gell urged upon him the necessity of speed, and of differentiating their product from that of their rivals, or, as Gandy called them, their adversaries.<sup>71</sup> He constantly applied to Gell for further information and clarification upon points of detail – and substantive fact – that were missing from

---

<sup>69</sup> Madden (ed.), *Literary Life and Correspondence*, ii, 85 (above, n. 9), William Gell to Countess of Blessington, 10 Mar. 1834.

<sup>70</sup> *Pompeiana* (1817-19), xvi. See, for example, Salmon, *Building on Ruins*, 78 (above, n. 42).

<sup>71</sup> BL Add MS 63617 fol. 10 Gandy to Gell, 8 Jan. 1817; fol. 21 Gandy to Gell, 17 Oct. 1817; fol. 23 15 Nov. 1817 Gandy warned Gell that he knew of two other volumes on Pompeii that were in preparation which it was important to pre-empt.

his notes.<sup>72</sup> A number of Gell's longstanding preoccupations may also be traced through the text, such as his interest in the structure of the city walls (and specifically their Pelasgian origins) and the archaeological evidence for the Oscan, Samnite and Greek settlements which were antecedent to the Roman colony.<sup>73</sup>

Gell later explained to William Hamilton, secretary to the Society of Dilettanti, how he had agreed with Gandy that the latter should oversee the production of the book and deal with the artists and engravers from London because he had more experience in that line of business: Gandy certainly showed a shrewd sense of what the public would expect and what would appeal to the prospective readership.<sup>74</sup> As he reminded Gell, he had a better idea of what would 'take', being on the spot in London.<sup>75</sup> *Pompeiana* was always conceived as a guide for the interested traveller as well as the antiquary, but Gandy was nonetheless keenly aware of the visual appearance of the book as a whole and the power of individual images. It was he who came up with the attractive vignettes, based upon illustrations from the *Antichità di Ercolano*, and who pressed Gell to ensure

---

<sup>72</sup> The comparison of the image of an eagle seizing a hare on the fountain at the Trivii outside the House of Pansa to the acroteria of the temple of Nemesis at Rhamnus, which depicted a griffon pouncing on a hart, may well have originated with Gandy, as the temple was one of the sites which he studied in some detail on the Dilettanti Mission, *Pompeiana* (1817-19), 168. The observation that 'to this day' roadside fountains are to be found in Turkey 'for the convenience and refreshment of the traveller' is almost certainly from Gell, who was always alert for signs of the persistence of customs from antiquity in the culture of modern Turkey.

*Pompeiana* (1817-19), 160.

<sup>73</sup> See, for example, *Pompeiana* (1817-19), 106. For Gell's views on city walls see *Le mure di Roma diseguate da Sir W. Gell, illustrate con testo note da A. Nibby* (Rome, 1820) and his *Probestücke von Städtewauern des alten Griechenlands ...Aus dem Englischen übersetzt* (Tübingen, 1831). This drew on and amplified comments made in earlier publications relating to his Greek tours, as well as his (then) unpublished work on walls around Latium.

<sup>74</sup> Clay (ed.), *Sir William Gell in Italy*, 64 (above, n. 7).

<sup>75</sup> BL Add MS 63617 fol. 23 Gandy to Gell 15 Nov. 1817.

that prospect views, like that of the amphitheatre, included an image of Vesuvius in the background, in order to enhance the appeal. People look for Vesuvius in views, he pointed out, but its familiar contours appeared in very few of the images that Gell had produced thus far: Gell was to provide one which Gandy would have engraved so that ‘we may attract admiration’.<sup>76</sup> **Figure 1 near here** Much was made of Gell’s use of the camera lucida – recently patented in 1807 by William Hyde Wollaston – which enabled him to produce architectural drawings of unprecedented accuracy and authenticity.<sup>77</sup>

Maps and plans were becoming increasingly standard in guidebooks by the early nineteenth century so these were not such unusual feature in themselves, but the street-plans of Pompeii showing the layout of the town and the extent of the excavation, and the level of detail provided for individual buildings, were a new departure in English texts.<sup>78</sup> Prior to Gell and Gandy’s publication, ground plans of individual buildings had been published by Piranesi and the Abbé de Saint Non, but there was nothing so useful to refer to in the guidebooks and topographical literature for British travellers. Indeed, until the excavations under the Murats not enough of the town had been uncovered to render the overall layout intelligible. Gell and Gandy’s depiction of Pompeii broke new ground, representing it as a functioning town: they evaluated the defensive strength of the city and its vulnerability to attack and carefully analysed the location of the major public buildings, their proximity to commercial and domestic structures, and the relationship between public and private space.

From the first discovery of Pompeii, its appeal had rested overwhelmingly upon the insights it offered into the private and domestic lives of the Romans and the opportunity it provided to engage imaginatively with the lives of ordinary Romans in the past. The excavations at Pompeii attracted considerable attention from the reading public: the space devoted to Pompeii and Herculaneum in the published travel literature on Italy is indicative, but these texts were also extracted in the periodical press, with a particular emphasis on the

---

<sup>76</sup> BL Add MS 63617 fol. 23 v Gandy to Gell, 15 Nov. 1817.

<sup>77</sup> *Pompeiana* (1817-19), xvi.

<sup>78</sup> Romanelli’s guidebook *Viaggio a Pompei a Pesto* had included one map of the city of Pompeii (above, n. 23).

domestic dimension, and news of recent finds were reported in the newspapers.<sup>79</sup> Thus the connection between Pompeii and ancient domesticity was already well established amongst the wider reading public by the early nineteenth century. In order to appeal to this popular taste, Gell and Gandy promised the readers of *Pompeiana* not just the latest information on the excavations but an account of the ‘domestic economy’ of the Romans.<sup>80</sup> In their correspondence Gandy pressed Gell for more detail on the gritty realities of day-to-day life, or for some ‘dissertation or essay upon the state of the houses when found with the sort of arrangement saying the beds do not remain untumbled or the stools unwormeaten’.<sup>81</sup> Gell, unsurprisingly, failed to describe any unmade beds, but the reader was informed that they were generally made of ‘carpets and vests’ spread upon the ground.<sup>82</sup> On re-visiting Pompeii in 1815, having last been there in 1802/3, Gell was much taken by the recent discovery of the mills and the bread ovens in the insula occupied by the House of Pansa, describing them in a letter to his brother in some detail with an analysis of how they functioned, accompanied by a sketch. Gandy evidently recognised the inherent interest of this example of domestic technology and pressed Gell for more information on their appearance and how they were operated.<sup>83</sup> The bread ovens featured in one of the plates, and along with the carbonised flour and loaf of bread bearing the name of the baker, the description of the baker’s shop became one of the set pieces of the tourist itinerary.<sup>84</sup> **(Figure 2 near here)** Despite their best efforts, however, Gell and Gandy were criticised in the pages of the *Eclectic*

---

<sup>79</sup> For example, extracts from Starke, *Letters from Italy* were published in the *Belle Assemblée* (Nov. 1820), 223-4; extracts from Chetwode Eustace, *Classical Tour* were published in the *Weekly Entertainer*, 10 June 1816, 464-6; and from T. Watkins, *Travels through Switzerland, Italy, Sicily, the Greek Islands to Constantinople, Greece, Ragusa, and the Dalmatian Isles*, 2 vols (2<sup>nd</sup> edn, London, 1794) in the *Weekly Entertainer*, 15 Nov. 1813, 197-8.

<sup>80</sup> *Pompeiana* (1817-19), xxiii ‘Advertisement’.

<sup>81</sup> BL Add MS 63617 fol. 16, Gandy to Gell, 15 May 1816.

<sup>82</sup> *Pompeiana* (1817-19), 164.

<sup>83</sup> BL Add MS 63617 fol. 1v Gandy to Gell, 15 Apr. 1817.

<sup>84</sup> *Pompeiana* (1817-19), 189-90 and plate 37.

*Review* in 1820 for not providing *more* information upon the circumstances in which objects, and bodies, were found.<sup>85</sup>

Part of the appeal of the bread ovens lay in the extraordinary sense of continuity and familiarity which they represented: the preparation and consumption of bread, the staff of life, was a bond that linked past and present, and something with which all could identify. But it was the fact that life had been extinguished so suddenly, whilst preserving its outward form, that particularly captivated visitors (and readers), and there was, as a result, a morbid curiosity to see not just the material evidence of everyday life, but the bodies of those who had inhabited the city. The imminent danger of death and the terror of its unheralded arrival needed to be apprehended more immediately. Such skeletons and bodies as were found were, of course, described in some detail, and where possible a narrative of desperate escape and pathetic suffering was projected onto the bodies. The emphasis on skeletons found and the impressions left in the ashes by dead bodies is characteristic of almost every account of the city, published and unpublished, from the later eighteenth century onwards.<sup>86</sup> Many of these bodies acquired a new posthumous fame, and were vivified, only to die again, in *The Last Days of Pompeii*. There was the woman's body found near the traces of a boiler – perhaps, speculated William Forbes, a washerwoman;<sup>87</sup> the body of a man discovered with a pickaxe by the Temple of Isis – presumably desperately trying to hack his way through a building to escape, transformed by Bulwer

---

<sup>85</sup> *Eclectic Review*, 14 (Sept 1820), 147: 'We mean, any appearances particularly striking as indicating the last situation or employments of the inhabitants, at the time the city was overwhelmed; such as, the positions of the skeletons sometimes found, unfinished processes of any kind of employment, situations of furniture and utensils, as shewing what had been their most recent use, circumstances attending the attempted escape of persons who had failed in that attempt, -- any thing, in short the most adapted to place the imagination the directest manner in the living scene, just before it was suddenly covered with the black veil'.

<sup>86</sup> On reactions to and interpretations of the various finds of human bodies, see Dwyer, *Pompeii's Living Statues*, especially pp. 1-24 (above, n. 5) with regard to the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries.

<sup>87</sup> NLS MS 1542 fos 27-8 journal of Sir William Forbes, Mar. 1793

Lytton into the greedy priest, Calenus;<sup>88</sup> the group gathered together in the cellar of the suburban villa (which became the Villa of Diomedes where Julia, Clodius and others took refuge);<sup>89</sup> and the bodies of those discovered with bags of money, jewels and artefacts, evidently attempting to flee with their worldly goods from impending destruction.<sup>90</sup> Most famous of all was the entirely apocryphal skeleton holding a lance found by the principal gate of the city, described by Gell in 1819 and transformed by Edward John Poynter, via Bulwer Lytton, into the sentinel ‘faithful unto death’.<sup>91</sup> But overall relatively few bodies had been found.<sup>92</sup> Travellers and antiquaries were puzzled as to why there was not more evidence of the human suffering and mortality that must have been the consequence of the eruption. Mariana Starke, for example, had observed with evident surprise in her account of 1800 that only forty skeletons had been found, a fact which she attributed to so little of the site having been excavated at that stage.<sup>93</sup> Given that part of the appeal of Pompeii was to reflect upon the fragility of human existence and man’s futility in the face of the

---

<sup>88</sup> Edward Bulwer Lytton, *The Last Days of Pompeii* (London, 1906), 390.

<sup>89</sup> Bulwer Lytton, *Last Days of Pompeii*, 392 (above, n. 87).

<sup>90</sup> *Last Days of Pompeii and Pompeiana* (1817-19), 96, 248; P. Beckford, *Letters and Observations Written in a Short Tour through France and Italy by a Gentleman* (Salisbury, 1786), 89-90.

<sup>91</sup> *Pompeiana* (1817-19), 94: ‘within this recess was formed 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 or quitting it for the more ignominious death which, in conformity with the severe discipline of his country, would have awaited him.’ See L. Behlman, ‘The sentinel of Pompeii: an exemplum for the nineteenth century’, in Gardner Coates and Syedl (eds.), *Antiquity Recovered*, 157-70 (above, n. 4) and Dwyer, *Pompeii’s Living Statues*, 12-13 (above, n. 5).

<sup>92</sup> Hamilton, ‘Account of Pompeii’ had suggested that the small number of bodies discovered was due to the fact that there had been sufficient warning of the imminent danger for most of the inhabitants to flee the city in advance of the devastation. A narrative of sudden and total destruction was more compelling, however.

<sup>93</sup> Starke, *Letters from Italy*, ii, 109 (above, n. 17).

overwhelming forces of nature, the absence of bodies which could provide an individualised and tangible point of connection to the experience was a disappointment. One of the reasons that Gandy had pressed for an account of the eruption of Vesuvius was that it would offer a chance to explain to the reader why more bodies had not been uncovered: at this point it was still believed, on the evidence of the Younger Pliny, that there had been sufficient time for many of the inhabitants to make an escape by sea.<sup>94</sup> It was also assumed, on the basis of a decree from the Emperor Titus, that many inhabitants returned shortly after the eruption to locate the bodies for ritual burial of relatives who had failed to escape. Nonetheless, Gell still found it necessary to return to this theme in the second edition of *Pompeiana* where, echoing Mariana Starke, he again justified the small number of skeletons, explaining that in terms of the proportion of the site excavated and the known size of the population of Pompeii at the time, one could not reasonably expect to find a larger number.<sup>95</sup>

*Pompeiana* offered ‘restorations’ or reconstructions of both the interior and exterior of the buildings. This was by no means unprecedented: Piranesi had notably made a name for himself by his reconstructions of Roman public buildings and had also produced typically imaginative reconstructions of the theatre at Herculaneum. The Abbé de Saint Non’s *Voyage pittoresque* had also offered a striking range of set-piece reconstructions of the

---

<sup>94</sup> Dwyer, *Pompeii’s Living Statues*, 22 (above, n. 5) ; Cooley, *Pompeii*, 36-49 (above, n. 13); Lazer, *Resurrecting Pompeii*, 66-95 (above, n. 1).

<sup>95</sup> *Pompeiana* (1817-19), xix: Gell noted that it was surprising that so few skeletons (c. 160 in total) had been discovered but pointed out that as only around 1/8 of the city had been uncovered, that meant that there may have been a total of around 1,300 killed in the eruption. Given that the circuit of the city was only two miles in extent, and that much of the interior was occupied by public buildings, he suggested that this represented a significant proportion of the total population. In his updates on the excavations to the Society of Dilettanti, Gell also reported additional finds of skeletons which could be ‘added to the list’, see Clay (ed.), *Sir William Gell in Italy*, 41 (above, n. 7).

public buildings that had been excavated at that date,<sup>96</sup> while Mazois provided idealised visions of architecturally perfect structures. These were not, however, publications that were available to any but the well-heeled collector or which could conceivably be consulted upon the spot. Moreover, what was offered in both editions of *Pompeiana* was a reconstruction of the private, domestic space and its furnishings, rather than designs for aspiring architects. Gell and Gandy were responding to a curiosity that had already been expressed by visitors: in 1781 John Moore had suggested that

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.<sup>97</sup>

This proposal was repeated by John Chetwode Eustace in his *Classical Tour* where he suggested that objects should be left in situ in the houses in order to enable the visitor better to imagine the domestic space and convey more powerfully the immediacy of the encounter with the ancient world that Pompeii offered.<sup>98</sup> The illustrations of *Pompeiana*, such as the restoration of the atrium of the House of Pansa, offered a virtual, if not

---

<sup>96</sup> The Temple of Isis, the ‘maison du campagne’, the Greek temple and the Soldiers’ barracks.

<sup>97</sup> Moore, *View of Society and Manners in Italy*, ii, 178-9 (above, n. 19). Chateaubriand famously made a similar suggestion fifteen years later in 1804: F.R. de Chateaubriand, *Travels in America and Italy*, 2 vols (London, 1828), ii, 253-4 quoted in P. Fritzsche, *Stranded in the Present. Modern Time and the Melancholy of History* (Cambridge MA, 2004), 100.

<sup>98</sup> Chetwode Eustace, *Classical Tour*, iii, 67 (above, n. 14); Gell also repeated the suggestion that objects be left in situ and regretted the Neapolitans’ insistence upon removing everything of interest to the museum at Portici, *Pompeiana* (1817-19), 14.

a physical reconstruction, and provided English readers for the first time with a vivid insight into the domestic spaces and interior lives of the ancient Romans. **(Figure 3 near here)**

As Gell pointed out, even the form of Roman houses was little understood prior to the excavation of Pompeii, with antiquaries having to rely solely on the authority of Vitruvius.<sup>99</sup> His description of the basic form of the house around an internal courtyard was similar to that of a number of other visitors, but he sought also to account for the origins of this form in the need for protection from one's enemies in the early days of human society. He also recognised the advantages that such a design offered in terms of privacy, particularly the privacy of woman, which still persisted in eastern nations.<sup>100</sup> The discussions of the floor plans of the excavated houses, particularly in the 1832 edition, show Gell analysing the relationship between public and private space in terms of access from the street to different parts of the building, the different degrees of privacy that would ensue, and exploring the implications of such physical barriers for gender and social relations.<sup>101</sup> His interest in the internal ordering of space continued to manifest itself in the letters sent to the Dilettanti Society during the 1830s in which he reported upon recent excavations, such as the House of the Faun, where he highlighted, for example, the unusual feature of its having two doors between the street and the vestibule.<sup>102</sup> He had perceptive comments to make with regard to the spatial segregation of the sexes within the home, often drawing upon his experience of travel in Asia Minor, where, on one occasion, he had penetrated the harem of the local pasha in error, much to the amusement of the women and the

---

<sup>99</sup> *Pompeiana* (1817-19), 146. This was something of an over-statement on Gell's part; other accounts, e.g. R. Castell *Villas of the Ancients Illustrated* (London, 1728) had drawn on sources such as Pliny the Younger.

<sup>100</sup> *Pompeiana* (1817-19), 140-2.

<sup>101</sup> *Pompeiana* (1832), ii, 18 with reference to the house of the Dioscuri 'the passage EE afforded a private entrance to the third of most distant house, without passing through any part of the central division, which had no immediate communication with the street, and was consequently the inner apartment.'

<sup>102</sup> Clay (ed.), *Sir William Gell in Italy*, 39 (above, n. 7).

horror of the men.<sup>103</sup> Like the eastern nations, he wrote, the people of ancient Greece and Rome were jealous of their women and put them in the most remote part of the house in an internal courtyard, accessible only through another [courtyard].<sup>104</sup> In the 1832 edition he used the story told by Lysias in defence of Euphiletēs who had killed, Sosastratus, whom he had caught in adultery with his wife, to elaborate further upon how interior space was used and demarcated in the ancient world, concluding that, even if children were sometimes accommodated on the ground floor for convenience, women's apartments were always on the upper floor.<sup>105</sup>

In both the editions of *Pompeiana* Gell combined colour, objects, and the physical structure of the buildings in written and graphic form to recreate an intriguing vision of richly furnished Roman interiors. Whilst later artists such as Alma Tadema took inspiration from Gell's images to produce highly imaginative visions of Roman interiors, Gell was scrupulous in depicting only such elements for which archaeological evidence survived: the curtains, which he depicted in the restoration of the House of the Tragic Poet, were no imaginary ornament, he emphasised, rather, their presence was based upon the evidence of carbonised rods and iron curtain rings from which draperies would have been suspended that had been discovered in Herculaneum in 1828.<sup>106</sup> **(Figure 4 near here)** In interpreting the material evidence of the excavations and attempting to reconstruct the practices of Roman domestic life, much of the evidence that Gell drew upon in both the first and the second editions of *Pompeiana* was textual as well as archaeological: he drew heavily on Plautus and Juvenal, for example, for insights into daily life, combining Juvenal's comments on window shutters and the use of curtains to cover the chinks with the archaeological evidence for glazed windows.<sup>107</sup> Thus the evidence of material culture enabled antiquaries such as Gell to reread traditional literary sources

---

<sup>103</sup> W. Gell, *The Topography of Troy, and its Vicinity* (London, 1804), 9.

<sup>104</sup> *Pompeiana* (1817-19), 142.

<sup>105</sup> *Pompeiana* (1832), i, 152-3.

<sup>106</sup> *Pompeiana* (1832), i, 160, ii, 99 and plate 37. See also Getty notebook 2002 M 16 leaf 39 r.

<sup>107</sup> *Pompeiana* (1817-19), 164.

with a different research agenda. Without the tangible evidence of the triclinia, the cooking and eating utensils, or the remains of the very food that was to be eaten, questions such as the use of table cloths and napkins amongst the ancients or the proprieties of mixed dining, upon which Gell enlightened his readers, had never previously attracted much attention from antiquaries.<sup>108</sup> Post-*Pompeiana* this would change, and one has only to read descriptions of hospitality chez Glaucus or Diomed in *Last Days of Pompeii* or Nicholas Wiseman's accounts of feasting in Roman households in *Fabiola: or the Church of the Catacombs* to see how far-reaching the influence of Gell's evocation of domestic dining was.

Gandy and Gell also evidently shared an interest in the more prosaic aspects of everyday life. In their own correspondence they enjoyed discussing the domestic arrangements for bodily functions: 'pray do describe me what sort of place was the necessary a la mode ou anglais or did you contrive matters by sitting across a stick?'<sup>109</sup> A month later Gandy renewed his plea for Gell's views on 'whether it is probable they used chamber pots or pissed into the compluvium whether each house had a bogger or if you do not think the outside of the door was the midnight place of deposit for the cacatorial exuberance'.<sup>110</sup> Gandy's scatological delight in cacatorial exuberance was absent from the published version, but in the notes for the plan of the House of Actaeon there was a discreet allusion to the commode in the women's apartments, near the kitchen as 'a conveniency, according to modern, at least English ideas, most inconveniently situated. The wood work of the seat is gone: the marks for the hinges, and fastening to the door, may be observed.' In ancient Italy, observed Gell delicately, as in modern Italy and Greece, 'a proximity between the ultimate receptacle of the aliments and their place of preparation was considered desirable'.<sup>111</sup> Nonetheless, it was sufficient to shock

---

<sup>108</sup> *Pompeiana* (1832), i, 58.

<sup>109</sup> BL Add MS 63617 fol. 14 Gandy to Gell, 15 May 1817.

<sup>110</sup> BL Add MS 63617 fol. 16 Gandy to Gell, 15 May 1817.

<sup>111</sup> *Pompeiana* (1817-19), 173. See also *Pompeiana* (1832), i, p. 170. Subsequent representations displayed greater prudery: Mary Beard in *Pompeii: the Life of a Roman Town* (London, 2008), 88 takes Bulwer Lytton to task for idealising the house of the tragic poet as a 'luxurious bachelor pad' and failing to note the proximity

the sense of propriety of the *Eclectic Review*, whose reviewer complained of the ‘strange want of good order and good taste in arrangements involving the decencies of civilized life’.<sup>112</sup> The ‘convenience’ was illustrated in a vignette at the start of the chapter, but being labelled simply as ‘kitchen in the House of Actaeon’, the uninitiated reader would not have been aware of its significance.<sup>113</sup> **(Figure 5 near here)** Interestingly, there was less reticence in detailing the number of ‘public cloacinae’ in Rome: Gell quoted the figure of 144 plus the Sellae Patroclianae, a figure which similarly featured in other texts by Joseph Forsyth and Richard Phillips.<sup>114</sup> References to public conveniences could be seen as part of the Roman system of urban sanitation and waste management and an index of good order; descriptions of the intimately domestic details of the Romans’ private lives, however, could not be justified in such terms and were rarely referred to.<sup>115</sup>

### ***Pompeiana: art and architecture***

Within the houses Gell was particularly fascinated by the wall-paintings, and this interest only increased over time. In the 1830s, before he died, he was planning a third volume on Pompeii, which would have focused purely upon the paintings, in which he tried, unsuccessfully, to interest the Society of Antiquaries.<sup>116</sup> Earlier visitors had always been forcibly struck by the profusion of artwork and by the brightness of the colours: the vivid hues of the ancient city were not something that antiquarian scholarship had recognised prior to the

---

of kitchen and lavatory in Pompeian houses; the lavatory was also omitted from the Pompeii Court at Crystal Palace in 1854.

<sup>112</sup> *Eclectic Review*, 14 (Sept. 1820), 156.

<sup>113</sup> In the 1821 explanatory text for the vignettes was provided in an appendix where the reader was informed that ‘This representation of a Pompeian convenience is described on page 174’, *Pompeiana* (1821), 270.

<sup>114</sup> J. Forsyth, *Remarks on Antiquities, Arts and Letters, during an Excursion in Italy, in the Years 1802 and 1803*, 2<sup>nd</sup> edn (London, 1816), 174; R. Phillips, *Geography Illustrated on a Popular Plan* (London, 1820), 209.

<sup>115</sup> Forsyth, unusually, mentioned being shown the ‘water closet’ by the guide at the suburban villa, *Remarks on Antiquities*, 306 (above, n. 114).

<sup>116</sup> Clay (ed.), *Sir William Gell in Italy*, 46, 67, 71 (above, n. 7).

excavations at Pompeii and Herculaneum and as more and more was uncovered the ubiquity of colour became increasingly evident. Prior to the publication of *Pompeiana*, few British travellers had described the paintings of Pompeii in any detail, however: some picked out memorable highlights such as the grasshopper drawing a chariot which had been transferred to Portici and others commented on the ‘Chinese’ effect of some of the designs from Herculaneum.<sup>117</sup> But for the most part their comments were vague and generic, simply emphasising the ‘freshness’ (the consequence of the walls being doused with water by the guides) and the brightness of the colour scheme. Some, who had read their Vitruvius, like the Scottish banker, Sir William Forbes, echoed his comments on the degradation of taste and descent into grotesquerie under Augustus: ‘what seems extraordinary’, wrote Forbes in his journal, ‘is, that among a people whose buildings were many of them so uncommonly fine the ornaments in Architecture in those paintings are universally in a bad taste; the Columns Slender & out of all Proportion; with no sort of regard to perspective’.<sup>118</sup>

Gell, however, refused to accept the Vitruvian verdict and identified a fundamental inconsistency in his condemnation of the substitution of reeds and foliage for pillars and pediments, given that the Corinthian order was itself a stylised interpretation of the acanthus:

That architect inveighed in vain against the custom of thus adorning the walls of houses with representations, which he declares not to interest the mind: he liked not the substitution of the slender reed, or candelabra form pillar, in the place of the more regular but massive column; nor foliated twists for the formal pediment; and, forgetting the Corinthian capital,

---

<sup>117</sup> Norfolk Record Office MS 20677, 148, journal of Robert Harvey, 1773; Miller, *Letters from Italy*, ii, 280-1 (above, n. 11); NLS MS 6327 fol. 57v, journal of Sir James Hall.

<sup>118</sup> Vitruvius, *The Ten Books on Architecture*, transl. M.H. Morgan (New York, 1960), 211-3; journal of Sir William Forbes NLS MS 1542 fol. 24.

could not approve of that mixture of foliage and volutes with semi-animals, the remains of which are among the most admired fragments of architectural antiquity.<sup>119</sup>

Nor was he receptive to the arguments against the Romans' use of coloured marble: again, the vivid hues of the stucco covering interior walls and columns, as well as the colour of the marble itself, had provoked considerable surprise amongst visitors. But Gell was a pioneer, with his friend Charles Cockerell, in arguing that modern interpretations of antiquity were mistaken in assuming that buildings and statues had been chastely white, asserting that 'no nation ever exhibited a greater passion for gaudy colours, with which, in the absence of the rarer marbles, they [the ancient Greeks] covered the surface of the beautiful pentelic. Blue is mixed with white in one of their best examples, the temple of Minerva Polias, at Athens; while even their statues were seldom left colourless'.<sup>120</sup> Gell was, in fact, the first British observer to give detailed attention to the full range of Pompeii's wall paintings in print: even in the first edition more than twenty per cent of the plates were devoted to the mural paintings and decorations; in the second edition the proportion was considerably higher (around fifty per cent) reflecting his developing interest in ancient art, as well as the quality of the paintings that recent excavations had revealed. However, he warned against the expectation of finding art works of outstanding quality: Pompeii, the reader was reminded, 'was but a small town, and, in all probability, contained no celebrated specimen of any artist of consequence': masterpieces of ancient art were not to be expected.<sup>121</sup> Gell could, in fact, be highly critical of some of the paintings that were uncovered: the

---

<sup>119</sup> *Pompeiana* (1817-19), 158; compare with Donaldson, *Pompeii Illustrated with Picturesque Views*, 4 (above, n. 49), where Vitruvius' critique was wholly endorsed: Pompeii's decorations 'particularly in the ornamental part, partake of the bad taste that was introduced into Rome after the time of Augustus, and is, with so much justice, censured by Vitruvius'. However, Gell was not the only architect/antiquary to question Vitruvian orthodoxy in this period: see Winsor Liscombe, *William Wilkins*, 77-8 (above, n. 30).

<sup>120</sup> *Pompeiana* (1817-19), 160 footnote.

<sup>121</sup> *Pompeiana* (1817-19), 155. Joseph Forsyth had made a similar point with regard to the paintings in Portici a few years earlier in *Remarks on Antiquities*, 288 (above, n. 114) : 'yet against these unfortunate pictures critics

sacrifice of Iphigenia was not, in his opinion, a pleasing painting and the side walls in the Chamber of Leda were gaudy and glaring.<sup>122</sup> At the House of the Faun, he reported to the Dilettanti in 1831, the only paintings were ‘vile imitations of imaginary marbles which cover the walls in glaring colours’.<sup>123</sup>

The 1832 volume, upon which Bulwer Lytton drew so heavily for his descriptions of Glaucus’ house, focussed upon the paintings in what was then known as the House of the Tragic Poet, including scenes such as Achilles restoring Briseis, where Gell particularly admired the delicacy of colouring – surpassing Titian – in Briseis’ face and garments, and the ‘forceful manliness’ of Achilles’ expression. **(Figure 6 near here)** The painting of Leda presenting her progeny to Tyndareus in the same house, he deemed to be one of the most beautiful productions of ancient art, ‘estimable for the elegance of its design and composition’ and excelling other paintings ‘in chastity and harmony of colour’.<sup>124</sup> Whilst these dramatic mythological scenes were his primary focus, he was also appreciative of the delicacy and elegance of the more ornamental mural

---

bring all the rules of the art, they subject them to a second ordeal; they examine colours which had been flying off like brick-dust as sharply as they examine the best preserved Titian; they compare these shadows of a shade with statues found in the same town, compare panels painted by provincial artists, with bronzes which may have been cast at Rome or Athens, and thus rank the ancients as much below us in painting, as they excelled us in sculpture’. Gell and Gandy were certainly familiar with and referred to the travelogues by Mariana Starke (whom Gell knew personally) and John Chetwode Eustace, but never referred to Forsyth’s volume. Forsyth also shared Gell’s preoccupation with tracing the influence of the original Greek colony on Roman Pompeii.

<sup>122</sup> *Pompeiana* (1832), ii, 118.

<sup>123</sup> Clay (ed.), *Sir William Gell in Italy*, 40 (above, n. 7).

<sup>124</sup> *Pompeiana* (1832), i, 171. Gell’s positive evaluation followed that of the German artist Ternite who had first alerted Gell to their discovery: Madden (ed.), *Literary Life and Correspondence*, ii, 81 (above, n. 9).

decorations, such as the trompe l'oeil of the 'pseudo garden' or viridarium at the House of Actaeon where the back wall was painted with pilasters, shrubs and trellis work.<sup>125</sup> **(Figure 7 near here)**

There is no sense in which Gell anticipated August Mau's fourfold chronological classification of the wall paintings in Pompeii: he failed to identify any stylistic shifts or chronological development.<sup>126</sup> For all that he intended to produce a history of 'ancient painting' based upon his study of Pompeii, his history would have been largely descriptive rather than art historical in approach: his main interests were in the aesthetic properties of the paintings and their potential value as 'authentic' sources to illustrate ancient texts such as Homer (rather than relying on the 'fancy' of contemporary artists).<sup>127</sup> In his analysis of the paintings, Gell gave close attention to the colour: he drew upon Sir Humphry Davy's chemical analysis of the pigments used by the ancients in the *Philosophical Transactions* (1815), emphasising the great range, in addition to the ubiquitous vermilion, which were employed at Pompeii.<sup>128</sup> He was fascinated by the way in which even the smallest rooms were lined with stucco and painted in brilliant hues: the colour plates in *Pompeiana* were a dramatic – and provocative – illustration of the vivid saturation of colour which Pompeii must have presented in its heyday.<sup>129</sup> It was a style that he apparently replicated in his home: 'I have done it in all the bright staring colours I could get, a sort of thing between Etruscan and Pompeii'.<sup>130</sup> But there was more to

---

<sup>125</sup> *Pompeiana* (1817-19), 177-8.

<sup>126</sup> A. Mau, *Pompeii: its Life and Art* (London, 1982).

<sup>127</sup> *Pompeiana* (1832), ii, 106.

<sup>128</sup> On Davy's work see S. Rees Jones, 'Early experiments in pigment analysis', *Studies in Conservation*, 35:2 (1990), 93-101.

<sup>129</sup> *Pompeiana* (1817-19), 154.

<sup>130</sup> Madden (ed.), *Literary Life and Correspondence*, ii, 56 (above, n. 9). Not all his visitors appreciated his taste, however: James Ramsay, in his sharply two-edged memoir of Gell, deprecated his want of taste and his fondness for overly bright colours and 'meretricious ornament': Ramsay, 'A sketch of the character of Sir William Gell', in Madden (ed.), *Literary Life and Correspondence*, ii, 18 (above, n. 9).

Gell's appreciation than simply an eye for colour and expression: other writers had criticised the absence of true perspective in the paintings and the lack of proper chiaroscuro; indeed Gell had acknowledged such problems in the first edition.<sup>131</sup> In the second edition he adopted a more historicised analysis, arguing that the effects of light and shade, so familiar in modern art, were a consequence of lives lived indoors in colder northern climes, where artists carefully controlled the amount of light allowed into a room in order to accentuate the contrasts of light and shade. The Romans and Greeks, however, had lived outside, where such contrasts were not to be found.<sup>132</sup> The repetitive similarity of the paintings, which was often complained of, was explained through the want of models available to emulate: the Romans copied only themselves and the Greeks, and the Greeks had only themselves and the occasional 'Amazon or Persian' to copy.<sup>133</sup>

As a confirmed graecophile, Gell predictably could not admire all that he encountered in Pompeii. Its principal interest for him lay in its pre-Roman origins (evident in the prefatory discussion of the city's history) and he subscribed firmly to the view that the architecture of the first century Roman world represented a clear declension from that of ancient Greece. 'In the temples of Greece, we view architecture in its purest and simplest form: in the age of Titus we see that it had already reached the last period of complication and decline. To trace the connecting links is not the intention of this work, though perhaps, or rather certainly the same causes operated throughout the chain; namely, the progress of society, and the changes of religion.'<sup>134</sup> In the first volume in particular, he had a number of sharp criticisms to make on the want of taste to be found in various features of the architectural design and decoration of Pompeian buildings: in the buildings of the forum, he observed, 'there may be little of its [ancient Greece's] purity; but traces still remain

---

<sup>131</sup> *Pompeiana* (1817-19), 158.

<sup>132</sup> *Pompeiana* (1832), i, 106, 155.

<sup>133</sup> *Pompeiana* (1832), ii, 106.

<sup>134</sup> *Pompeiana* (1817-19), 224.

sufficiently decisive to recall remembrances<sup>135</sup> but there was scant edification to be gained from observation of the buildings where columns ‘are continually, by means of plaster, altered from one species to another; and of course those proportions of diameter to height, which the eye expects to vary with the several orders, every where violated’.<sup>136</sup>

Over the years, however, his closer familiarity with the site engendered a more subtle and nuanced understanding of how Pompeii had evolved in its built form and of the apparent degeneration from the ideals prescribed by Vitruvius. Gell’s version of Pompeii was one that was human, not just because it was populated by people, but because he recognised the practical compromises that had had to be made in architectural design to accommodate the vagaries of topography and property ownership. The relationship of the diameter of columns to height was not, he pointed out, immutable, but highly contingent upon the requirements of the particular building and the place: columns were adapted to buildings, rather than buildings to columns.<sup>137</sup> His Pompeii was emphatically not a city of right angles and symmetry but multiple irregularities and it was jerry-built in parts, with poor building materials and techniques. The shafts of Doric columns were covered in stucco on the lower sections in order to protect the delicate fluting which was liable to be damaged by passing traffic – not simply because of a lamentable deficiency in Pompeian taste.<sup>138</sup> Gell’s analysis of the Pompeian structures brought him to the percipient conclusion that Vitruvian prescription was seldom achieved in practice and that architecture should be understood as a solution to the specific requirements of function and place rather than a uniform realization of idealized form.

His analysis of the baths which had been excavated in 1824 similarly highlighted the discrepancy between them and the Vitruvian models of architecture or, more recently, William Wilkins’ study of the baths at

---

<sup>135</sup> *Pompeiana* (1817-19), 196.

<sup>136</sup> *Pompeiana* (1817-19), 200.

<sup>137</sup> *Pompeiana* (1832), i, 70-1, 80.

<sup>138</sup> *Pompeiana* (1832), i, 136; ii, 95, 143.

Baden.<sup>139</sup> Once again Gell concluded that ‘facts’, or architectural principles, had to be adapted to the locality.<sup>140</sup> He emphasised the exceptionality of the enormous complexes of Rome, arguing that they had distorted subsequent understanding of how the baths were conventionally arranged in lesser towns such as Pompeii.<sup>141</sup> The remains at Pompeii, moreover, were particularly to be valued because, unusually, it was possible to identify with a reasonable degree of confidence the different elements of the complex, while their small scale rendered them more comprehensible. Gell was also able to draw upon his experience of travel in Asia Minor and in Spain and his considerable familiarity with the baths of the Ottoman Empire and Moorish Spain to elucidate the interpretation of the archaeological remains at Pompeii.<sup>142</sup> His awareness of the continuity of bathing as a cultural practice – the enervated luxury of the Greeks and Romans had been preserved by the Ottomans and the Moors long after it had been abandoned in the rest of Europe<sup>143</sup> – not only enriched his recreation of the bathing practices of the ancients, but prompted him also to consider the decline and disappearance of public baths in the west. This he attributed, in Gibbonian terms, to the superstition of Christianity and anxiety surrounding the morality of behaviour at the baths, as well as the general political and social upheavals of the middle ages.

For all that he had arrived at a more historicised and more sympathetic opinion of Pompeii by time that he compiled the second volume, he was still critical of the want of taste and the deviation from the original purity of the Greek forms of which he found evidence all over Pompeii. A want of taste also lay behind the Romans’ unembarrassed sexual frankness. In private correspondence with his brother, Gell enjoyed mildly

---

<sup>139</sup> *Pompeiana* (1832), i, 84.

<sup>140</sup> *Pompeiana* (1832), i, 136.

<sup>141</sup> Again, Bulwer Lytton evidently learned much from his discussions with Gell, particularly in the emphasis upon the difference between the gargantuan Roman bath complexes and the comparative simplicity of those found in Pompeii

<sup>142</sup> See e.g. *Pompeiana* (1832), i, 121.

<sup>143</sup> *Pompeiana* (1832), ii, 86.

scatological jokes ('a Scotch warming pan is when you let a f—t under the bed cloaths & keep it in?'), but did not descend to sexual innuendo; however, as a member of the Dilettanti Society and a friend of, amongst others, Richard Payne Knight, he would certainly have been familiar with that society's libertarian attitude to sexuality.<sup>144</sup> But the overt sexuality on display in Pompeii was not a subject that he dwelt on at length in either his private correspondence or his publications: the explicit sexual content of the finds at Pompeii was either ignored or denatured of its erotic potential with discreet references to priapic objects or simply 'emblemata'.<sup>145</sup> In letters to his brother there was only mild ironic amusement: 'Why', he remarked, 'people should place a great red priapus over the mouth of an oven and write upon it, "hic habitat felicitas" is more than I can tell you'.<sup>146</sup> In publications he stepped swiftly and smoothly past such matters without allowing any hint of sexual impropriety to disrupt the urbane charm of his vision of ancient Pompeii. As his friend Lady Charlotte Bury observed, Mr Gell, though often droll, 'was never indecorous... and if he ever indulged in a joke that was questionable, it was in a manner so devoid of real vice, that the most punctilious or delicate female could scarce take offence at it'.<sup>147</sup> In the second edition of *Pompeiana*, he did acknowledge the presence (and the function) of the lupanarium, with its 'obscene' and 'indecent' wall paintings, observing the very different notions of delicacy that existed amongst the ancients.<sup>148</sup> He declined, however, to dwell further on what it suggested regarding the Romans' sexual mores and customs.

---

<sup>144</sup> DRO 258/50/47 Gell to Philip Gell 22 Oct. 1810. On the Society of Dilettanti see J. Kelly, *The Society of Dilettanti* (New Haven CT, 2009), esp. 61-89 and B. Redford, *Dilettanti: The Antic and the Antique in Eighteenth-Century England* (Los Angeles, 2008), 113-28.

<sup>145</sup> See *Pompeiana* (1817-19), 133 in allusion to the sign of the phallus over the fornix.

<sup>146</sup> DRO D258/50/84 Gell to Philip Gell 14 Jul. 1815. In the published version, Gell referred simply to the 'baker's sign': *Pompeiana* (1817-19), 190.

<sup>147</sup> Bury, *Diary Illustrative of the Times of George IV*, i, 60 (above, n. 35).

<sup>148</sup> *Pompeiana* (1832), ii, 11; see also the reference to an 'obscene picture' and the triple phallus in *Pompeiana* (1832), i, 11.

Gell's discreet silence regarding the Pompeians' indelicacy was entirely typical of his time; but there were other aspects of the life of the city which he also passed over in comparative silence. In particular the emphasis upon the 'domestic economy' of the Pompeians that had featured in the 1817-19 edition was much less in evidence by 1832 when Gell's interest in the paintings and the mosaics was starting to dominate. The fullonica, for example, had been excavated in the 1820s and while he reported the bare outlines of the excavation in terms of what was found (the form of the building, the vats for fulling and dying, the jar of lime) he did not treat it as an opportunity to elaborate upon the manufacturing economy of Pompeii. It is revealing in this context to compare Gell's version of Pompeii with that of the volume by William Clarke, produced for the Society for the Diffusion of Useful Knowledge in 1831. This was a much smaller, cheaper publication, clearly aimed at a very different domestic readership in a market where volumes on 'domestic antiquities' were becoming increasingly numerous. Comparisons with Roman Britain and Roman London in particular were frequent, reflecting the recent increase in Romano-British archaeological finds in the metropolis due to urban improvement and specifically the work on new London Bridge. Clarke's emphasis was very much upon the practical aspects of life in Pompeii: trade, manufactures, construction, and the quotidian business of food and drink and his account was, in fact, much closer to the vision of the 'domestic economy' of Pompeii that Gell and Gandy had originally intended to deliver in 1817. Indeed, Clarke promised his readers an insight into the 'private life' of the Italians in the first century, which other works, including Gell's, had failed satisfactorily to provide.<sup>149</sup> The contrast is seen most clearly in the style and subject of the illustrations. While Clarke certainly provided the reader with the familiar prospect views of streets and reconstructions of interior spaces, many of the illustrations were of individual objects or practical details. Whereas Gell evoked the lifestyle of a wealthy, leisured Pompeian at the House of Pansa, Clarke focussed on the stove in the kitchen;<sup>150</sup> and while Clarke did reproduce some of Gell's reconstructions of

---

<sup>149</sup> W. Clarke, *Pompeii*, 2 vols, 2<sup>nd</sup> edn (London, 1833), i, 5.

<sup>150</sup> Clarke, *Pompeii*, ii, 106 (above, n. 148).

grandiose apartments or the public spaces of the forum, he also provided readers with the more prosaic image of the cook shop restored.<sup>151</sup> (Figures 8 and 9 near here) .

## Conclusion

Clarke's account of Pompeii never achieved the kind of recognition that Gell's did, for all that it went into a second edition in 1833. It was too small and too cheaply produced, and too derivative of other publications to make a similar impact. But Clarke's emphasis upon domestic economy is telling in terms of how Gell's two versions of *Pompeiana* were received in the course of the nineteenth century. After his death the first edition of 1817-19 proved to have much greater longevity, being reissued again in 1852 and 1875, whereas the 1832 edition was only reissued once in 1837. An interest in the domestic and private lives of the past was, as Peter Fritzsche has argued, characteristic of nineteenth-century approaches to the past across Europe and America.<sup>152</sup> It was this quotidian vision of Pompeian domestic life that captured the Victorian imagination, not the wall paintings; and it was the first edition, with its emphasis upon 'domestic economy', that proved to have greater longevity and the widest influence, offering readers of any description an accessible and attractive insight into everyday life in ancient Rome, whether directly or indirectly as mediated through texts such as *Last Days of Pompeii* or the Pompeii Court at the Crystal Palace Exhibition.<sup>153</sup> Reviewing the Pompeii Court, the *Athenaeum* suggested that Pompeii 'at its best was only the Worthing or Dawlish of Italy': Pompeii's

---

<sup>151</sup> Clarke, *Pompeii*, ii, 82 (above, n. 148). See also the article 'Pompeii' reviewing Clarke's volume in the *Penny Magazine* which focused chiefly on the technology of the bread oven and other domestic matters, which were assumed to be 'most interesting for our readers', 24 Nov. 1832, 338-40.

<sup>152</sup> Fritzsche, *Stranded in the Present* (above, n. 97).

<sup>153</sup> George Scharf's handbook *The Pompeian Court in the Crystal Palace* (London, 1854), 33-7 drew heavily on Bulwer Lytton, *Last Days of Pompeii* but also acknowledged Lytton's debt to Gell in describing the configuration of Roman houses. See also S.J. Hales, 'Re-casting antiquity: Pompeii and the Crystal Palace', *Arion*, 3<sup>rd</sup> ser., 14:1 (2006), 99-134. Hales arguably underplays the extent to which Lytton's evocation drew on information and insights provided by Gell.

small town provinciality, however, made it particularly appropriate as a point of comparison for Roman Britain.<sup>154</sup> *Pompeiana*, it should be recognised, also provided an invaluable framework through which British antiquaries and archaeologists could interpret the increasingly prolific evidence of the domestic life of Roman Britain that was being revealed through the process of urban improvement and redevelopment. As such it exercised a significant influence upon the Victorians' conceptualisation of Romano-British urbanism from Londinium to Uriconium.<sup>155</sup>

In his interpretations of Pompeii Gell moved fluidly between the neo-classical aesthetic and the modern archaeological registers which Göran Blix has identified in French antiquarian and archaeological writings upon Pompeii in the same period.<sup>156</sup> His emphasis upon the aesthetic properties of the wall paintings and the mosaics in the second edition of *Pompeiana* – although influential on subsequent artists – was out of kilter with the direction that increasingly archaeological and historicist approaches to Pompeii were taking in the nineteenth century, whilst his work lacked the imaginative flair permitted to novelists. He was, in effect, an eighteenth-century antiquary who, in his emphasis upon scientific accuracy of observation and in his interest

---

<sup>154</sup> *Athenaeum*, 21 Jan. 1854, 92. Hales also suggests that by mid-century Pompeii was increasingly represented as a Greek city colonised by the Romans, which would have strengthened the direct comparison between it and Romano-British settlements: Hales, 'Recasting antiquity', 112 (above, n. 153).

<sup>155</sup> See, for example, A.J. Kempe, 'Londiniana IV', *Gentleman's Magazine* (April, 1836), 370; C.R. Smith, 'Observations on the Roman remains found in various parts of London, in the years 1834, 1835, 1836', *Archaeologia*, 27 (1838), 140-52, at 149-50; C.R. Smith, *Collectanea antiqua. Etchings and Notices of Ancient Remains, Illustrative of the Habits, Customs, and History of Past Ages*, 7 vols (1848-80), ii, 10-11; C.R. Smith, *Illustrations of Roman London* (London, 1859), 120, 147; G.P. Bevan, 'The English Pompeii', *Fraser's Magazine for Town and Country* (Oct.1860), 539-42; T. Wright, *Guide to the Ruins of the Roman City of Uriconium* (Shrewsbury, 1859).

<sup>156</sup> Blix, *From Paris to Pompeii*, 1-47 (above, n. 10).

in the domestic mores of the past, anticipated developments in nineteenth-century archaeological practice.<sup>157</sup> But Gell had died in 1836: he was never a Victorian in any sense and was closer in spirit to the eighteenth than the nineteenth century. In the 1830s he railed against the changes which he observed from a distance that were transforming not only the political structure of Britain but also the world of publishing.<sup>158</sup> The rise of the cheap periodicals had, he argued, ruined the market for books such as his.<sup>159</sup> Gell was criticised by his successors in the nineteenth century for being superficial and for being a 'dilettante' whose interests were aesthetic rather than archaeological; but that is to judge him by standards which he did not aspire to meet.<sup>160</sup> Gell's importance rests on the detailed and accurate observations that he left for posterity, his use of archaeological and literary evidence to address new questions regarding the private and domestic life of classical antiquity and on the fact that his work captures the transition between an eighteenth-century 'antiquarian' and nineteenth-century 'archaeological' view of the past.

---

<sup>157</sup> For recent and positive evaluations of Gell's topographical accuracy, see Wallace Hadrill, 'Roman topography and the prism of Sir William Gell' (above, n. 8) and C. Plouviez, 'Straddling the Aegean: William Gell 1811-13', in S. Searight and M. Wagstaff (eds), *Travellers in the Levant: Voyagers and Visionaries* (Durham, 2001), 42-56.

<sup>158</sup> DRO 258/50/151 Gell to Philip Gell 22 Aug. 1832 where he observed that he would rather 'live under the Turks than Mr Atwood and Co'.

<sup>159</sup> DRO 258/50/154 Gell to Philip Gell 6 Feb. 1834: 'the deuce take your penny magazines, they have ruined the Booksellers who can no longer buy ones books and thus all my means for patching up my pecuniary misfortunes have failed.'

<sup>160</sup> Ramsay described him as 'possessing general, though superficial information, both literary and scientific', in Madden (ed.), *Literary Life and Correspondence*, ii, 15 (above, n. 9). See also Wroth in *Dictionary of National Biography* (above, n. 9); T.H. Dyer, *Pompeii: its History, Buildings and Antiquities* (London, 1867), 6; and Dwyer's criticisms in *Pompeii's Living Statues* (above, n. 5).

