
SHIFTING PERSPECTIVES

A COMPARISON OF TWO ACADEMIC GUIDES TO POMPEII

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INTRODUCTION

Pompeii is a window to the Roman world like no other. In Goethe's often-quoted words: 'Es ist viel Unheil in der Welt geschehen, aber wenig, das den Nachkommen so viel Freude gemacht hätte.'¹ A tragedy for many, a pleasure for many more. Being such an invaluable source to historians, much has been written about the city, its life, architecture and art. Especially the last few decades have seen a surge in studies about the ancient city, and in new guide books, too. According to Mary Beard, many of these offer oversimplified interpretations of the findings, giving merely one explanation where several are possible.² Being a very naughty girl,³ Beard wrote a subversive guide to ancient Pompeii – a guidebook for the educated reader which puts all the controversies and disputed explanations of the ruins of Pompeii and their former life on display, published as *Pompeii – The Life of a Roman Town* in 2008. One would assume that her study differs most from a study that is much older. Therefore, I will compare her guide to the second edition of August Mau's *Pompeji in Leben und Kunst*, a classic of Pompeian studies from 1908.

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Let me explain how the comparison of these two guides came about. Mary Beard claims that with her insights she comes closer to the sources, and that she can reveal how ancient Pompeii was turned into 'our Pompeii'.⁴ I set out on a quest to prove that Beard's insights are a reflection of her own time, rather than that of ancient Romans. To highlight the anachronism I wanted to compare Beard's study with an earlier monograph on Pompeii from the nineteenth or early twentieth century. August Mau's classic on Pompeii seemed to lend itself to my purposes exquisitely. How do the two studies differ? How has writing about Pompeii changed during the twentieth century? Are the two studies reflections of their own time? Do the two studies reflect changes in historical writing?

As happens so often when doing research, things were not exactly as I had envisioned. Mau's study, which appears to be a guidebook as well, does not differ from Beard's as much as one might expect. An underlying divergence of approach can, however, be distinguished. The discussion of similarities and differences in chapter 5 form the core of this study. To

¹ J. W. von Goethe, *Italienische Reisen*, 13. März 1787 (München 1960) 206.

² M. Beard, *Pompeii – The Life of a Roman Town* (London 2008) 23.

³ R. McCrum, 'Up Pompeii with the roguish don', *The Observer*, 24 August 2008, <http://www.guardian.co.uk/books/2008/aug/24/classics> (17 March 2012).

⁴ M. Beard, *Pompeii*, 22.

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place the two studies in a context, I will first sketch a short history of archaeology in general and the excavations at Pompeii in particular in chapters 1 and 3, interrupted by a short biography of August Mau and his *Pompeji in Leben und Kunst* in chapter 2, and followed by an introduction to Mary Beard and her *Pompeii – Life of a Roman Town* in chapter 4.

1. A SHORT HISTORY OF ARCHAEOLOGY AND THE EXCAVATIONS AT POMPEII

The first ‘excavations’ were probably conducted just after the eruption in 79 CE by the surviving Pompeians to retrieve some expensive metals, for example the statues in the forum, or other belongings. Through the centuries, however, kings, popes and other thieves have dug tunnels to retrieve works of art and precious materials. What was recovered when and by whom mostly remains obscure.

Knowledge of the location of the mythical city of Pompeii was apparently lost in the mists of the ages, for it was only in the very late seventeenth century that the site of *La Cività* was first recognised as the remains of ancient Pompeii, and as late as 1763 an inscription was found that scattered all doubts.⁵

In 1738, Charles of Bourbon began to more systematically dig tunnels under what was to be discovered as Herculaneum. Under the supervision of a Spanish engineer, Rocque Joachin de Alcubierre, the Swiss engineer Karl Jakob Weber led many of the excavations and documented them very accurately and systematically in maps and beautiful axonometric projections. Regrettably, Weber was never allowed to publish his documentations properly, as the Bourbon court claimed exclusive publishing rights and was only interested in the recovered works of art. The main objective was to retrieve the treasures of the past.⁶ The unearthed buildings were often buried again or simply left as they were, exposing them to the elements.⁷ The statues and mosaics that had been found were shipped to the royal palace in Portici near Naples and were at most analysed by art historians.⁸ There was little interest in the buildings themselves, and even less in undecorated pots and vases or bones. There was no space for common, everyday or simple objects, as they did not confirm the view held on the glorious Romans.⁹

Because digging at Herculaneum was very expensive - the ruins lay under many meters of hard volcanic rock - Charles of Bourbon shifted his excavations to *La Cività*, soon to be

⁵ R. Ling, *Pompeii: History, Life and Afterlife* (Gloucestershire 2005) 158.

⁶ Th. Kraus, *Pompeji und Herculaneum: Antlitz und Schicksal zweier antiker Städte* (Köln 1973) 13.

⁷ R. Ling, *Pompeii*, 160.

⁸ *Ibidem*.

⁹ H. G. Niemeyer, ‘Klassische Archäologie (RWG)’, in: H. Cancik, H. Schneider, M. Landfester ed., *Der Neue Pauly*, (2012) <http://brillonline.nl/subscriber/entry?entry=dnpe1409080> (13 March 2012).

discovered as Pompeii. Randomly digging up buildings, many of these were uncovered completely, though not always permanently. After the French had conquered the kingdom of Naples, Napoleon's brother renewed the excavation projects and undertook to connect the unearthed 'islands' in the West of the city – a more systematic approach than the earlier random digging for treasures. The city walls were exposed, as well as the forum and many surrounding buildings. The latter were beautifully documented in the architect Charles François Mazois's work *Les ruines de Pompéi*, which he published in four parts from 1812-1824. Nevertheless, the practice of removing the most beautiful objects was still continued.¹⁰

Archaeologists' attitudes began changing steadily from the 1850s onwards. The decades around the middle of the nineteenth century saw slow but significant shifts in the history of archaeology. This branch of science which used to be concerned mainly with the excavation and study of works of art, widened its scope of duties to include 'nicht nur eine Auswahl von Kunstdenkmälern, sondern die Gesamtheit des monumentalen Stoffes, [...] der Gesamttanschauung des ant. Lebens zu überliefern,' in the words of Eduard Gerhard, a German archaeologist.¹¹ From these early thoughts it was, however, still a long way until they were actually implemented in practice on a broad scale. Undecorated tableware, for instance, was still thrown away undocumented.¹² Gerhard was also the one who had founded the precursor of the *Deutsches Archäologisches Institut* (DAI) in 1829 in *Palazzo Caffarelli*, the seat of the Prussian Embassy on the Capitol, obviously on 21st April, the alleged founding day of Rome.¹³ What other date and place could have been more appropriate?

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Towards the end of the 19th century, archaeology could be called 'scientific,' although systematizing trends had begun much earlier, of course. It was Heinrich Schliemann who heralded the age of the great excavations around the Mediterranean in 1871. German Historicism had a surging influence on archaeological studies, and by 1900 the interests and aims of archaeology had shifted away from the image of classicistic antiquity and a mainly philological and art historical approach to a more empirical and fieldwork-oriented one.¹⁴

For the excavations at Pompeii specifically, the unification of Italy in 1860 was important. In that year a new director of excavations was appointed by Vittorio Emanuele II: Giuseppe

¹⁰ Ling, *Pompeii*, 162.

¹¹ H. G. Niemeyer, 'Klassische Archäologie (RWG)', in: H. Cancik, H. Schneider, M. Landfester ed., *Der Neue Pauly*, (2012) <http://brillonline.nl/subscriber/entry?entry=dnpe1409080> (13 March 2012).

¹² *Ibidem*.

¹³ H. Kyrieleis, 'Deutsches Archäologisches Institut (RWG)', in: H. Cancik, H. Schneider, M. Landfester ed., *Der Neue Pauly*, (2012) <http://brillonline.nl/subscriber/entry?entry=dnpe1308130> (15 March 2012).

¹⁴ H. G. Niemeyer, 'Klassische Archäologie (RWG)', in: H. Cancik, H. Schneider, M. Landfester ed., *Der Neue Pauly*, (2012) <http://brillonline.nl/subscriber/entry?entry=dnpe1409080> (13 March 2012).

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Fiorelli. He remained director until 1875 and in this time started to fill in the gaps, or rather the opposite, and systematically uncover everything that had not yet been brought to daylight in the northwestern corner of the city.¹⁵ Furthermore, he tried to reverse the practice of removing the most important paintings and objects.¹⁶ The change of attitude can also be traced in August Mau's *Pompeji in Leben und Kunst*: 'Es kann nicht genug beklagt werden, dass auf diese Weise die ganze Wanddekoration und das ihren Mittelpunkt bildende Gemälde, auseinander gerissen werden, noch dazu natürlich unter Zerstörung der das Bild zunächst umgebenden Teile.'¹⁷ Fiorelli to this day is renowned for his division of Pompeii into regions, *insulae*, and houses, giving each house a specific number, e.g. VI.15.1 for the House of the Vettii, and his technique used to preserve the bodies of the deceased Pompeians: he filled the voids left by the decayed bodies with plaster. Petrifying different people and animals in their last moments, they remain the sole witnesses to the tragedy otherwise so far removed from our experience. The technique was later also used to 'recover' wooden objects as doors or furniture. Fiorelli's systematic approach paved the way for new studies, such as W. Helbig's catalogue of figure paintings published in 1868.¹⁸

It is this context in which the first protagonist of this study enters the stage: August Mau.

¹⁵ Th. Kraus, *Pompeji und Herculaneum*, 13.

¹⁶ Ling, *Pompeii*, 164.

¹⁷ August Mau, *Pompeji in Leben und Kunst* (Leipzig 1908) 27.

¹⁸ Ling, *Pompeii*, 163-165.

2. AUGUST MAU, *POMPEJI IN LEBEN UND KUNST*

Little is to be found about August Mau, author of one of the standard handbooks on the city, *Pompeji in Leben und Kunst*. A short biography is sketched in the collection *Archäologenbildnisse*, the contents of which will be summarized here.¹⁹

Mau was born in 1840 in Kiel, Germany, as son of a professor of theology. After completing his degree in classical philology in 1863, he worked as a teacher until 1867, when a lung sickness prevented him from fulfilling his function. In 1872 he moved to Rome for the milder climate. After a short while, he was appointed secretary of the director of the German Institute in Rome, Wilhelm Henzen, and remained in that position up to the director's death in 1887. According to Hartmut Döhl, author of the short biography, Mau might have been appointed on the recommendation of Theodor Mommsen.²⁰ We must, then, assume that Mommsen and Mau knew each other or were even friends. During his time at the institute Mau studied Pompeii most intensely and published his findings regularly. Already in 1873 he published an article wherein he distinguishes five styles of Pompeian art, which was to be the basis of his famous *Geschichte der dekorativen Wandmalerei in Campanien* in which he reduced the styles to four – the classification still taught today. Methodologically he built on the work of a colleague at the institute, Wolfgang Helbig, who in 1868 had published a substantive catalogue of wallpaintings and in 1873 further findings of his study on Campanian wallpaintings.²¹

Being new to the subject, I suppose Mau must have been less prone to the prevailing conventions and assumptions. While usually scholars would search for a reflection of Greek art in Pompeii, Mau analysed Pompeian art as autonomous Italian works. This step is usually accredited to Alois Riegl and Franz Wickhoff, but Mau, as it appears unknowingly, went down the same road twenty years earlier.²²

Döhl more generally gives the impression that Mau was a working horse: doing the hard work of organising, cataloguing and publishing his findings, without being intent on glory. The picture Döhl offers some similarities to eighteenth century Karl Weber, the leader of the

¹⁹ H. Döhl, 'August Mau', in: R. Lullies, W. Schiering ed., *Archäologenbildnisse: Porträts und Kurzbiographien von Klassischen Archäologen deutscher Sprache* (Mainz 1988) 78-9.

²⁰ Idem, 78.

²¹ Ibidem.

²² Idem, 79.

excavations under the Bourbons, who had catalogued and mapped much of the ancient city, but was never able to publish his studies adequately.²³ Both Weber and Mau were rather new to the subject at hand, and might have been seen as outsiders. As soon as the director of the Institute, Henzen, could no longer protect Mau, his career prospects vanished into thin air. Mau had hoped to be appointed one of the secretaries of the institute, but after his protector Henzen died in 1887, he did not get one of the positions. Rather, he was assigned to work on and publish the *Realkatalog* of the library. Mau was certainly perfectly suited to the task, as it required endurance and meticulousness, but it did not leave him with any spare time to continue studying Pompeii. In order to survive financially, he later published several books, among which a fourth edition of Johannes Overbeck's *Pompeji* in 1884, a reworked edition of Joachim Marquardt's *Privatleben der Römer* in 1886 and the classic *Pompeji in Leben und Kunst* in 1899.²⁴

Not much is to be found about Mau's epistemological convictions and approach to historical study. As I assumed above that Mau and Mommsen knew each other and Döhl suggests that Mommsen recommended Mau, he then must have approved of Mau's work, approach or convictions. Mommsen again was a friend of Henzen's, who had appointed Mau and kept him in his position.²⁵ I descend to speculation if I infer from the convictions of Mommsen and Henzen some of the convictions of Mau, but as they were connected in the way mentioned above, their assumptions must at least have been similar.

Mommsen was a trained lawyer, but also interested in philological criticism of Latin texts and free interpretation thereof. Eventually, he ended up studying ancient Roman inscriptions, publishing the impressive overture of the *Corpus Inscriptionum Latinarum* in 1852 and his *Römische Geschichte* in 1854, and teaching as professor of Roman History in Berlin. He was very much a historicist, as he put the history of Great Men and states to the fore. According to historicists views, the state is seen as an organism and comprises all other elements, as for example individuals.²⁶ As is typical for historicism, individuals are inferior to the state, but some Great Men, as Caesar, stand out above the others and do have a limited influence on history, while at the same time being a product of their own time.²⁷ Furthermore, the study of history can teach us about the present. The analogy is not linear, though. By studying ancient civilisations we can uncover the driving mechanisms that lie behind every civilisation, the

²³ C. C. Parslow, *Rediscovering Antiquity: Karl Weber and the Excavation of Herculaneum, Pompeii, and Stabiae* (Cambridge 1995) 1-13.

²⁴ H. Döhl, 'August Mau', 79.

²⁵ K. Christ, *Von Gibbon zu Rostovtzeff* (Darmstadt 1972) 106.

²⁶ K. Christ, *Von Gibbon zu Rostovtzeff*, 96.

²⁷ Idem, 110-2.

processes and *Grundkräfte* which are the same in every civilisation, but manifest themselves differently.²⁸ His methodology sounds very familiar today, but did not constitute the standard procedure at the time. It is the task of the historian to seek, identify and closely inspect the sources and, in a second step, summarise them in a coherent narrative, emphasising causes and effects. Thereby, it is important to conduct, in Mommsen's own words, 'rücksichtslos ehrliche, im grossen wie im kleinen vor keiner Mühe scheuende, keinem Zweifel ausbiegende, keine Lücke der Überlieferung oder des eigenen Wissens übertünchende, immer sich selbst und anderen Rechenschaft ablegende Wahrheitsforschung [...]'.²⁹ Of course, also Mommsen could not always adhere to these strict principles. In a wider context, Mommsen could be placed in *Savignys Historische Rechtsschule* with Friedrich Carl von Savigny and Barthold Georg Niebuhr. Characteristically for this school, they would start historical research from the study of law.³⁰ Influenced by Romanticism, they claimed that every people had their own spirit, or *Volksgeist*, from which their most natural laws could be derived.³¹ But, of course, we are deviating rather far from our actual subject, August Mau, and his *Pompeji in Leben und Kunst*.

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Mau was, however, no lawyer, but a classicist. His *Pompeji in Leben und Kunst* is mostly descriptive, he does not create a narrative as Mommsen advises. Like Mommsen, however, he did have no eye for the individual. He rather saw them as part of a culture, a people. From some of Mau's analogies with contemporary Romans, we might induce that he believed in a *Volksgeist* inherent to every people. Mommsen's principles of *Wahrheitsforschung* are certainly reflected in Mau's work, although maybe not as rigorously as we might expect today.

Generally, it can be said that Mau makes more judging remarks and personal statements of taste than we would nowadays expect of a historian. Let me provide some examples. He obviously preferred the 'Tuffstil', how Mau also calls the first style of Pompeian art,³² above later styles. On the new portico at the forum, he remarks the following: 'Es sind eben nicht mehr die Formen der Tuffperiode. Verschwunden ist der feine Formensinn der früheren Zeit, alles grob und unschön; so die Säulen mit der zu weit nach oben verlegten Schwellung.'³³ He also makes a definitive value judgement about the four styles of Pompeian wall-painting,

²⁸ Idem, 116-7.

²⁹ Idem, 105.

³⁰ F. Wagner, *Geschichtswissenschaft* (Freiburg/München 1966) 171.

³¹ Idem, 174.

³² A. Mau, *Pompeji in Leben und Kunst* (Leipzig 1908) 456.

³³ Ibidem.

claiming that the second style 'künstlerisch betrachtet [...] tief unter der vorigen [steht]'³⁴ and makes statements about the background of some of the paintings of the Temple of Isis: 'es sind teils verkümmerte Formen des Tuffstils, dürftig ausgeführt und nicht mehr recht empfunden, teils [...] gröbere und künstlerisch minderwertige Formen anderer Herkunft, wohl von den Kolonisten importiert.'³⁵ Mau does not, however, explain how he arrives at this conclusion and what is his evidence. Further on, he gives a very subjective interpretation of two heads of Zeus, the one from Otricoli and one from Pompeii. He describes the Zeus from Otricoli in the following flowery words: 'Unbezwingliche Willenskraft prägt sich aus in den massigen Zügen, die Fähigkeit gewaltiger Leidenschaft in den Augenbrauen, über denen der untere Teil der Stirn vorspringt, drohend wie eine Gewitterwolke [...]. Der Gott ist hier gefasst als die geheimnisvolle, unbewusste Naturkraft, Urquell und Gesetz aller Dinge.'³⁶ Let me quote a rather long, but beautiful, passage about the Pompeian Zeus:

'Gewaltige Kraft auch hier, aber beherrscht von einem lebhaften, klaren und umfassenden Geiste. In wunderbarer Weise sind hier starker Wille und hohe Intelligenz vereinigt. [...] Kein in sich versunkenes Brüten; mit gespannter Aufmerksamkeit, die sich auch in der gehobenen Oberlippe malt, verfolgt der Gott irgend einen fernen Vorgang, der vielleicht im nächsten Augenblick sein Eingreifen erfordern wird. Es ist der weise und mächtige König, dessen schützendes Auge weit reicht bis an die Grenzen seiner Herrschaft. Wir irren wohl nicht, wenn wir annehmen, dass diese Umwandlung des Otricolitypus stattfand in einer monarchischen Zeit, in der Zeit, als die griechische Welt von den Nachfolgern Alexanders beherrscht wurde.'³⁷

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Today, historians would expect more extensive arguments to underpin such a thesis and dating. Another 'romantic' description is given in the introduction, where Mau paints a very lively and colourful picture of Pompeii's surroundings.

'Und wenden wir uns nun noch weiter nach rechts, nach Norden, da schwindet all die bunte Herrlichkeit; nichts weiter sehen wir als den mächtig die Ebene und die Stadt überragenden Kegel des grossen Zerstörers, des Vesuv. In tiefes Violett hüllt die scheidende Sonne den kahlen Aschenkegel, goldig glänzend hebt sich die Rauchwolke von seinem Gipfel.'³⁸

Such descriptions make the guide much more lively and readable, but may often be oversimplifications and create a certain definite and subjective image. More often, however, he describes buildings in more neutral words.

³⁴ Idem, 40.

³⁵ Id., 40.

³⁶ Id., 66.

³⁷ Ibid.

³⁸ A. Mau, *Pompeji*, 6.

Mau's approach shows strong influences of the nineteenth-century archaeologist's or scholar's approach, but is innovative in certain ways. Fiorelli, for instance, structures his *Descrizione di Pompei*, published in 1875, along the same lines as his new arrangement into *regiones*, *insulae* and doorways. He neatly begins with building or doorway I in *insula* I in *regio* I and proceeds from door to door describing the findings at and peculiarities of each site. In the back, there is a very useful alphabetic register with the 'popular' names of the buildings listed, as for example The House of the Faun, so they are easily retrievable. The study very systematically describes everything that was excavated. As far as I can judge, with my limited proficiency in Italian, he makes few or no connections between different buildings or general interpretations or statements.³⁹ In Michele Ruggiero's *Pompei e la regione sotterrata dal Vesuvio nell' anno LXXIX* from 1879, articles by different authors about more general topics are bundled together with long lists of wallpaintings and inscriptions.⁴⁰ Mau's *Pompeji* is at the same time somewhere in between the two and more 'advanced' (without implicating any judgement). Like Fiorelli, he lists all the buildings separately, but groups them into categories of function (public, private, craft and trade, graves) and adds chapters on Pompeian art and inscriptions. The book is opened with more general comments on the geography and history of the city, including the history of the excavations, and concluded with a reflection on the importance of Pompeii as a source for knowledge about antiquity.

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Mau does not use footnotes and has not included a bibliography within the guidebook itself. Instead, a separate *Anhang* was published posthumously with references to his sources, assorted by chapter and page number and justifications of some presumptions or conclusions.⁴¹ Mau explains that for most readers, the references are not interesting and that they would be outdated sooner than the book itself.⁴² The latter line of argument I cannot follow since the sources to certain insights in my postmodern opinion remain important for as long as the insights remain valid or give insight into wrong conclusions. In fact, the remark might be more revealing about Mau's epistemology (or the epistemology of his time) than I first realised. Today, references are used to reconstruct an author's reasoning and validate its scholarly value. It seems that for Mau, the sources are mainly meant to provide further information for the interested reader, not to serve as a validation of his claims.

What makes the *Anhang* even more interesting is that it was published only after Mau's death. Most of it had already been prepared by the author, but some of the later chapters had

³⁹ G. Fiorelli, *Descrizione di Pompei* (Napoli 1875).

⁴⁰ M. Ruggiero, *Pompei e la regione sotterrata dal Vesuvio nell' anno LXXIX* (Napoli 1879).

⁴¹ A. Mau, *Pompeji in Leben und Kunst – Anhang* (Leipzig 1913) III.

⁴² A. Mau, *Pompeji*, VII.

to be annotated by other scholars. What is more, the editor Drexel added notes where Mau's opinion diverted from the newest findings, a modification that seems odd today, as we treat works of scholars as 'sovereign' entities not to be tampered with by outsiders.⁴³ Today, a monograph does not represent truth, which can change with new insights and thus be altered in the book itself, but only the vision of a certain author and his own time.

By a reviewer, Mau is lauded as 'der beste Kenner Pompejis'⁴⁴ and a reviewer of the second edition has similarly praising words for Mau's work:

'It may now be said to have established its position as the standard work, both in England and Germany, on the subject of Pompeii; and its importance is greatly enhanced by the fact that this is a subject which interests a much wider circle of readers than the scholar and the archaeologist. It is an eminently satisfactory thing to have a work of this kind from the pen of the greatest living authority on the subject, a work which is at the same time scholarly and popular in its treatment.'⁴⁵

Within few years, then, Mau's work was established as the standard volume on Pompeii.

To conclude, Mau was a learned Latinist, but was to become an archaeologist – a very typical development in the nineteenth century, because archaeologists were only beginning to be trained. His rigorous and meticulous style of working made him the authority on Pompeian archaeology. A century later, however, some of his 'academic practices' seem outdated. In chapter 5, I will assess how his guide fares in comparison with Mary Beard's much newer work.

⁴³ A. Mau, *Pompeji – Anhang*, III.

⁴⁴ R. Weil, 'Pompeii its life and art by August Mau' *Historische Zeitschrift* 87 (2) (December 1901) 290.

⁴⁵ H. B. Walters, 'Pompeii, Its Life and Art by August Mau' *The Classical Review* 17 (5) (June 1903), 279.

3. CONTINUED HISTORY OF ARCHAEOLOGY AND THE EXCAVATIONS AT POMPEII

Under Fiorelli's successors, many more buildings were uncovered and partly restored, so as to give the frequent visitors an impression of their original state. Vittorio Spinazzola, who was director from 1910 to 1923, had houses excavated from the top down, instead of gaining access to the buildings from street level, a technique first established by Fiorelli. In that way, upper floors could be studied and reconstructed.⁴⁶ Spinazzola set out to uncover all of the *Via dell'Abbondanza* and its shops and houses in order to join the western part of the city with the amphitheatre in the east.⁴⁷ His successor was Amedeo Maiuri, who remained in office until 1961. Prior to World War II, he unearthed many now famous houses in the city, as the House of Menander, the Villa of the Mysteries, and the large *palaestra*. In the meantime, he resumed excavating at Herculaneum, which had been abandoned in 1855.⁴⁸ The findings were published with 'exemplary promptitude and thoroughness' in reports in journals and monographs on different houses.⁴⁹

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Maiuri was the first to systematically investigate the development of the buildings in Pompeii. By digging beneath the top-most buildings and making stratigraphical surveys, studies of the underground layers, he explored the history of these buildings and what had been standing on that spot before they were built.⁵⁰ Furthermore, he surveyed the effects of the 62 CE earthquake by examining structural repairs. After the War, however, excavations were hurried by private funding; construction companies provided manpower and used the spoil for building the Naples-Salerno motorway. Excavations were hasty, documentation sloppy; restoration and conservation did not take place. As a result, many houses that were excavated in that period remain sparingly documented and many wallpaintings are severely damaged or lost.⁵¹

Not surprisingly, policy has changed since. The focus is now on preservation and documentation of the already unearthed structures, rather than exposing more of the ancient

⁴⁶ R. Ling, *Pompeii – History, Life and Afterlife*, 165.

⁴⁷ Ling, *Pompeii*, 165 and Th. Kraus, *Pompeji und Herculaneum*, 14.

⁴⁸ Th. Kraus, *Pompeji und Herculaneum*, 14.

⁴⁹ R. Ling, *Pompeii*, 167.

⁵⁰ *Ibidem*.

⁵¹ *Idem*, 168 and Th. Kraus, *Pompeji und Herculaneum*, 14.

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city to further decay.⁵² Furthermore, sites outside the ancient city are threatened by modern building projects and have priority. From the 1970s on, and even more so after an earthquake in 1980, resources were diverted to the photographic and digital registration of data resulting in photographic encyclopaedias and digital databases.⁵³ International teams are pursuing other, more specific excavation projects, for instance investigating beneath the level of the houses buried in 79 CE. An important new field of study is the analysis of seeds, pollen and animal bones to learn about the plants in the *peristylia* and eating habits of Pompeians.⁵⁴

Apart from archaeologists, Pompeii must also accommodate almost two million tourists a year. Signboards have to be erected, weed killers used, toilets and refreshment facilities installed. Imagine two million pairs of feet treading on the ancient pavements, two million hands leaning on the famous fountains to be photographed or touching the wallpaintings. Further problems are posed by thieves and vandals, let alone Vesuvius which has been all too silent for much too long...⁵⁵

Apart from significant changes in archaeological research, the twentieth century has also seen serious challenges to objectivity, positivism and historical writing. Postmodernists and poststructuralists have shown that historical coherence is created by the historian himself and the language he uses.⁵⁶ The debates have not, however, provoked to the end of historical writing. They have rather led to a widening of approaches and the subjects to be examined. Research on macro histories by Fernand Braudel or micro histories as conducted by Carlo Ginzburg, gender history by Joan Scott or postcolonial studies by Edward Said have posed new questions and looked at old evidence from a new perspective.

⁵² Th. Kraus, *Pompeji und Herculaneum*, 14.

⁵³ Ling, 168.

⁵⁴ *Idem*, 170.

⁵⁵ *Ibidem*.

⁵⁶ G. Iggers, *Historiography in the Twentieth Century* (Middletown 2005) 132.

4. MARY BEARD, *POMPEII – THE LIFE OF A ROMAN TOWN*

Rather than the shy introvert classicist you might expect, Mary Beard calls herself a feminist ‘don’ and lives up to that image. Her role as an intellectual is, she claims, speaking her mind in public.⁵⁷ And she certainly does so. Several controversies have followed her statements – be it in the London Review of Books or in her own blog, *A Don’s Life*.⁵⁸ She hit a nerve when she stated, only few weeks after 9/11, that the United States ‘had it coming. [...] World bullies, even if their heart is in the right place, will in the end pay the price.’⁵⁹ Certainly not an untrue statement, but not very sensitive, as she admits today. She declared that ‘Beard’s secret is always to be slightly on the edge, but to pull back from disaster at the last minute.’⁶⁰ In the 9/11 case, hate mail and scathing criticism suggest she might have crossed the line.

18 However that may be, also her studies are fraught with rebellious sentiment. In both her most recent monographs, *The Roman Triumph* and *Pompeii – Life of a Roman Town*, she explicitly articulates that it is her aim to turn so-called facts upside down and expose well-established assumptions to be wrong.⁶¹ On the other hand, in her study on Pompeii she often refers to *The Last Days of Pompeii* by Edward Bulwer-Lytton, a novel from the early nineteenth century, as a bad example of historical writing on Pompeii – not exactly an academic work she compares her own guide to.⁶²

Furthermore, her vocabulary in *Pompeii* is at times very colloquial. The problem is not colloquial language as such; it rather seems misplaced in an otherwise very academic work. I will give some examples. When she talks about the furnishing and painting of the rooms, she pictures that ‘brightly coloured [...] curtains [...] would have added to the gaudy *razzmatazz*.’⁶³ Discussing the function of rooms, she asks the valid question ‘where did the people who lived here eat, cook, sleep, or *shit*?’⁶⁴ Both terms seem to be childish, recalcitrant

⁵⁷ T. Adams, ‘Mary Beard: A classicist in a class of her own’, *The Observer*, 2 May 2010, <http://www.guardian.co.uk/theobserver/2010/may/02/mary-beard-pompeii-profile> (18 March 2012).

⁵⁸ http://timesonline.typepad.com/dons_life/

⁵⁹ M. Beard, ‘11 September’ (4 October 2001), <http://www.lrb.co.uk/v23/n19/nine-eleven-writers/11-september> (17 March 2012).

⁶⁰ R. McCrum, ‘Up Pompeii with the roguish don’, *The Observer*, 24 August 2008, <http://www.guardian.co.uk/books/2008/aug/24/classics> (03 March 2012).

⁶¹ M. Beard, *The Roman Triumph* (Cambridge/London 2007) 3 and M. Beard, *Pompeii – The Life of a Roman Town* (London 2008) 23.

⁶² For instance M. Beard, *Pompeii – The Life of a Roman Town* (London 2008) 97.

⁶³ Beard, *Pompeii*, 93 (my italics).

⁶⁴ *Ibidem* (my italics).

choices. On second thought, however, the latter example might be an expression of the image of Roman life she attempts to draw; she wants to deviate from the clean and sober image that was sketched by neo-classicists in the nineteenth century and emphasize the dirtiness and stench of Roman cities instead.⁶⁵

Sadly, when she discusses different opinions on a certain subject, she mentions no scholars by name. She gives references for some of the discussions in the *Further Reading* section in the back, but the sources of many scholarly opinions remain obscure even to the interested reader. That makes it nearly impossible to check Beard's opinion against others'. Besides, her argumentation is not always transparent. For instance when she discusses the use of a set of front rooms, she determines they were shops and rejects all other options, giving as an implicit argument only that the openings were too large to be anything but shops.⁶⁶

Reviews of Beard's book on Pompeii all point out the intended readership of the guide: educated lay, but not students or researchers of Pompeii. It is a pity that she does not make her insightful dismantling of so-called truths debateable by not providing proper references and sources. The book, therefore, has only limited value for the advancement of research on Pompeii, as Leslie Shumka rightly states.⁶⁷

According to Penelope Allison, an archaeologist, Beard is at times not critical enough and allegedly refers to archaeologists and criticizes them, although they were actually trained as classicists.⁶⁸ Allison seems to forget that most of the early archaeologists were educated as classicists; archaeology as a discipline in its own right and formal education for archaeologists was only developed over the course of the nineteenth century. Allison relativises her criticism in view of the intended audience of the book.⁶⁹ It seems to be permissible not to validate claims as thoroughly for a lay audience as one would for specialists.

Similar problems, however, can be traced in other works of Beard. Reviewing Beard's *Roman Triumph*, Mary Boatwright, a classicist, accuses her of citing previous research in a simplified manner.⁷⁰ And Thomas Habinek, another classicist, is very harsh when he calls *The Roman Triumph* a throwback, despite her subversive attitude.

‘Throughout the book, there is a defensive tone about the Romans, as if the job of the historian was to prove the complexity and thus the worthiness of his or her

⁶⁵ Idem, 56.

⁶⁶ Idem, 86.

⁶⁷ L. Shumka, ‘*The Fires of Vesuvius: Pompeii Lost and Found*, by Mary Beard.’ *Canadian Journal of History* 44 (3) (2009) 493-4.

⁶⁸ P. Allison, ‘Europe: Ancient and Medieval’ *American Historical Review* 114 (5) (December 2009) 1511-2.

⁶⁹ Ibidem.

⁷⁰ M. Boatwright, ‘*The Roman Triumph*. By Mary Beard.’ *The Historian* 71 (4) (2009) 882.

object of study. Beard explicitly acknowledges that the sources incline toward presentation of the viewpoint of the elites, yet no engagement with methods of reading, comparative data, or alternative sources of information that might have counterbalanced that elite bias. [...].⁷¹

He also stresses that Beard's claim that the Triumph was mainly 'inscribed [...] in Roman memory' by means of written documents while the vast majority of Romans throughout antiquity were illiterate.⁷² As I will show, Beard makes a similar claim for literacy when discussing the documents of a Pompeian banker, Caecilius Jucundus.

James Rives, also a classicist, on the other hand, is very positive about Beard's work. He particularly admires her threefold approach in *The Roman Triumph*, being at the same time a re-examination of the evidence about the triumph, a study of Roman culture through the lens of this ritual, and an example of the proper study of ancient history, including at its core a very critical stance towards the primary and secondary sources and writers' own agendas, and how to deal with contradictory or scanty evidence. Beard proposes a history of discourse instead of a history of facts. She does not try to solve (all) ambiguities and problems, leaves them as they are or sees them not as problems of evidence, but as debates also the Romans led.⁷³ She rather emphasizes ambiguities and contradictions instead of attempting to solve them or iron them out. In general, the same can be said about her *Pompeii*.

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Beard divides her book into chapters covering certain topics, rather than buildings. Her approach is certainly more narrative. The choice for such a division reflects the more general conclusions she draws and the connections she makes between different buildings or insights. Her approach is not the archaeologist's, but the postmodern historian's.

⁷¹ T. Habinek, 'Mary Beard. *The Roman Triumph*.' *American Historical Review* 113 (5) (2008) 1467.

⁷² *Ibidem*.

⁷³ J. B. Rives, 'The Roman Triumph, by Mary Beard.' *Canadian journal of history* 43 (3) (2008) 514-6.

5. SIMILARITIES AND DIFFERENCES

In this chapter, I will have a closer look at the similarities and differences between Mau's and Beard's books. My approach to compare the two studies was the following. Both writers differ in their arrangement of their guides. As Mau makes it easy to look up a certain building or topic, I decided to read Mary Beard's book and note in a spread sheet important interpretations; conclusions of which I thought there could be different explanations for. I then looked up the buildings covered by Beard in Mau's guide to compare their interpretations and descriptions. The resulting list is certainly not exhaustive, but should give a fair impression.

Both studies are written for an educated lay audience – mainly as guidebooks. Whereas Mau's book makes it easy to look up a certain house while visiting Pompeii, Beard's is better suited as a pre-visit-introduction. The layout of the book does not invite readers to carry it around the ancient city to look up the different buildings as one passes by. Furthermore, many anecdotes are not properly linked with definite spots in Pompeii. She mentions the many 'phalluses' around the city, but does not give the exact location of any of them.

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The map in the front of her book can only be used one-way, that is from the name of the building to the number on the map. It is rather hard to find the number one sees on the map in the list below, as it is ordered alphabetically and because she does not use Fiorelli's numbering. Also Mau's map, to be found in the back, eases use only one-way, but rather the reverse from Beard's. It is very easy to link a building on the map with its name and the according page in the book, but it is hard to find a certain building on the map. In the text, however, Fiorelli's number indication of the house is always given, making it easy to locate the building on the map, which is numbered according to Fiorelli's system.

In Beard's book, mostly photographs of the ruins or objects are printed. Sometimes, she inserts reconstructions or plans of buildings. They miss the detail, accuracy and beauty of Mau's reconstructions by far. The highlights are definitely the buildings where he places a photograph of the ruins next to a reconstruction – our imagination could not be supported any better.⁷⁴ Even the photos in Mau's book are sharper, which might be due to the choice of

⁷⁴ See, for instance, the *Forum Triangolare*, 136, or the Temple of Isis, 178.

paper; coarse in Beard's case, almost glossy in Mau's. His plates, however, cannot exceed the coloured ones in Beard's book.

One important difference lies in the handling of primary sources. Mau remains a classicist and seems not to have embraced hermeneutics, though it seems improbable that he had never heard of it, bearing in mind its prominence in contemporary historical debates. As stated above, he takes the ancient writers' texts at face value without evaluating their backgrounds or agenda's. Petronius, for instance, wrote satire – which had great influence on his writing to large extents. We can expect that all his descriptions are exaggerated versions of the world around him. Mau does not consider such issues when trying to find four different dinner rooms or *triclinia* for the four seasons.⁷⁵ On the other hand, he dryly concludes that at Pompeii such lavish richness could not be found, without overinterpreting minute evidence in order to identify all four *triclinia* by all means. Thus, although he does not use the sources very critically, he is not tempted to see more in the archaeological evidence than there actually is. Beard, on the other hand, is very critical of her sources. She looks at the biographies of the ancient writers, relativises their statements and compares them with the archaeological evidence.

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Both do not use footnotes. As for the bibliography, Beard has included a *Further Reading* section with references to the most important secondary sources and more information on some important discussions of each chapter. Yet, it does by far not cover all scholarly disputes. Mau did not feel the necessity for including a proper bibliography in his book, either. In the *Anhang* he gives references to some important debates, although by far not for as many as the interested student might hope. His annotations are, at least, more rigid and detailed than Beard's.

The main drawback of Mau's work from today's perspective, obviously, stems from the fact that at the time of writing only parts of the northwestern corner of Pompeii had been excavated, which becomes clear at a glance when looking at plan I.⁷⁶ Many of the buildings Beard discusses are, therefore, not mentioned by Mau.

The remaining differences and similarities are organised in sub-topics and summarised at the end.

HISTORY OF POMPEII

⁷⁵ A. Mau, *Pompeji in Leben und Kunst* (Leipzig 1908) 273.

⁷⁶ Inserted between pages 28 and 29 in *Pompeji*.

Similarities and Differences

Beard gives several explanations for the name ‘Pompeii’. It might come from the Latin word *pompa*, meaning triumph, or Oscan for the number five, *pumpe*. She infers that the city might have been called after an association of five villages.⁷⁷ Mau, on the other hand, derives a surname from the word *pumpe*: Pompeius. Just like the cities *Veii* and *Tarquinius*, *Pompeii* would have derived from the corresponding family name.⁷⁸

When recounting the early history of the city, Mau resorts to stereotypes of the tribes involved in the civil wars. He describes the Campanians as being educated and devoted to an opulent lifestyle, while the Samnites were rawer and more militant. Beard opposes the theatre-loving Pompeians to the brute Roman colonists, mostly retired soldiers. She does, however, stress that while some cultural clash between the Pompeians and the Roman colonists must have ensued, these stereotypes were probably not true.⁷⁹

Concerning the earthquake in 62 BCE, already signalling the renewed activity of Vesuvius, the author’s opinions diverge. Mau takes over the assumption of Seneca and Tacitus that most of the ancient city was destroyed and that by the eruption in 79 BCE, far from everything had been repaired.⁸⁰ Beard challenges these claims. According to her, it is an exaggeration that most of Pompeii had collapsed in 62. How could the city have functioned for 17 years with part of its city still in rubble? Many baths, for example, were under repair in 79. The same is true for a large part of the Forum.⁸¹ It is more likely, I agree with Beard, that many earthquakes in the months and days leading up to the eruption must have caused much of the damage we find today. In some cases, however, looting distorts the picture even more.⁸² Thus, Mau tends to rely on the ancient sources without much reflection, while Beard prefers to highlight the complexity of many debates and show different possible interpretations. I say *prefer*, because she is not always consistent.

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PRIVATE BUILDINGS

A good example of diverging interpretations and approaches is the debate on two rooms of the House of the Tragic Poet. The rooms are situated to the right and left of the doorway and have

⁷⁷ M. Beard, *Pompeii – The Life of a Roman Town* (London 2008) 34.

⁷⁸ A. Mau, *Pompeii*, 7.

⁷⁹ Mau 8, Beard, 36-37.

⁸⁰ Mau, 18.

⁸¹ Mau, 51.

⁸² Beard, 12-14.

wide openings towards the street. Such rooms were usually shops, but both had a small door at the back leading into the House of the Tragic Poet, which was not normally the case. Beard suggests that the shops were owned by the same owner as the house, but probably leased out.⁸³ She mentions that there were other ideas about the use of the room, but dismisses them as being ‘bright ideas, but certainly wrong’ without providing further evidence for her own stance.⁸⁴ William Gell wonders ‘if the wide openings toward the street be not certain indications of a shop, it does not seem impossible that the rooms might have been occupied by the servants of the family’⁸⁵ and Bulwer-Lytton in his novel claims they might have been used for the reception of low-ranking visitors.⁸⁶ Sadly, Beard does not give us a specific indication of where we might find Gell’s and Lytton’s claims. Mau, however, does not even mention any other interpretations – they were simply shops, full stop. Both, then, are not very explicit in their argumentation.

Mau gives a very detailed account of *the* Pompeian house. Whereas Mau is fixed on the idea of *the* Pompeian house and tries to formulate general laws, Beard would not give such an exact definition. According to Mau, the oldest houses were built only around an *atrium*, the *peristyle* was added to the standard layout from the second century BCE on. The older part of the house, around the *atrium*, was given Roman names (*atrium*, *fauces*, *ala*, *tablinum*), while the younger, around the *peristyle*, had Greek names (*peristylum*, *triclinium*, *oecus*, *exedra*). The houses were turned inwards with few and only small windows and, instead, the *impluvium* and *peristyle* for lighting and fresh air. Window façades did not exist in the ancient house. Obviously, Mau did not yet know the House of Fabius Rufus near the *Porta Marina* with its large windows opening on the sea – it had not yet been excavated.⁸⁷

Mau also claims that the door of a house was usually closed – other than Beard, who supposes the opposite.⁸⁸ Whereas Mau does not argue for his position, Beard reasons that the layout of the houses was drawn up to display its wealth. You looked right through the *atrium* and *tablinum* over the plants of the *peristyle* at the back wall, which was often richly decorated. A closed door would, of course, have spoiled the effect.⁸⁹ On the other hand, in the heat of summer in the city, a closed door could have trapped the cold inside. In the same line,

⁸³ Beard, *Pompeii*, 85.

⁸⁴ *Ibidem*, 86.

⁸⁵ William Gell, *Pompeiana*, Vol. I (London 1832) 143.

⁸⁶ Beard, *Pompeii*, 86.

⁸⁷ P. Clements, ‘AD79 : House of M. Fabius Rufus’ (version 17 February 2012),

<http://sites.google.com/site/ad79eruption/pompeii/regio-vii/reg-vii-ins-16/house-of-m-fabius-rufus> (April 08 2012).

⁸⁸ Beard, 84, Mau 251.

⁸⁹ Beard, 84.

Mau argues that the houses were built for staying outdoors, be it outside the house or in the *atrium* or *peristyle*. The houses were built to protect against the heat, not the cold, hence they could keep out the heat, but were hard to heat up in winter. Mau concludes that the ancient Pompeians could endure the cold more easily than the heat – just as the Romans in his day.⁹⁰ Personally, I rather get the opposite impression. Even when it is 15°C warm, Romans seem to wear winter jackets and shawls. However that may be, it is, of course, anachronistic to draw a direct analogy from today's Romans to the Pompeians of 79 CE. It seems he is thinking of a *Volksgeist* of Italians here, characteristics that remain the same over centuries. Furthermore, Mau does not consider the fact that the climate might have changed.

At night, however, the door was certainly closed.⁹¹ Very typically, Mau meticulously describes all the locking mechanisms of doors that were found, concluding that the nights in Pompeii probably were not very safe, and Beard focuses her attention on the nocturnal noises; the creaking and squeaking of cartwheels, the howling of dogs, the babbling of late night drinkers and the shouts of sign painters. Moreover, she concludes that it must have been pitch dark. Dozens of lamps were found, but they were only rather small, their cone of light very limited.⁹²

Just like Beard, Mau notices the rather small kitchens, which make regular lavish banquets somewhat improbable, and that the *triclinia* were not exactly practical.⁹³ Contrary to Beard, Mau does not go on to conclude that the Pompeians probably ate on the wing, the rich at home in the *atrium*, the *tablinum*, the room where the master worked and received most of his clients, or probably even in the *cubiculum*, the bedroom, and the less fortunate out on the street, in or in front of one of the many bars.⁹⁴ Rather, he reasons that the *Speiseluxus* of the early empire did not reach Pompeii.⁹⁵

Furthermore, Mau tries hard to give all the rooms in the Pompeian house a certain label, from the more obvious *atrium* to *alae* (open rooms at the sides of *peristyles*, used for different purposes as, for instance, storage) and dining rooms and bedrooms. The latter were, according to Beard, not only used for sleeping; business talks in private could be held *in cubiculum*.⁹⁶ Mau goes so far as to suggest that Pompeians used to eat sitting at a table in the *atrium* and that *triclinia* were introduced only later. The hearth also used to be situated in the *atrium* and

⁹⁰ Mau, 252.

⁹¹ Beard, 84.

⁹² Mau, 255, Beard 92.

⁹³ Mau, 271, Beard 88.

⁹⁴ Beard, 58.

⁹⁵ Mau, 274.

⁹⁶ Mau, 268-9, Beard 100-1.

its smoke would have blackened the ceiling. Hence the name *atrium*, which was derived from the Latin word *ater* – black.⁹⁷ His claim is not discussed by Beard. Mau even suggests a link between the Pompeian house and peasants' houses in Lower Saxony. The origin of the Pompeian house is supposed to be in the countryside and the *alae* are reminders of that origin. The *atrium* used to be covered, and windows in the *alae* provided the rooms with light. As there could be no windows in the sides of houses in the city, the *atrium* was opened up.⁹⁸ Again, Beard does not mention any of these theories.

There are more examples of Mau's pursuit to classify everything. Apart from the styles of decoration, which I will cover below, he also distinguishes between different six different building styles⁹⁹ and quotes Vitruvius's five types of *atria*.¹⁰⁰

Whereas Beard notes that private houses had no bathrooms and people had to rely on the public baths to wash, Mau only mentions the occasional and very small private baths, only to be found in some of the grandest houses of Pompeii – obviously, because most houses in Mau's time did not have bathrooms either. Beard additionally observes that houses had only one lavatory and suggests that bushes in the *peristyle*, pots or simply the street might have been used for the same purpose.¹⁰¹ On the other hand, we might imagine that one lavatory was sufficient, as not everybody had to relieve himself or herself at the same time. Concerning washing, a bowl or bucket with water would have been enough to clean oneself in the *cubiculum*. Here, Beard seems to fall back into the same thinking in categories concerning the use of rooms as she accuses others of. Just as well as Pompeians probably did not need or use an explicit dining room for most meals and the *cubiculum* was not simply a bedroom, also washing might have taken place wherever it was handy.

When it comes to upper floors, Mau had the disadvantage that few of them were recovered. As I have mentioned above, by starting digging at ground level, whatever remains of upper floors existed were destroyed during the excavation. From the remaining evidence, he concludes that there were few upper rooms, that they were usually irregular in height and did not necessarily match the rooms below.¹⁰² According to Plautus and Varro the upper rooms were called *cenacula*, because the first upper floors used to be dining rooms.¹⁰³ Mau relies much more on ancient texts than Beard; he seeks to understand the etymology of words

⁹⁷ Mau, 269-71.

⁹⁸ Idem, 265.

⁹⁹ Idem, 34-42.

¹⁰⁰ Idem, 255-61.

¹⁰¹ Mau, 275, Beard 93-4.

¹⁰² Mau, 280-1.

¹⁰³ Idem, 281-2.

and tries to locate the rooms in the archaeological evidence. The labelling of rooms seems to be rather important to him. Beard, however, is more focussed on the function, meaning and importance of rooms (or buildings, for that matter). She concludes that upper floor rooms could be used as attics for storage, some as bedrooms or even apartments to let, here and there with a stairway leading up to it directly from the street. The owner probably slept downstairs, slaves in the kitchen, near the door of their master or at the foot of his bed. Children would sleep with adults, probably parents, but more likely with slaves.¹⁰⁴

The inhabitants of the larger houses, the ‘typical’ Pompeian houses, were probably households, an extended nuclear family with slaves and ex-slaves, the family’s dependents. Apparently, the Latin word *familia* includes slaves and ex-slaves.¹⁰⁵ It has been suggested that these households consisted of up to 40 people, but Beard is convinced that even with 20 inhabitants, the houses must have been crowded.¹⁰⁶ Mau does not even consider the question of how many people might have been living in one house.

In the same line, Beard seeks to analyse the proportions of rich and poor, whereas Mau does not attempt any such interpretational business. Beard states that the differences must have been considerable. The most destitute poor probably died very soon, although some may have lived in tombs or other dark corners. The smallest houses consisted of just one room and must have lodged several people. The phalluses painted onto the walls of these rooms not necessarily point to prostitution – although they might – as the phallus was also a symbol for good luck. Furthermore, there were houses with a central court instead of an *atrium*, rented rooms and flats on upper floors.¹⁰⁷ Not always is it easy to link an apartment with the social status of its owner. The rooms above the Sarno baths, for example, offered a splendid view over the sea and airy rooms, but also had to cope with noise from the baths and had no lavatories.¹⁰⁸

It is even more difficult to link names of owners with the appropriate houses, as there is usually little proof. Beard explains that the results can shed light on what background and social status owners of certain houses had.¹⁰⁹ As a rule, Mau focuses more on descriptions of the rooms, often including exact dimensions. What is more, he compares them to Vitruvius’s ideal ratios and interprets the differences – buildings could be grander or lose some of their

¹⁰⁴ Beard, 98.

¹⁰⁵ *Idem*, 99.

¹⁰⁶ *Ibidem*.

¹⁰⁷ Beard, 105-8.

¹⁰⁸ *Ibidem*, 108.

¹⁰⁹ *Ibidem*, 117.

appeal if they were not built according to Vitruvius's laws.¹¹⁰ See, for instance, the House of the Faun.¹¹¹

STREETS

Both authors agree that the street grid was established before most houses were built: it was a planned grid.¹¹² Beard claims that it had already been established in the sixth century BCE, around the same time when the city walls were built.¹¹³ They were, then, built taking into consideration the future development of the city. As the excavations had not proceeded beyond the western part of Pompeii, Mau could not yet assess the whole extent of the grid.¹¹⁴

Although the streets seem to have been planned, there was no zoning of the city. Residential houses, crafts, entertainment, rich and poor intermingled. While Beard points to this fact, Mau does not mention it.¹¹⁵ From the archaeological evidence, no zones can be distinguished, but it is typical for Mau not to pose the question.

While the streets were probably the municipality's responsibility, the sidewalks were not. As many different sorts of stone were used in front of different houses, both Beard and Mau conclude that the sidewalks were privately built and maintained.¹¹⁶ The same might have been true for cleaning the sidewalks. Yet, while for Beard, busting the myth of perfectly clean Pompeian streets is a main concern, Mau does not dwell on the topic. She emphasizes that excrements, rotten vegetables and other waste must have filled the streets, a nasty odour arising from the mess. Thus, not only were the stepping stones necessary for providing a safe passage across the torrents heavy rainfall could generate, but also to keep the feet clean.¹¹⁷ On the other hand, we might imagine that during the night, when little water was used, it was diverted through the streets in order to have the dirt washed out. The next morning, at least the streets leading downhill could have been fairly clean. Mau does not refute Beard's claim – he simply does not consider it. He sees the stepping stones merely as a means of evading rainwater and overspill.¹¹⁸

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¹¹⁰ Mau, 257.

¹¹¹ *Idem*, 303-4.

¹¹² *Idem*, 29.

¹¹³ Beard, 32-3.

¹¹⁴ Mau, plan I between pages 28 and 29.

¹¹⁵ Beard, 62.

¹¹⁶ Beard, 72, Mau 231.

¹¹⁷ Beard, 56-7.

¹¹⁸ Mau, 232.

Also when considering the function of bars and inns, Mau does not pose fundamental questions or look at the wider picture, he simply describes the individual buildings. He attempts to reconstruct the use of the different excavated rooms and structures, such as the pots in the counter. Mau does conclude, however, that the inns were cheap and the quality low. Travellers with sufficient status would rather stay with acquaintances.¹¹⁹ The former conclusion could be derived from the small quarters and the close location of the stables. How Mau arrives at the latter conclusion remains completely obscure. It is interesting to note that today, the situation is rather the opposite. Beard claims the same for dining outside the house or privately. Because the modest living quarters were very small and had no or little means to cook, she deduces that the poor rather ate out.¹²⁰ That would also point to the high number of bars that were found in Pompeii. Beard still thinks that 200 of them were too many for the 12'000 inhabitants (a crude estimate). Thus, some of them could simply have been grocery stores rather than fast-food restaurants selling food ready to eat.¹²¹

Just as difficult as it is to match certain names with certain houses, it is largely impossible to link buildings with certain trades. Both Beard and Mau indicate that only the ones that used permanent structures for their work, like fullers or bakeries, can be identified. For others, we have to rely on graffiti, descriptions or rare finds like the irregular tools of a doctor or documents of a banker. For most of the trades and crafts as architects, barbers, or weavers, however, we cannot find out where they were settled or how many of them there were.¹²²

Some differences of approach also come to the fore in the discussion of the documents of the banker Lucius Caecilius Jucundus which were found in a chest in his house. While Mau claims that a certain Lucius Caecilius Felix mentioned in one of the documents was Jucundus's father, Beard points out that it might just as well have been an uncle.¹²³ It is also characteristic that Beard warns that only part of all the documents that must have passed Jucundus's hands were found in that wooden chest – what exactly the criteria for this selection were we do not know – and Mau simply describes and interprets the evidence we have.¹²⁴ But even interpretations based on the same documents can differ, of course. Beard claims that Jucundus collected taxes for grazing grounds in the name of the municipality and

¹¹⁹ *Idem*, 420-421.

¹²⁰ Beard, 58.

¹²¹ Beard, 226-227.

¹²² Beard, 169, Mau, 404.

¹²³ Mau, 517, Beard, 177.

¹²⁴ Beard, 178, Mau, 517-21.

rented a farm and a fullery, where cloth was treated, from the community.¹²⁵ Mau, however, tells us that he paid the rent for the grazing grounds himself instead of collecting it from somebody else.¹²⁶ Departing from the same Latin text, they arrive at a different conclusion. An interesting detail: Mau converts the amounts in sesterces into his contemporary German Mark, but does not state on what sources he bases his calculation.¹²⁷ For the contemporary reader the conversion was very convenient, but without a reference it is of no use to the scholar.

THE FORUM

According to Mau, the forum was mainly used as a marketplace. The buildings around it would dispense some of the pressure, because in the *Macellum*, a large market hall, food was sold, in the Building of Eumachia clothes, and other goods in the basilica and the hall west of the temple of Jupiter.¹²⁸ Beard, on the other hand, maintains that the function of the Building of Eumachia is one of the biggest puzzles of archaeology – it might just as well have been a guildhall of cloth workers or a slave market.¹²⁹ Beard dismisses the first option as mere fantasy, because the only evidence pointing in that direction is that the fullers sponsored a statue of Eumachia that was erected in the building. She does not, however, dare to raise a new suggestion.¹³⁰

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Both scholars mention that there must have been gates at the entrances to the forum, and both agree that they were probably open to the public most of the time.¹³¹ Beard proposes that they might have been closed at night, or that they were used during elections to be able to control the electorate body.¹³² She mentions nothing of the possible use Mau mentions, namely the closing off of certain parts during gladiatorial games to be able to collect entry fees. Other uses of the forum Mau mentions include musical and pantomime performances, bullfights, and games. Furthermore, he claims that the forum was the ‘Festsaal und Dingstätte der Bürgerschaft,’ Dingstätte denoting a place where (political) gatherings were held.¹³³

¹²⁵ Beard, 180.

¹²⁶ Mau, 519.

¹²⁷ Ibidem.

¹²⁸ Mau, 51.

¹²⁹ Beard, 51, 164-5.

¹³⁰ Idem, 214.

¹³¹ Beard, 66, Mau, 53.

¹³² Beard, 67.

¹³³ Mau 53-5.

The archaeological evidence shows that carts were not allowed on the forum – the entrances were simply blocked by large stones set in the pavement. Beard proposes, based on a painting in the House of Julia Felix which shows a cart in a portico that carts might have been allowed at certain times (for instance by allowing access via ramps).¹³⁴ Mau, however, seems not to have known this particular painting.¹³⁵ He interprets the road blockades and the resulting ban of carts on the forum as an important distinction between the capital and the provincial cities: while in Rome carts were allowed by law during religious and civil celebrations, outside the capital they were forbidden in order to make the celebrations (and the participators) of the capital more exclusive. According to Mau, all sources from Pompeii suggest that during processions carts or wagons were not used.¹³⁶ Beard proposes that part of the *Via dell'Abbondanza* was closed to carts exactly for these processions which might have taken place between the theatres and the forum. She adds the possibility that they were mainly meant to divert the water towards the Sarno gate.¹³⁷

Both writers claim to know the positions of statues of the imperial family on the Forum as opposed to the statues of citizens. The statues were recovered some time after the eruption, but the sockets remained. Neither Beard nor Mau explain how they arrived at their conclusion.¹³⁸

Concerning the temple of Jupiter, Juno and Minerva, both agree that at the time of the 79 CE eruption, it might temporarily have been used as a mason's workshop. While Beard gives some other interpretations as well, Mau is convinced that this is the only true explanation.¹³⁹

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PAINTING AND DECORATION

The paintings decorating the walls in a room often had a common theme. In the House of Jason, for instance, three paintings of Medea, Phaedra and Helen all depict 'a moment of calm before tragedy strikes.'¹⁴⁰ In the *atrium* of the House of the Tragic Poet, six paintings decorated the walls. Some of them were destroyed beyond recognition, others have been

¹³⁴ Beard, 76.

¹³⁵ The House of Julia Felix was excavated and reburied in the eighteenth century; drawings of some of the paintings were made of which two are reproduced by Mau without reference to the building. Whether there was no drawing of the painting in question or whether Mau simply did not find it useful, we do not know. For the House of Julia Felix, see P. Clements, 'AD79 : House of Julia Felix' (version 17 August 2011), <https://sites.google.com/site/ad79eruption/pompeii/regio-ii/reg-ii-ins-4/house-of-julia-felix> (10 April 2012).

¹³⁶ Mau, 55.

¹³⁷ Beard, 67, Mau, 53-5.

¹³⁸ Beard, 207, Mau, 44-5.

¹³⁹ Beard, 289-90, Mau, 59.

¹⁴⁰ Beard, 149.

preserved. They probably all showed stories from the Trojan War.¹⁴¹ Beard and Mau agree that the painting of Iphigenia is not of very high quality.¹⁴² It is supposed to be based on the masterpiece of a Greek artist, Timanthes, which we only know from descriptions by Pliny and Cicero.¹⁴³ The most emotional characters, Odysseus and Menelaus, are left out and Iphigenia is depicted in a different fashion: instead of standing at the altar, patiently awaiting her fate, she is carried by two men.¹⁴⁴ Beard concludes that the Pompeian painter had probably never seen the original, but evoked rather than reproduced the original.¹⁴⁵ Mau comments that the painter depicted the characters in the most favourable perspective, thereby neglecting a more dramatic one. He claims that this weakness is to be found in many Pompeian paintings.¹⁴⁶

The idea of themes for paintings suggests that they were more than mere decoration. Another example of the seemingly intelligent use of painting is the depiction of Narcissus on a wall above a marble *triclinium* with a small nymphaeum and a little lake in the middle of the *triclinium*: when looking at their own reflection in the water, should the diners have been reminded of Narcissus's fate?¹⁴⁷ What is more, in a graffito on a kitchen wall in the House of Julius Polybius someone comments on a painting of Dirce in the same house, revealing deep knowledge of the background of the story.¹⁴⁸ Yet, Beard warns the reader not to overestimate their meaning; we should not go too far and try to decipher some mythical code from the images, as other scholars have attempted.¹⁴⁹

In the conclusion of her chapter on *Painting and Decorating*, Beard seems rather enthusiastic about the cultural scope of Pompeian art. Not only did it extend architecture through magnificent *trompe l'oeils*, it also depicted a large cosmos of cultural images from the Far East to Egypt and many myths from the Greco-Roman sphere. The influence of the Roman Empire on this provincial town must have been considerable.¹⁵⁰ A more simple function of the decoration was to lighten up the dark rooms in the Pompeian houses by means of their light colours.¹⁵¹ Mau typically does not draw such general conclusions or paint such a

¹⁴¹ Mau, 334.

¹⁴² Beard, 144, Mau, 335-6.

¹⁴³ Beard, 143.

¹⁴⁴ Mau, 335-6, Beard, 143-4.

¹⁴⁵ Beard, 144.

¹⁴⁶ Mau, 334.

¹⁴⁷ Beard, 146.

¹⁴⁸ Idem, 145-6.

¹⁴⁹ Idem, 145.

¹⁵⁰ Idem, 150.

¹⁵¹ Idem, 92.

wide picture. He leaves it at describing and judging the images, as in the case of the painting of Iphigenia.¹⁵²

Lastly, I wish to discuss Mary Beard's and August Mau's handling of the four styles of Pompeian art. Mau, having defined the four styles in his earlier work,¹⁵³ very accurately describes their characteristics. In the third style, he sees Egyptian influences, while in the second and fourth, Greek ones are dominant. He concludes that the fourth style must have developed from the second in Greece, while the third one was developed in Pompeii under the influence of Egyptian art.¹⁵⁴ Beard challenges this separation of four homogenous styles. The distinction, she argues, simply is not that clear, especially between the third and fourth style.¹⁵⁵ Her claim is supported by the fact that even Mau had issues with defining the styles: initially, he had distinguished five styles, but later narrowed them down to four.¹⁵⁶ Beard agrees that a chronological order seems logical, as 80 per cent of all decorations can be placed in the fourth style. All other styles, however, were on display as well, sometimes even in the same house or applied at times when another style was already dominant. She suggests a new view on wall painting, taking into account the function of the room, but arrives at no convincing conclusion. She admits that there is no direct connection between a room's function and its decoration, but only some superficial commonalities. Service areas, for example, were usually clad in a black and white design, gardens often showed imaginary wilderness scenes, and in the grandest rooms, obviously, the most expensive colours were used.¹⁵⁷ In the end, then, also Mary Beard resorts to attempts of categorization, although more tentative and more aware of the difficulties involved.

Many more similarities and differences could be found, of course, but I think that the ones given above provide us with a wide enough picture to be able to make an assessment. First, I will recapitulate the characteristics of each author.

¹⁵² Mau, 335-6.

¹⁵³ He published his findings in A. Mau, *Geschichte der decorativen Wandmalerei in Pompeji* (Berlin 1882).

¹⁵⁴ Mau, *Pompeji*, 473-89.

¹⁵⁵ Beard, 135, 137.

¹⁵⁶ Döhl, 'August Mau', 78.

¹⁵⁷ Beard, 138.

August Mau's background as a Latinist often seeps through in his approach: he often refers to the etymology of names and heavily relies on ancient texts. On the other hand, it is very much an archaeologists study, as his book is mostly descriptive; he makes few general remarks on the life of Pompeians and does not place the findings in a larger picture. The buildings are usually described separately, without placing them in a wider context. These descriptions are, however, all the more detailed, while remaining readable. From his descriptions, he attempts to make various categorizations, as of styles of building or decoration. These categorizations might be seen as interpretations, just as well as the reconstructions of the buildings. The latter are based on archaeological evidence, but always partly emerge from the imagination of the illustrator. Nevertheless, they are very accurately drawn and with their shadings and shadows become almost three-dimensional. Furthermore, he often makes judging remarks, for instance about wall decorations and art, or the shape of columns. And sometimes, he uses anachronistic analogies which seem rather strange today. It appears that he was convinced that every people, every nation has its own *Volksgeist*, and therefore, analogies can be made from today's Romans to the ancient Pompeians. Therefore, I dare say, Mau - at least in his *Pompeji in Leben und Kunst* - had an antiquarian approach to history and archaeology, by mainly describing and categorizing. The parts on *Leben* are rather limited.

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Mary Beard, on the other hand, tends to the opposite. The questions she asks have a much wider scope. By means of interpretation of many sorts of evidence, including the critical study of ancient texts, she attempts to draw a wide picture of the spheres in which daily life in Pompeii took place; private, political, social, religious, economic. She did, of course, have more sources at her disposal. Not only were many more buildings excavated, but also research methods have changed, improved and multiplied and many more specific studies have been conducted since Mau wrote his *Pompeji*. That she composed her book for a lay audience is, however, no reason to let academic standards slump. Leaving out footnotes is one thing, but in the *Further Reading* section she does not cover all important academic discussions by far. For some of her conclusions, her sources and argumentation remain obscure.

6. CONCLUSION

At first glance, August Mau's and Mary Beard's book have more in common than one might expect. Both studies are guidebooks principally for a lay audience, not scholars or students. Therefore, both have neither used footnotes nor inserted a complete bibliography. Whereas in Mau's *Anhang*, many important debates are presented in more detail for the interested reader and literature for each page in the book is noted, Beard's *Further Reading* section is rather unsatisfying. Although the standards for annotation have been sharpened over the last century, Beard does not adhere to them. This is regrettable, because Beard's new insights are, therefore, of no use to scholars – her claims are not verifiable and not debatable. Another commonality is that both authors at times are not explicit enough in their argumentation. At a short glance, the tables of contents show us that there must be significant differences, as well.

Their divisions into chapters suggest two different approaches. While Mau has ordered his book, roughly, according to the different buildings already excavated, Beard emphasizes different aspects of Pompeian life. The two approaches reflected are Mau's *archaeological-antiquarian* and Beard's *historical-interpretative*. Both in certain ways reflect their own time and background.

Mau's *Pompeji* is certainly not an example of leading progressive historical research of the turn of the century. It is, rather, very typical for the (mid-)nineteenth century desire to classify and categorize. It is important to note, however, that his approach also comes forth from his decision to write an archaeological guide. The very idea of the guide is that it should be a reference book to look up certain buildings. On the other hand, his way of reasoning sometimes seems peculiar to the twenty-first century reader. What is regarded as legitimate reasoning in dealing with history has apparently been subject to change. A telling example is the notion of a *Volksgeist* which Mau allegedly adheres to and is very typical for nineteenth century thought. It also seems that references were mainly meant to provide the interested reader with more information, not to make the argumentation verifiable, transparent and objective. And while today, a writer's work is treated as an autonomous interpretation that is not to be tampered with, a study in Mau's time could be edited, rectified and enhanced where necessary or where new evidence provided different insights.

In Beard's study, many developments of the last century can be traced. Rather than describing the evidence, she is interpreting and linking it. Her approach is much more

subjective than Mau's. She is asking deeper and more encompassing questions about how people *might* have lived in Pompeii. We could also say, however, that she makes *different* links and connections than Mau. Not only what is accepted as legitimate reasoning has changed, but also what links can legitimately be made. While Mau sticks much more closely to the hard evidence, Beard dares to diverge farther from it. On the other hand, it also becomes obvious that different interpretations of the same evidence are possible, as for example about the function of certain buildings. In some cases, Mau does not even mention certain topics, because he has a different way of looking at the evidence and because he does not pose the accordant questions. Furthermore, Beard tries not to judge, whereas Mau gives his own assessment of what he finds beautiful and what he does not. Should not the opposite be the case? It was the nineteenth century historian Mommsen who pleaded for 'rücksichtslos ehrliche [...]Wahrheitsforschung'¹⁵⁸ and it should be the postmodernists who allow for more personal judgement. It appears, then, that although certain decades herald certain believes, contemporary studies need not adhere to these in all respects. General tendencies we perceive not necessarily need to be true for all studies. It is obvious that over the last century, then, mainly the approach seems to have changed; from cataloguing, describing and categorizing to drawing more general interpretations. Although humans tend to categorize, historians seem to be more reluctant to do so today. Both studies do fit in their own time and are, to a certain degree, reflections thereof and of this general tendency. They do, however, retain their peculiarities and need not adhere to all the principles conventional in their time.

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In Beard's case, two important questions remain. How subversive is her book after all? She busts two important myths; the notion of cleanliness and the practice of assigning one definite function to each room. Apart from these and some smaller issues, however, there is little subversion to be found – it is mostly polemic. Her incidental use of colloquial language does fit into her subversive image. In an overall academic work, it seems rather misplaced. That is not to say, however, that she is wrong in her criticism or the points she makes. Mary Beard also wanted to show how ancient Pompeii became 'our Pompeii'. In some instances, she has shown that certain assumptions were quite certainly wrong. She has not, however, succeeded in doing so for the wider picture. And how could she? We will never know what the 'ancient Pompeii' actually was like, no matter how many more subversive historians shed new light on the same evidence. Yet, it is mainly the progressive and daring scholars who fuel the debates. And debating is, after all, what academic research is all about.¹⁵⁹

¹⁵⁸ K. Christ, *Von Gibbon zu Rostovtzeff*, 105.

¹⁵⁹ 11'694 words.

Conclusion

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