

## A HOME IN ROME: VILLA MILLS AND THE PALATINE HILL

by Tommaso Zerbi<sup>1</sup>

*Prior to the acts of demolition pursued in the ventennio to recover and celebrate the heirlooms of antiquity as the simulacra of a fascist restoration of the Roman Empire, a Gothic Revival villa stood atop the Palatine Hill. A transhistorical palimpsest, this edifice incorporated a portion of the imperial palace that was erected for Domitian after his accession to power (AD 81). Through the disclosure of groundbreaking archival documentation, this article reveals that the Gothic Revival mansion, commonly known as ‘Villa Mills’, can be renamed ‘Villa Smith’. It was Robert Smith (1787–1873), a lieutenant-colonel of the East India Company, who embarked on the medievalist makeover rather than the previous owner, a fellow Englishman named Charles Andrew Mills (1770–1846). In spite of an exceptional location in the imperial heart of the Eternal City, knowledge of the nineteenth-century history of the site is very limited and tends to be derived from hearsay and hypothesis, rather than primary information. Drawing on broad textual and iconographical sources, this article aims to fill this gap by reflecting closely upon the relationships in pre-unification Rome between architecture and political and cultural intent, between Italy and Britain, and between modernity and antiquity. After a reconstruction of British presence above the Domus Augustana and an investigation of the person behind the neo-Gothic reworking, the study offers a critical reconsideration of Villa Mills and the character of (Charles Andrew) Mills.*

*Una villa neogotica sorgeva sul Colle Palatino prima delle demolizioni perseguite nel ventennio per recuperare e celebrare i cimeli dell’antichità come i simulacri di una restaurazione fascista dell’impero romano. Un palinsesto transstorico, l’edificio incorporava una parte del palazzo imperiale eretto per Domiziano in seguito alla sua ascesa al potere (81 d.C.). Attraverso uno straordinario ritrovamento documentario, questo articolo suggerisce che la dimora neogotica, comunemente nota come ‘Villa Mills’, può essere ribattezzata ‘Villa Smith’. Non fu infatti l’inglese Charles Andrew Mills (1770–1846), ma il successivo proprietario Robert Smith (1787–1873) — un tenente-colonnello della Compagnia delle Indie Orientali — ad intraprendere il rifacimento medievalista. Nonostante la straordinaria posizione nel cuore imperiale della Città Eterna, la conoscenza della storia*

---

<sup>1</sup> Research for this project was made possible through the award of the 2021/2022 Paul Mellon Centre Rome Fellowship. The findings of my activity at the British School at Rome were first presented in a public lecture on 13 December 2021. My deepest gratitude goes to the Paul Mellon Centre for Studies in British Art for generous support, to Tanja Michalsky and the Bibliotheca Hertziana — Max Planck Institute for Art History (BH-P-22-06), for the opportunity to complete this project, and to the staff of the British School at Rome, for their tireless attention. I am particularly grateful to the anonymous reviewers, for the kind words, and to Abigail Brundin, Emlyn Dodd, the late Harriet O’Neill and all who made me feel at home in Rome. My special thanks are due to suor Maria Agnese and the cloistered nuns of the Monastero della Visitazione di Santa Maria, and to the several institutes that allowed me to consult their archival holdings. Unless otherwise noted, all translations are my own. This article is dedicated to Maria Romilda (1937–2022).

*ottocentesca del sito è stata sino ad oggi esigua, e per lo più fondata su dicerie e ipotesi piuttosto che fonti primarie. Attingendo ad un ampio bacino documentario testuale ed iconografico, il presente studio mira a colmare questa lacuna e riflettere sulle relazioni tra architettura, politica e cultura, tra Italia e Gran Bretagna e tra contemporaneità ed antichità nella Roma preunitaria. Ricostruisce una storia della presenza britannica sulla Domus Augustana, conduce un'indagine sulla committenza dell'intervento neogotico ed offre una riconsiderazione critica di Villa Mills e del personaggio storico di (Charles Andrew) Mills.*

## PROLOGUE

A photographic print on card in the Parker Collection of the Photographic Archive of the British School at Rome, dated between 1864 and 1866, offers a view of the Palatine Hill from via dei Cerchi, in the area of the Circo Massimo (Fig. 1). In the background, the southern slope of the hill leads to the ruins of the Palatine Stadium (to the left) and the Palace of Severus (to the right). In the foreground, a curious iron gate with two solid pillars, enriched by roundels and crowned with delicate pinecone finials, interrupts a modest boundary wall. A manuscript conserved in the Archivio Storico Capitolino attests that, on 24 March 1851, under the instructions of the engineer G. Palazzi, the City Council of Rome granted a 'Robberto Smit [*sic*]' the licence to open a gate in via dei Cerchi 46.<sup>2</sup> By locating the street number in the urban cadastre (official property register) of Rome (1871) — where '46' appears as a correction in pencil over a '45' — it is possible to suggest that the photographic print shows the gate wanted by Smith at the foot of the hill (Fig. 2). The argument is strengthened by a visual comparison between the albumen and a small sketch plan of the project proposal, which is dated 12 March 1851 (Fig. 3). This plan shows the outline of the wall and two pillars, and their positioning in between via dei Cerchi and the 'Garden that introduces to Villa Smit [*sic*]' ('Orto che conduce alla Villa Smit [*sic*]').

We shall return to the photographic print showing the gate to this Villa Smith later, when it will activate one of the arguments of this article.

## INTRODUCTION

One of Britain's foremost travel writers of the twentieth century, H.V. Morton (1892–1979), achieved international fame in the 1920s by covering the sensational opening of Tutankhamun's tomb. In the appendix to a travel book first published in 1957, he reconstructs a biography of a Charles Andrew Mills (1770–1846) (Morton, 1958: 417–20).<sup>3</sup> Morton (1958: 417) presents him as a

<sup>2</sup> Rome, ASC, Amministrazione, Comune pontificio, Titolo preunitario, Titolo 62, busta 3, fascicolo 137.

<sup>3</sup> Morton, like some others, mentions that Charles Andrew was born in 1760. Yet this information does not sit well with the fact that Charles Andrew's eldest brother, George Galway,



Fig. 1. The gate of Villa Smith in via dei Cerchi, Rome. John Henry Parker (1806–1884), *Palatine*, between 1864 and 1866, photographic print on card, image 19 × 26, on card 22 × 30 cm. Rome, BSR PA, John Henry Parker Collection, jhp-0108. Courtesy of the British School at Rome.

member of the Legislative Council on the island of St Kitts, a descendant, on his father's side, of a London goldsmith who had made his fortune in the West Indies and, through his mother, of a Scottish soldier of fortune who had been appointed governor of the Leeward Islands. Following the loss of his role as Collector of Customs in Guadeloupe (1809–17), the journalist adds, Mills acquired a property that was soon turned into 'shades of Strawberry Hill and Fonthill Abbey', as the owner 'built himself a Gothic villa' (Morton, 1958: 156, 417, 419). This article reveals that this Gothic Revival mansion, known as 'Villa Mills', should be renamed 'Villa Smith', as primary evidence suggests that Lieutenant-Colonel Robert Smith (1787–1873), a former official of the East India Company, acquired the property from Mills (in 1846) and pursued the medievalist makeover (Figs 4 and 5). The intervention might not seem surprising in the age of Victorian medievalism and Gothic (Parker and Wagner,

---

was born only in 1765. According to the database of the Centre for the Study of the Legacies of British Slavery, Charles Andrew was born on 30 August 1770 and baptized on 7 September 1770 at St Mary's, St Marylebone, London. <https://www.ucl.ac.uk/lbs/person/view/26099> (accessed 5 April 2022).

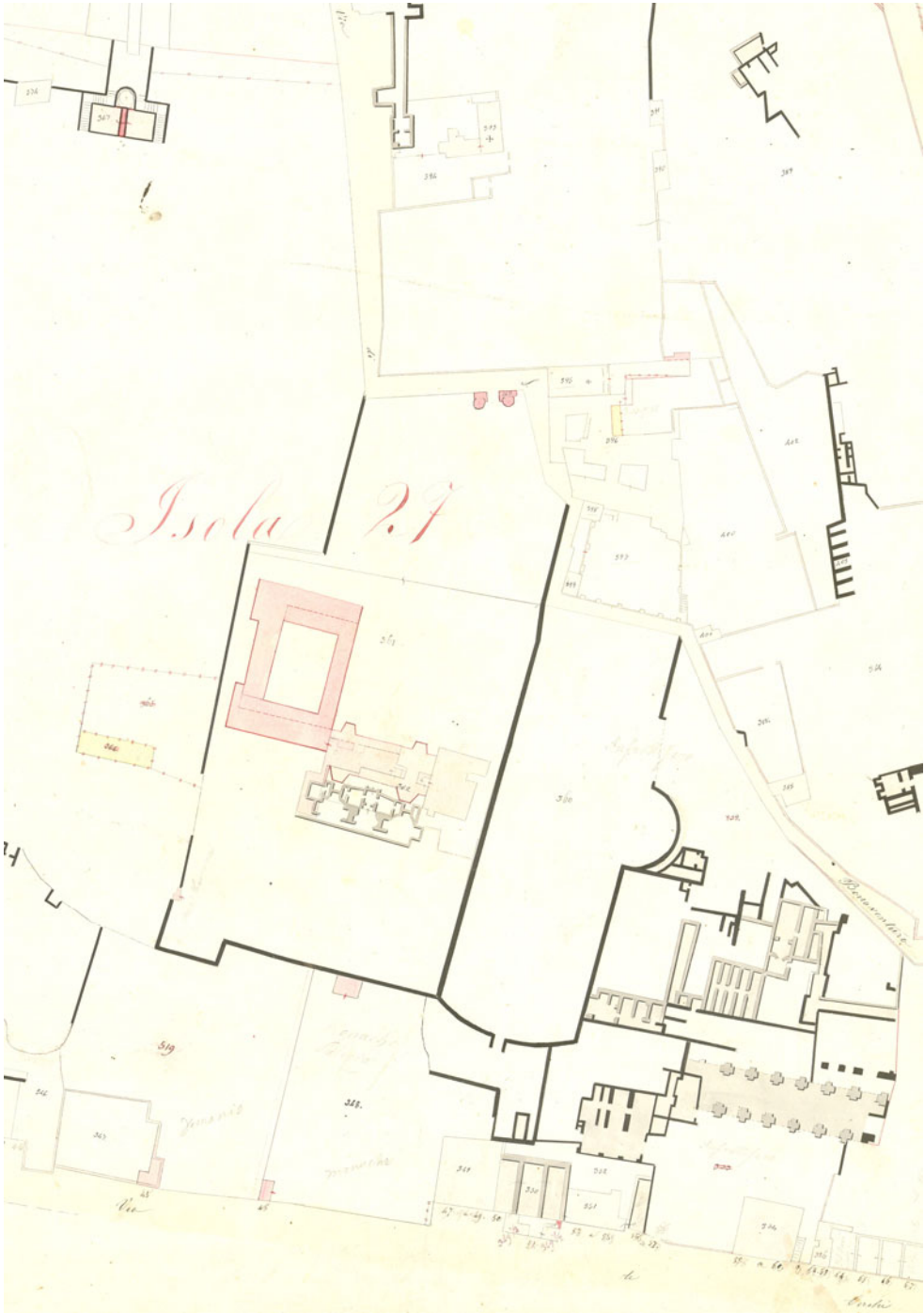


Fig. 2. Detail of the Rione X (Campitelli) from the urban cadastre of Rome (1871). Rome, ASR — SIS, Presidenza generale del censo, Catasto urbano di Roma, Campitelli, Allegato, 2-II. Courtesy of the Ministero della Cultura — Archivio di Stato di Roma.

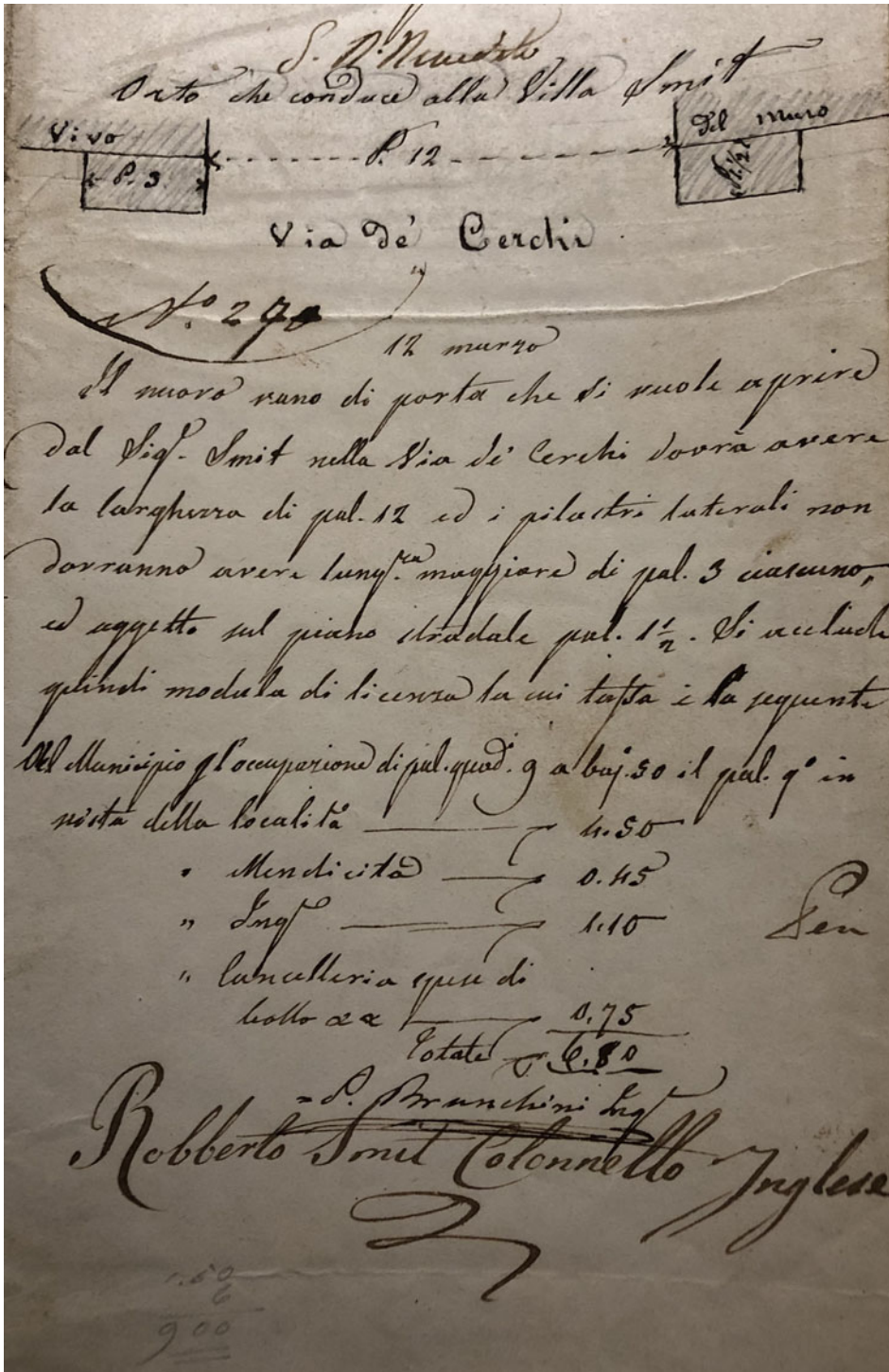


Fig. 3. Robert Smith's proposal for the opening of a gate in via dei Cerchi 46, Rome (1851). Rome, ASC, Amministrazione, Comune pontificio, Titolo preunitario, Titolo 62, busta 3, fascicolo 137. Courtesy of the Sovrintendenza Capitolina — Archivio Storico Capitolino.



Fig. 4. The northeast front of Villa Smith, Rome. Giovanni Gargioli (1838–1913), n.d., photographic print. Rome, ASGFN, E001934. Courtesy of the Ministero della Cultura — Istituto Centrale per il Catalogo e la Documentazione.

2020). Yet Villa Smith was not located in Britain, nor in any of its formal or informal colonies, but, surprisingly enough, in Rome, where the Gothic Revival might appear as a striking, and sporadic, anomaly. What is even more surprising is that it was erected atop the Palatine Hill, where it incorporated Villa Mills, formerly Villa Magnani — and, prior to that, Villa Spada, Mattei (di Giove) and Stati — above the *Domus Augustana* (Fig. 6).<sup>4</sup> While housing the Loggia Stati–Mattei (Baroni and Parapatti, 1997), with sixteenth-century painterly works that have been attributed to Raffaello, Raffaellino del Colle, Baldassarre Peruzzi or Giulio Romano (Cortilli, 2021: 315), the edifice rested on the walls of the palace erected by Domitian towards the end of the first century AD. Villa Smith was turned into the monastery of the Sisters of Visitation in the second half of the nineteenth century and then demolished (sparing the Loggia Stati–Mattei) in the first half of the twentieth century, to reveal the Roman structures (Figs 7 and 8). Starting with preliminary investigations in 1907, which led to Alfonso Bartoli’s (1874–1957) claimed discovery of the Oratory and Monastery of Saint Caesarius beneath ‘Villa Mills’, but mostly during the *ventennio* — after the death of Giacomo Boni

<sup>4</sup> On the ownership of the estate, see Pafumi, 2007: 207–8.



Fig. 5. The southwest front of Villa Smith, Rome. Esther Boise Van Deman (1862–1937), n.d., photographic print, 18 × 24 cm. Rome, AAR, Photo Archive, Van Deman Collection, VanDeman. 715. Courtesy of the American Academy in Rome.

(1859–1925) and the appointment of the archaeologist from Foligno as the director of excavations in the Forum and on the Palatine (1925–45) — the neo-Gothic mansion was erased from the Palatine Hill (Bartoli, 1907, 1929, 1938; Spera, 2017).

Around the time of these preliminary investigations, A.J. Rusconi (1906) published an article on ‘La Villa Mills sul Palatino’, followed by Bartoli’s (1908) ‘La Villa Mills al Palatino’. The former does not add much to the statement that Villa [Smith] recalls a *maison hantée*. The latter is a call to action to demolish it, rather than a critical study. To this day, the topic is haunted by vague, imprecise and even wrong information. One can point to the attribution of the medievalist renovation to Mills, a misconception that this essay will link to both a superficial reading of the edifice by the pioneering archaeologist of ancient topography Rodolfo Lanciani (1845–1929) and the Roman legacy of the character of Mills. The villa, in contrast to the previous heirlooms of the Palatine (the imperial ones, especially), has not garnered an equivalent degree of scholarly interest.<sup>5</sup> This is not surprising. After all, the

<sup>5</sup> Among the rich literature on the Palatine Hill, see, for example, Augenti, 1996; Iacopi, 1997; Coarelli, 2012; Morganti, 2018.



Fig. 6. View of the Palatine Hill from northeast, with Villa Smith in the background, between the Convent of Saint Bonaventura and the Farnese Aviaries, Rome. Félix Benoist (1818–1896), *Palais des Césars sur le Palatin, vue de l'entrée principale, prise de la Basilique de Constantin*, 1870, lithograph, 25 × 36 (on 35 × 50) cm, in *Rome dans sa grandeur*. Courtesy of the author.

edifice is for Rusconi (1906: 158) a mere ‘watchful guardian of the grandiose ruins of the Palatine Hill’ (‘vigile custode delle rovine grandiose del Palatino’). Despite the explicit caveat to conduct the excavations ‘so that the monuments of a given time are not sacrificed in favour of those of a different epoch’ (‘in modo che non si sacrificino monumenti di un dato tempo a preteso vantaggio di quelli di altra epoca’), Bartoli (1908: 102) — while concerned to ‘scrupulously save what is left in there not only from the Empire but also from the Middle Ages and the Renaissance’ (‘scrupolosamente salvare quanto in essa è rimasto e del tempo imperiale non solo ma e del medioevo e del Rinascimento’) — ignored modernity and sacrificed Villa Smith in favour of the *Domus Augustana* (Fig. 9).<sup>6</sup> Aside from brief mentions of ‘eccentric’ architecture in Rome’s built environment — such as C.L.V. Meeks’s (1966: 212) presentation of the villa as ‘an improbable Gothic mansion, an example of uninhibited Romanticism’, which ‘stood on the Palatine, of all places’ — very little has been written about the edifice. One could name, in particular, a contribution by L. Jannattoni

<sup>6</sup> Bartoli’s caveat can be situated against the broader shift, in conservation practice, to a less selective approach to the *longue durée* history of monuments. See, for instance, Casiello, 2005.





Fig. 7. Undated aerial view of the Palatine Hill from west prior to the demolition of Villa Smith, Rome. To the left of the villa is the extension commissioned by the Sisters of Visitation. Rome, AN, Aeronautica Militare 0\_Foglio 150\_Strisciata PROSP\_Fotogramma 688\_Negativo 274917\_0. Courtesy of the Ministero della Cultura — Istituto Centrale per il Catalogo e la Documentazione.



Fig. 8. Undated aerial view of the Palatine from west after the demolition of Villa Smith. To the left of the *Domus Augustana* is the Palatine Antiquarium. Rome, AN, Aeronautica Militare 0\_Foglio 150\_Srisciata PROSP\_Fotogramma 0\_Negativo 109679\_0. Courtesy of the Ministero della Cultura — Istituto Centrale per il Catalogo e la Documentazione.



Fig. 9. Alfonso Bartoli stands in front of a pier of the northeast porch of Villa Smith, in demolition to recover the *Domus Augustana*, Rome. Soprintendenza alle Antichità Palatino e Foro Romano, *Villa Mills, fronte nord, particolare*, June 1927, photographic print on card. Rome, ASPARCo, Archivio Fotografico, Villa Mills, VM-FN 002-asf022617. Courtesy of the Ministero della Cultura — Parco Archeologico del Colosseo.

(1987) in the *Strenna dei Romanisti*; a volume on the history of the area of *Villa Mills e la Domus Augustana* by M.E. Garcia Barraco (2014); and an article by G. Olthof (2019). Despite these efforts, knowledge of this architecture is often contradictory and tends to derive from hearsay and hypothesis rather than primary information. Questions on the construction phase, patron and author of the neo-Gothic intervention (Villa Smith), and the condition of the villa prior to this intervention (Villa Mills), remain to be answered. In addition to these struggles, the building suffered an overbearing *damnatio memoriae*. For instance, after the demolition, the fascist architect Marcello Piacentini (1952: 8) — echoing an expression previously adopted by Bartoli (1908: 102) (‘indecorous pseudo-medieval mask’) — addressed it as ‘that vile pseudo-Gothic villa, now, if God wills, demolished’ (‘indecorosa maschera pseudo-medioevale’; ‘quella ignobile villa pseudo-gotica, ora, se Dio vuole, demolita’).

The state of knowledge of the ‘foreign’ ownership of the *Domus Augustana* during the modern era is not more encouraging. Very little information — at times very confusing — has been recorded about (Charles Andrew) Mills. This includes, as this article reveals, an erroneous identification with a different

(Charles) Mills. It is nonetheless relatively well known that our Mills lived on the Palatine Hill, as it is that he was not the only Briton that once owned the property. Morton (1958: 419–20) did not fail to highlight that, in 1818, the estate had been purchased by the pioneering scholar of the classical world Sir William Gell (1777–1836) — even though claiming that ‘he had acquired this property jointly with’ Mills — nor did he fail to briefly mention that it ‘then came into the possession of ... Smith’. Even if sporadically, the literature on the Eternal City had already mentioned the association between the Palace of the Caesars and Smith — long before the publication of *A Traveller in Rome*, and starting from the year in which the British official had purchased the estate.<sup>7</sup> The scholarship on Smith, instead, including a pioneering article by M. Archer (1972), for a long time ignored this purchase altogether. While exploring his experience in England and in the East, respectively, D. James (2018: 286–7) and S. Shorto (2018: 102–5) have more recently addressed Smith’s ownership of the Roman villa. The latter even indicates, albeit without providing the exact source for this information, that Smith was not the last possessor of the estate before the acquisition by the Sisters of Visitation (Shorto, 2018: 105). Yet no significant attempts have been made to focus on his (nor on the broader foreign) ownership of, and presence above, the *Domus Augustana*.

Via the presentation, and thorough scrutiny, of a broad range of visual and textual sources, including extensive notarial paper trails, this article sets out to fill these gaps and offer a close study of the villa and of British presence atop Rome’s imperial hill. Yet its scope goes beyond architectural and biographical discourses and matters of ownership, to reflect upon the relationships between architecture and political and cultural intent, between Italy and Britain, and between modernity and antiquity. A rich literature has considered the connections of Italy and Britain in the modern era, including investigations of the impact of Rome and its architecture on Britain’s architects and architectural culture (Salmon, 1995, 2000). The spatial implications of British presence in the Eternal City, and the modes through which this presence was asserted in the urban fabric, remain much less explored. In this capacity, a recent study has suggested that the English church of All Saints’ (1880–7) — alongside George Edmund Street’s other neo-medieval design for the Anglicans in Rome, the American Episcopal church of Saint Paul’s Within-the-Walls (1872–6) — emerged as an architectural manifestation of the negotiations and cultural politics of post-conquest Rome (Bremner, 2020). Through the case of Villa Mills/Smith, this article turns attention to secular architecture, to the reuse of pre-existing palimpsests and to pre-unification Rome. By covering the period from the 1810s to the 1850s, it provides an insight into Anglo-Italian relations vis-à-vis the return of Pius VII to Rome (1814), the parenthesis of the Roman Republic (1849), the challenges of revolution and the Italian Risorgimento, and Britain’s growing imperial anxieties.<sup>8</sup>

---

<sup>7</sup> Ruspoli, 1846; Whiteside, 1848: 228; Rufini, 1857: 41; Cancogni, 1909: 148.

<sup>8</sup> On modern Roman history, see Hearder, 1975; Bartocchini, 1985; Insolera, 2018.

This study does not focus on an architectural reading of Villa Smith, nor does it discuss the life of the edifice and the estate under the Sisters of Visitation first and the Italian state thereafter, or the cultural and political dynamics at play in its demolition and *damnatio memoriae*. These topics will be the subject of a broader project, which is only anticipated here. While disentangling a history of the foreign ownership of the *Domus Augustana* in the nineteenth century, the first two sections of the article reflect on British presence in Rome, with the first one dedicated to the period from the Restoration to the sale of the property to Smith, and the second one ending with the sale to the nuns. The third section investigates the person behind the neo-Gothic reworking. The fourth section argues that, prior to Smith's interventions, Villa Mills was not a Gothic Revival edifice. It offers a critical reconsideration of both the villa and the character of Mills.

## BRITAIN AND THE PALATINE

On the cusp of Romanticism, starting with the sunset of Napoleonic Italy which led to the restoration of the Papal States by the Congress of Vienna, a glittering array of British personalities came to — and was spellbound by — the Eternal City.<sup>9</sup> These personalities included poets, painters and architects — such as Lord Byron, Percy Bysshe Shelley, John Keats, William Turner and Charles Robert Cockerell.<sup>10</sup> They also include our Charles Andrew Mills, Esq. — from a long-established family in St Kitts, the son of Peter Matthew Mills and Catherine Hamilton (Morton, 1958: 417) — and Sir William Gell (Fig. 10), the author of, among others, *The Topography of Troy, and Its Vicinity; Illustrated and Explained by Drawings and Descriptions* (published in 1804) and *Pompeiana: The Topography, Edifices, and Ornaments of Pompeii* (first published in 1817–19 with J.P. Gandy), which is the first English-language account dedicated solely to the description of the site of Pompeii.<sup>11</sup>

'Classic Gell' — as Byron referred to him in 1810 (Sweet, 2015: 254) — arrived in Italy in 1814 as part of Caroline of Brunswick's (1768–1821) loyal court after the princess (afterwards queen) had been estranged from her husband, who would ascend to the throne in 1820 as George IV (Thompson, 2019: 31–46). Gell's resignation from the role of chamberlain and private secretary to Caroline (on grounds of poor health) and the grant of an annual pension of £200 (February 1815) that, at least temporarily, contributed to easing his financial struggles

<sup>9</sup> The 'return' of the British ranged from short-term travels and long-term stays to (much less investigated) diasporic networks.

<sup>10</sup> Rogers, 1975; Liversidge and Edwards, 1996; Schoina, 2009; Rawes and Saglia, 2017; Mason, 2020.

<sup>11</sup> Clay and Frederiksen, 1976; Wallace-Hadrill, 2006; Riccio, 2013; Sweet, 2015; Thompson, 2019.



Fig. 10. Portrait of William Gell. Thomas Uwins (1782–1857) (engraved by Fenner Sears & Co.), *Sir William Gell, M.A. F.R.S. & F.S.A.*, in Gell (1837). Rome, BH, E-POM 120-4370/1. Courtesy of the Bibliotheca Hertziana — Max Planck Institute for Art History.

enabled him to dedicate himself to scholarly activity in Italy (Thompson, 2019: 46–9). The decision to move to Rome, where he was soon elected to the Roman Academy of Archaeology, might be explained by his particular research interests, resulting in the publication, with Antonio Nibby (1820), of *Le mura di Roma* and, especially, *The Topography of Rome and Its Vicinity* (1834) (Sweet, 2015: 247). The estate he acquired on the Palatine Hill presented ‘an unrivalled view of Rome and the Campagna’, noted Marguerite Gardiner, the Countess of Blessington (1839: 470). The area was of extraordinary archaeological interest — and had been since at least the sixteenth century (Iacopi, 1997). The purchase took place in 1818, when British presence was reinforced in the city by the establishment of the services of the Church of England and the revival of the Venerable English College.<sup>12</sup> On 9 April 1818, a

<sup>12</sup> ‘The toleration in the spring of 1818 extended so far as to allow the English to assemble in a room for the purpose of hearing the Church of England service read, but they were not allowed a regular and formal chapel,’ Cadell, 1820: 527. On the Venerable English College in the nineteenth century, see Champ, 2009.

notarial deed was drawn up in via Frattina 122 — Gell’s address in Rome at that time — between Count Angiolo Colocci di Jesi, son of Francesco Patrizio, and the English scholar, who was still referred to as ‘Chamberlain of H.R.H. the Princess of Wales’ (‘Ciamberlano di S.A.R. la Principessa di Galles’).<sup>13</sup> The former sold to the latter ‘The villa once called Magnani surrounded by boundary walls ... nearby the Convent of S. Bonaventura, bordering the Orti Farnesiani [to the east], the [Palatine Stadium leading towards the] English Garden [to the west], and the public road leading to said Convent [to the north], with the Casino and every object’ (‘La Villa una volta denominata Magnani circondata di mura ... presso il Convento di S. Bonaventura, confinante da un lato gli Orti Farnesiani, da altro l’Orto Inglese, da altro la strada pubblica che porta al detto Convento, con Casino e tutti gli oggetti’) for ‘2,650 silver Roman plates’ (‘piastre romane d’argento’). Notary Luigi Gallesani reports that the property had been acquired by Count Francesco Patrizio Colocci di Jesi on 3 January 1781 from the French abbot Paul (‘Paolo’) Rancurel — famous for pursuing a campaign of excavations in the area between 1774 and 1777 (Pafumi, 2007) — and then sold to Paolo Montagnani, who gave it back to the Colocci di Jesi due to insolvency.<sup>14</sup> The document does not include a detailed description of the estate, nor is it accompanied by a drawing. Yet a map of the Palatine Hill, dated 1820 and conserved in the Archivio di Stato, offers a rare depiction of Villa Gell, and its gardens and environs (Fig. 11). Indeed, Gell owned the property for less than three years. On 9 February 1821, ‘Sir William Gell ... Chamberlain of H.M. the Queen of England’ sold the estate to Mills for 2,850 golden and silver Roman coins.<sup>15</sup> This sale must have helped to ease his financial woes — which were worsened in the same year by the death of his greatest patron, Queen Caroline (7 August), and the beginning of the issues with the assignation of the pension she had granted him.

The correspondence from Caroline to Gell attests that Mills was close to both of them (Thompson, 2019: 205, 230–1, 233, 240, 243, 246, 252). In 1820, Gell and Mills were in London to testify at her infamous trial.<sup>16</sup> Richard Grenville (1862: 17), the Duke of Buckingham and Chandos, noted in his diary that Mills was ‘famous for having come over at the head of the Queen’s witnesses during her trial, and as having perjured himself more than most of

<sup>13</sup> Luigi Gallesani, notarial deed (sale of a property), 9 April 1818. Rome, ASR — SIS, Trenta Notai Capitolini, Ufficio 19.

<sup>14</sup> According to the Gallesani, Angelo obtained the property on 7 August 1804.

<sup>15</sup> ‘il nobile uomo Sig. Cav. e Guglielmo Gell, figlio della bo. me. Filippo di nazione Inglese Ciamberlano di S.M. la Regina d’Inghilterra’. Luigi Gallesani, notarial deed (sale of a property), 9 February 1821. Rome, ASR — SIS, Trenta Notai Capitolini, Ufficio 19. The deed refers to Villa Gell as the ‘Villa una volta denominata Magnani’.

<sup>16</sup> Gell’s deposition took place on Friday 6 October; Mills’s on Monday 9 October. *The Important and Eventful Trial*, 1820: 554–64, 598–603. The trial was a hot topic well beyond Britain. See, for instance, *Giornale Costituzionale*, 6 November 1820. On the trial, see Thompson, 2019: 97–117.



Fig. 11. Villa Gell and its surroundings, Rome. Detail of *Colle Palatino*, 1820, pencil, ink and watercolour on paper, 54 × 69.5 cm. Rome, ASR — SIS, Collezioni disegni e mappe, 89-640/1. Courtesy of the Ministero della Cultura — Archivio di Stato di Roma.

them'. The proceedings (*The Important and Eventful Trial*, 1820: 598) inform us that Mills resided in Rome in 1820 — before his acquisition of the estate on the Palatine. Mills reported spending only 'about 12 days' in Rome during summer 1817 (*The Important and Eventful Trial*, 1820: 598). This enables us to suggest that, dismissed from his post in Guadeloupe and back to England, he did not settle in Rome before the autumn of the same year, probably not before 6 October 1817 when, Morton (1958: 417–18) has noted, Mills wrote to Charles Arbuthnot (one of the joint secretaries of the Treasury to whom he appealed against the dismissal), expressing the wish to go to the continent for a short time, as his health demanded a change of scenery. Such change of scenery proved long-term, as his name was to be remembered for the estate he owned for 25 years in Rome. Where he resided in the Eternal City prior to becoming the owner of the property on the Palatine, and the extent of the relationship with Gell remain matters of speculation — just like the extent of the relationship between Gell and Keppel Craven (1779–1851), also a chamberlain

of Princess Caroline and executor of the scholar after his death.<sup>17</sup> It cannot be ruled out that Mills lived in the villa prior to the acquisition from Gell, something which could explain Morton's belief that the two had jointly acquired the estate. It can be convincingly argued that neither the sale of the villa nor the decision to move to Naples, where he died in 1836, put an end to Gell's relationship with Rome, Mills and the villa. After all, the Countess of Blessington (1839: 565) noted that, on her farewell to the city in May 1828, she had dined on the Palatine, 'where our kind friend Mr. Mills has assembled those of our Roman friends most dear to us, with our good Gell, and Mr. and Mrs. Dodwell'.

Indeed, the two Englishmen were well known among visitors and expatriates in Italy from the British Isles. The Irish painter and archaeologist Edward Dodwell (1767–1832) made them his executors. After the death of Dodwell, the young Roman architect Virginio Vespignani (1808–1882), his collaborator, reported to Gell and Mills the updates on the drawings for *Views and Description of Cyclopiæ, or, Pelasgic Remains in Greece and Italy* (Dodwell, 1834).<sup>18</sup> In 1832, a fatigued Sir Walter Scott was escorted by Gell on his Italian adventure (Riccio, 2013: 45–58; Thompson, 2019: 133–6). His profile was captured in a small sketch by Michelangelo Caetani (1804–1882) during a visit to Frascati (Gorgone and Cannelli, 1999: 92–4). Filippo Caetani (1805–1864), younger brother of the author of this, one of the latest depictions of the Scottish poet, created the only known likeness of our Mills (Fig. 12).<sup>19</sup> The watercolour caricature, showing a slim figure with large forehead, arched brows, hooked nose, puffy cheeks, and a hat in his left hand, offers us a glimpse of the character that made a name for himself in Rome, not just among fellow Britons or local high society. More than the tragic discovery of the body of Rosa Bathurst in the Tiber (Thistlethwayte, 1853: 286; Caetani, 2005: 103), Mills's name was inextricably linked to his Roman villa.

In the Rome of the Restoration, Mills turned the Palatine — the same place that Byron (1818: 56) had described as 'one mass of ruins, particularly on the side towards the Circus Maximus' — into a sophisticated window onto the past, that welcomed visitors of different nationalities and backgrounds. In a well-known passage, the Countess of Blessington (1839: 550–3) reported on an

<sup>17</sup> The notarial deed for the sale of the property to Mills only mentions that he was domiciled in Rome ('domiciliato in questa città medesima'), without further information on the address. Luigi Gallesani, notarial deed (sale of a property), 9 February 1821. Rome, ASR — SIS, Trenta Notai Capitolini, Ufficio 19. On Gell and Craven, see Thompson, 2019: 48.

<sup>18</sup> Virginio Vespignani to William Gell and Charles Andrew Mills (between 1832 and 1834). Rome, BiASA, Fondo Lanciani, Mss. Lanciani, 125/15, cc. 1–6.

<sup>19</sup> The caricature, which appears in Gorgone and Cannelli, 1999: 87, can be considered a depiction of Charles Andrew Mills — who has been recurrently confused with the English historian Charles Mills, born in 1788 at Croom's Hill, Greenwich. While Charles had died at Southampton in 1826, Charles Andrew was an active member of the *salotti romani* when the Caetanis depicted the high society of Rome (including British personalities). The 'Roma 1833' album, which includes these depictions, was once owned by Thomas Ashby.





Fig. 12. Caricature of Charles Andrew Mills. Filippo Caetani, *C. Mills*, in the 'Roma 1833' album, c. 1833, pencil and watercolour on paper, 12.6 × 8.8 cm. Rome, FCC, Caricature di Filippo Caetani, Album A. Courtesy of the Fondazione Camillo Caetani.

encounter with the Prince and Princess de Montfort and Letitia Bonaparte in May 1828. Napoleon's mother was not the only Bonaparte to visit the estate, as two watercolours at the Museo Napoleonico portray Charlotte Bonaparte's visit to — what, in the 1820s, was becoming known as — 'Villa Mills', and her fascination with its archaeological curiosities and environs.<sup>20</sup> Yet, on the

<sup>20</sup> Charlotte Bonaparte, *Villa Mills, sur les ruines du palais des Césars*, c. 1826, pencil, ink and watercolour on paper, 10.8 × 16.1 cm. Rome, MN, 964 14b; Charlotte Bonaparte, *Feuilles d'acanthé dans la Villa de Mr. Mills à Rome*, 15 March 1826, pencil, ink and watercolour on paper, 14.1 × 16.8 cm. Rome, MN, 969 69b.

Palatine, Mills did not entertain and astound just the wealthy with the extraordinary location of his residence. In *Rome: A Tour of Many Days*, resulting from his ‘545 days’ in the city between 1838 and 1842, G. Head (1849: 69) noted that ‘A general admittance to the grounds is granted to the public every Friday’ — and, following ‘a special order from the proprietor’, visitors could even ‘enter the casino’. Similarly, in an account of G. Melchiorri (1840: 611), Mills ‘kindly welcomes anyone who would like to visit’ the villa (‘cortesemente permette a tutti di visitarla’). While diametrically opposite to Rancurel’s use of the estate, the opening of the site to the general public makes Mills a true pioneer of archaeological museumization on the Palatine. Indeed, G. Head (1849: 69) remarked that ‘Mr. Mills is generally distinguished among the Roman Ciceroni’. Thus, it should not surprise that, in a beautiful watercolour from 1886 — 40 years after the death of Mills — which depicts the Palatine from the southwest, the French architect Henry-Adolphe-Auguste Deglane (1855–1931) labelled the Gothic Revival mansion emerging from the cypresses as ‘Villa Mills’ (Fig. 13). The legacy of Villa Mills did not end with the death of the British gentleman, as his name was, and still is, associated with the estate that he once owned on the Palatine — an association which greatly added to the myth that Mills was behind the Gothic makeover.

An English duplicate of a French will made in Paris on 27 June 1842 expresses Mills’s intention to make his brother’s daughter, Catherine Amelia (who by marriage was Baroness Gallus de Glaubitz), his universal heir.<sup>21</sup> The document, in which Mills is referred to as ‘usually residing at Rome’ and ‘in possession of a villa ... in the said city of Rome’, does not reveal much about the estate on the Palatine, as it pertains to all of Mills’s possessions, ‘exempt my property and effects in Italy’. These were the subject of a Roman testament — which Morton (1958: 420), who first discussed the French one, could not find. I have located this deed, drawn up by Mario Damiani (Protonotaro del Senatore) on 17 March 1834, in the documentation on the opening of the will of Mills conserved in the Archivio Storico Capitolino.<sup>22</sup> This documentation includes an additional testamentary note by the same notary and dated 12 April 1837. In this testament, revoking a previous one made in Rome in May 1827 and disposing of his Italian possessions (‘de’ miei beni d’Italia’), likewise in the French will, Mills appointed as universal heir his ‘most beloved niece Catherine Amelia born Mills and consort of Baron Gallus de Claubitz [*sic*] of Strasbourg’ (‘dilettissima nipote Caterina Amelia nata Mills, e consorte del Sig Barone Gallus de Claubitz [*sic*] di Strasburgo’). Yet his ‘most beloved niece’ was not meant to inherit the villa. The will gives precise instructions to the testamentary executors (‘Cavalier Luigi Chiaveri, e Dottor Antonio Pagnoncelli’) to sell, after

<sup>21</sup> English duplicate of the will of Charles Andrew Mills, 27 June 1842. Richmond, TNA, PROB 11/2049/41.

<sup>22</sup> Will of Charles Andrew Mills, 17 March 1834, in Antonio Pagnoncelli, ‘Istrometro di aperizione, e pubblicazione del testamento della Ch. Me. Carlo Andrea Mills’, 4 October 1846. Rome, ASC, Protonotaro del Senatore, serie I, vol. 97.



Fig. 13. Henri-Adolphe-Auguste Deglane, *Mont Palatin, Palais des Césars, façade du côté du grand cirque, état actuel MDCCCLXXXV*, 1886, ink and watercolour on paper. Paris, ENSBA, Env 76-03. Courtesy of the Beaux-Arts de Paris, Dist. RMN-Grand Palais.

Mills's death, anything that is not mentioned in the document — including, within six months, the villa itself — and to give the related revenue to her, sparing the sum to pay any debt and what he aimed to bequeath to staff and acquaintances. There was no need for this, as the villa was sold before Mills's death. According to the additional testamentary note, Mills was still living on the Palatine on 12 April 1837. G. Head (1849: 69), who visited the estate sometime between 1838 and 1842, reported it being 'uninhabited by the proprietor, and left, together with the gardens, under charge of a custode'. When Mills moved out of the villa is uncertain. By reporting that Mills died on the night of 3 October 1846 in Mr Rinaldini's inn in piazza di Spagna 25, where he resided, the document for the opening of the will attests that Mills had left the Palatine sometime before his death, to live in the (area that once was the) heart of the so-called 'English Quarter'.<sup>23</sup> Indeed, in *Roma veduta in otto giorni*, F.S. Bonfigli (1854: 6) noted that, in piazza di Spagna 25, Mr Rinaldini 'has several furnished apartments, which he rents by month or for the winter' ('ha parecchi appartamenti mobiliati, che affitta per mese o per tutta la stagione d'inverno'). The location of number 25 in the urban cadastre (1871) of the Rione Campomarzo — a number which can still be spotted on the façade in piazza di Spagna — suggests that Mills died in the edifice below the stairs of Trinità dei Monti, opposite the one where Keats had died in 1821 (the Keats–Shelley House).<sup>24</sup> The owner of civic numbers 22–5 (corresponding to cadastral number 1178) was Giuseppe Canali first (in the proceedings of the cadastral census that was ordered in 1818) and then Laura Canali (in the so-called 'Aggiornamento' of 1871).<sup>25</sup> Mills was already living there on 5 April

<sup>23</sup> Antonio Pagnoncelli, 'Istrometro di aperizione, e pubblicazione del testamento della Ch. Me. Carlo Andrea Mills', 4 October 1846. Rome, ASC, Protonotaro del Senatore, serie I, vol. 97. See also the *Diario di Roma*, 1846/80: 4.

<sup>24</sup> Rome, ASR — SIS, Presidenza generale del censo, Catasto urbano di Roma, Campomarzo, Allegato, 4-IV.

<sup>25</sup> Rome, ASR — SIS, Presidenza generale del censo, Catasto urbano di Roma, Rione IV, Brogliardi, serie II, 110; Rome, ASR — SIS, Presidenza generale del censo, Catasto urbano di Roma, Rione IV, Brogliardi, Aggiornamenti, 260.

1846, when Damiani drew up a notarial deed for the appointment of Pagnoncelli as Mills's legal representative for the sale of the estate.<sup>26</sup> The day after, acting for Mills, Pagnoncelli sold, for 8,000 *scudi romani*, 'The Villa called Mills' ('La Villa denominata Mills') to 'Sig.r Colonnello Roberto Smith'.<sup>27</sup>

## A TALE OF DEATH, INFIDELITY AND THE NEO-GOTHIC

The villa passed from an Englishman who had served the Crown overseas to another. Unlike Mills, there is a known portrait of Smith, which R. Head (28 May 1981: 1524) included in his account of the life of the 'artist, architect, and engineer' (Fig. 14). James (1740–1839) and Mary (1760–1838) Smith, his parents, lived in Bengal in the early 1780s, where his two elder brothers were born (R. Head, 21 May 1981: 1432; Shorto, 2018: 84–5). The son of 'Giacomo', notarial documentation reports that Robert Smith came from London ('nativo di Londra') — where the family had moved upon return from the East.<sup>28</sup> Yet Robert Smith was born on 13 September 1787 in France and baptized in Nancy (R. Head, 21 May 1981: 1432; *Biographical Dictionary*, 2002: 637; Shorto, 2018: 84). Raised in London, Robert spent much of his childhood in Bideford, where the Smith family had their home (Shorto, 2018: 85). This information finds confirmation in archival documentation in Rome, according to which Smith was from 'Devonshire in Inghilterra'.<sup>29</sup> The family must have had some ties with the East India Company, as four brothers out of four (sparing the couple's two daughters) later joined the company as ensigns (and were promoted to at least the position of lieutenant-colonel) — all but Robert died abroad (R. Head, 21 May 1981: 1432; James, 2018: 278). In 1803, prior to arriving in India and joining the Bengal Infantry and, soon after, the Bengal Engineers (1805), Smith became a cadet at the East India Company's college at Great Marlow, an experience which informed his career as engineer-architect, artist and soldier (R. Head, 21 May 1981: 1432). A talented painter from childhood, at Marlow he was instructed in mathematics, fortifications and draughtsmanship (Shorto, 2018: 86). Among other appointments, he was field engineer in the Nepal War (1815–16), superintending officer in Penang and — after a leave on furlough to England starting in 1819, the publication, in 1821, of *Views of Prince of Wales Island*, and his return to India in 1822 — garrison engineer of Delhi (R. Head, 21

<sup>26</sup> Mario Damiani, notarial deed (appointment), 5 April 1846. Rome, ASR — SIS, Trenta Notai Capitolini, Ufficio 3.

<sup>27</sup> Mario Damiani, notarial deed (sale of a property), 6 April 1846. Rome, ASR — SIS, Trenta Notai Capitolini, Ufficio 3.

<sup>28</sup> Mario Damiani, notarial deed (sale of a property), 6 April 1846. Rome, ASR — SIS, Trenta Notai Capitolini, Ufficio 3.

<sup>29</sup> Curzio Franchi for Giuseppe Franchi, notarial deed (registration of the sale of a property), 24 July 1849. Rome, ASR — SIS, Trenta Notai Capitolini, Ufficio 6.



Fig. 14. Head and shoulders portrait of Captain Robert Smith (1787–1853), Bengal Engineers. Raja Jivan Ram, c. 1830, oil on canvas, 29 × 24.5 cm. London, BL, Foster 870. Courtesy of the British Library Board.

May 1981). An acclaimed and highly skilled draughtsman and surveyor, he provided, via sketches and landscape paintings (including topographical panoramas, and ranging from watercolours to oil on canvas), a glimpse of the British gaze — and of British presence — in the East (Archer, 1972; Shorto, 2018: 86–9). As an engineer-architect, his name in India is associated with the construction of several buildings, military and non-military, in Delhi and beyond, such as Ludlow Castle and the Flagstaff Tower, but also Saint James's Church and his very house, used today as offices by the Northern Railways Construction Department (Shorto, 2018: 81–3, 91–9). It is also associated with the campaigns of 'preservation' and recrafting of local historical sites that added to a colonial narrative of rescue, ranging from the work on the Kashmir Gate and the reinforcement of Delhi's defensive walls, to the interventions on Shah Jahan's Jama Masjid and on the late twelfth-century Qutb Minar at Mehrauli (Shorto, 2018: 89–92). Unlike Mills, Smith returned to Britain with full honours. Prior to retirement (which took place in July 1832, at age 44), he was promoted to lieutenant-colonel in June 1830 and created a Companion of the Order of Bath in September 1831 (James, 2018: 285). In November 1854, he

was awarded the title of honorary colonel (Phillimore, 1950: 442; James, 2018: 285). R. Head (21 May 1981: 1434) has highlighted that ‘his artistic achievement lapse[d] into obscurity’ — not least because ‘he seems deliberately to have chosen not to concern himself with the eventual fate of his paintings’, which were dispersed after his death. Smith’s activity in India is nonetheless well documented, including sketchbooks, watercolours, and oil on canvas in the British Library’s collections.<sup>30</sup> More ‘obscure’ remain the years between his retirement and the acquisition, in the 1850s, of estates in Paignton (Devon) and Nice — in particular, the years of his wedding with Julia Adelaide Vitton and the couple’s stay in Italy (R. Head, 28 May 1981: 1524).

It is not difficult to imagine a retired Smith wanting to spend time in Italy, where the polymath could cultivate his varied interests — ranging from mathematics to landscape painting and architecture — and follow in the footsteps of many compatriots before him. While R. Head (28 May 1981: 1524) has claimed that Smith and Julia married in Florence, according to Shorto (2018: 101), ‘early in 1840’ the couple married ‘in Savoy’, but no evidence is presented in either case. G.B. Contarini’s work on the tombstones erected in Venice in the first half of the nineteenth century (1844: 269), reporting an epigraph that ‘ROBERTO SMITH COLONNELLO DI S.M. BRITANNICA’ and ‘GIULIETTA NOB. VITTON’ dedicated, on 5 May 1843, to their infant children ‘GIOVANNI — EDOARDO — MARIA’, enables us to situate the Smiths in Italy in the early 1840s. Of the four children born to them in Venice from 1840, only the youngest, who was born on 9 March 1843, survived infancy (Shorto, 2018: 101). His name was Robert Claude, whom, after the colonel’s death, *The Law Times Reports* (In the Goods of Co. R. Smith, 28 February 1874) referred to as Robert’s ‘only lawful and natural son’. The British official seems to have travelled around in Italy, in his own version of the Grand Tour. ‘Smith Roberto, Inglese, Colonnello ed ingegnere degli stabilimenti Inglese delle Indie (Matematica)’ figures in the *Diario* (1845: 142) of the seventh Congress of Italian Scientists, held in Naples between 20 September and 5 October 1845.<sup>31</sup> At the time of the deed with Mills, he was accommodated in Rome, in via della Fontanella di Borghese 35.<sup>32</sup> The acquisition of an estate in the Eternal City, facilitated by British presence in the city and by the sale from a fellow Englishman, suggests that the Smiths had serious intentions for their stay in Italy.

Smith put some effort into the improvement of the estate. On 19 August 1848 — following the appointment, on 20 June 1848, of lawyer Francesco Costa as his representative for the transaction — he acquired, for 800 scudi,

<sup>30</sup> The work of our Robert Smith should not be confused with that of another soldier artist Robert Smith (1792–1882), who was in India between 1825 and 1833 (Losty, 2013).

<sup>31</sup> I have not found his signature in the records of the Congresso degli Scienziati di Napoli. Naples, ASM, serie II, 33.

<sup>32</sup> Mario Damiani, notarial deed (sale of a property), 6 April 1846. Rome, ASR — SIS, Trenta Notai Capitolini, Ufficio 3.

water supply ('un'oncia e mezza') of Acqua Felice from Gaspare Conti.<sup>33</sup> On 20 July 1849, notary Giovanni Franchi ratified Smith's acquisition, for 750 scudi, of an orchard from Giuseppe Brogi.<sup>34</sup> This property, situated between the Circus Maximus and Smith's estate on the Palatine, granted direct access on to via dei Cerchi.<sup>35</sup> The transaction is illuminating on multiple accounts. Pagnoncelli — who had represented Mills before that date — acted in place of Smith for the purchase. This underpins the presence of a Roman intelligentsia which specifically negotiated with British expats. A private deed had been drawn up on 23 December 1848.<sup>36</sup> The delay in the fulfilment of the sale highlights the impact that the revolutionary climate of 1848–9 had on Italians and foreigners alike. Indeed, the sale drawn up on 20 July 1849 — which follows the end, on 4 July 1, of the Roman Republic — states that the 'past political events ... suspended postal communications, and interrupted the course of legal proceedings'.<sup>37</sup> Last but not least, by suggesting that the property would grant Smith the opportunity to 'recover objects of artistic interest', a report by engineer Cesare Brunelli, attached to the deed, draws attention to the permanence of antiquarian practices in the mid-nineteenth century.<sup>38</sup> In this sense, an undated letter from 1848 — in which Smith offered to buy a property that the government had acquired in via dei Cerchi to pursue archaeological excavations — highlights a rising interest of the state in the area.<sup>39</sup>

More than a site where they could carry out excavations à la Rancurel and more than a holiday residence, the Palatine was where the Smiths set up home. Archival documentation records that Robert and Julia lived on the Palatine.<sup>40</sup> The acquisition provided the former with the opportunity to follow in the footsteps of fellow countrymen and draw inspiration from the Eternal City.

<sup>33</sup> Giovanni Tassi, notarial deed (sale of water supply), 19 August 1848. Rome, ASR — SIS, Trenta Notai Capitolini, Ufficio 23.

<sup>34</sup> Giuseppe Franchi, notarial deed (sale of a property), 20 July 1849. Rome, ASR — SIS, Trenta Notai Capitolini, Ufficio 6.

<sup>35</sup> 'orto situato nel circondario di Roma presso la Madonna de' Cerchi, confinante con la via pubblica, ed attiguo ad altra possidenza del suddetto Colonnello Smith ... di pezze quattro ed ordini diecisette e mezzo; comprensivamente alla casetta rurale, pozzo, ed altri fabbricati fattivi dallo stesso Sig.r Brogi'. Giuseppe Franchi, notarial deed (sale of a property), 20 July 1849. Rome, ASR — SIS, Trenta Notai Capitolini, Ufficio 6.

<sup>36</sup> Giuseppe Franchi, notarial deed (sale of a property), 20 July 1849. Rome, ASR — SIS, Trenta Notai Capitolini, Ufficio 6.

<sup>37</sup> 'passate vicende politiche che sospesero nel momento le comunicazioni postali, ed interruppero il corso alla procedura giudiziale'. Giuseppe Franchi, notarial deed (sale of a property), 20 July 1849. Rome, ASR — SIS, Trenta Notai Capitolini, Ufficio 6.

<sup>38</sup> 'È da notarsi, che il suddetto fondo, facendo parte dei Palazzi de' Cesari, scavandosi potrebbero rinvenirsi oggetti di belle arti'. Cesare Brunelli, report, 17 December 1848. Rome, ASR — SIS, Trenta Notai Capitolini, Ufficio 6.

<sup>39</sup> Rome, ASR — SIS, Camerlengato, parte II, busta 300, fascicolo 3589.

<sup>40</sup> The envelope of a letter to Julia reads 'alla Sigra Adele Smith Villa Palatina'. Luigi Hilbrat, notarial deed (deposit), 5 May 1851. Rome, ASR — SIS, Trenta Notai Capitolini, Ufficio 16. According to this notarial deed, Robert Smith was also domiciled 'nella sua Villa al monte Palatino'.

Confirmation that he kept painting while in Rome, and that he was inspired by the surroundings of his Italian villa, may lie in a painting on canvas depicting the *Fish Market / Portico d'Ottavia / Rome* and signed 'Robert Smith' — sold by a French dealer some years ago.

Despite the lieutenant-colonel's commitment, the legacy of Mills in Rome was not eclipsed by that of Smith. The villa that incorporated the *Domus Augustana* is still known as 'Villa Mills' and the name of Mills was still used to refer to the villa during Smith's ownership.<sup>41</sup> Altogether, one would struggle to find references to 'Villa Smith', with some exceptions being the documentation relating to the opening of the new gate in via dei Cerchi, the introduction to I. Ruspoli's (1846) album of lithographs on the Palatine Hill, and a plan showing the topography of the Orti Farnesiani, owned by the Crown of Bourbon-Two Sicilies — with the inscription 'Villa Smitt [*sic*]' on the left, demarcating the property of the lieutenant-colonel (see Fig. 3; Fig. 15).<sup>42</sup> The reason is that, while Mills lived on the Palatine for many years and built a solid reputation in Rome, the Smiths did not dwell for long in the city. The registration, on 22 March 1851, of a private deed in the *Registro d'introito degli atti di firma privata* of Rome reveals that, less than five years after the acquisition, Smith sold the 'villa called Mills' ('villa detta Mills') to 'Conte Carlo Plowden, e Cavagliere Ugo Edoardo Cholmeley'.<sup>43</sup>

After establishing the Plowden & French firm in Florence, Charles Plowden (Fig. 16) and his partner Anthony French signed a partnership agreement with Hugh Cholmeley (the brother of the wife of Charles's elder brother) to set up the branch in Rome in October 1843 — Plowden & Cholmeley or Plowden, Cholmeley & Co. and, after Cholmeley's death, Plowden & Co.<sup>44</sup> The ownership by the bankers — an ownership which constitutes the last chapter of the British phase of the property — anchors the history of the villa to a well-respected authority and a particularly precious resource for the English-speaking community in Italy. An obituary released in *The Bankers' Magazine* (1884: 446) described Plowden, who 'died at his residence, the Palazzo Doria', as 'the well-known banker', who was 'well known by the English colony at Rome, and by British travellers, for more than forty years'. *The Roman Advertiser* (11 November 1848: 235) — the first and short-lived (1846–9) journal in English published in Italy (Pantazzi, 1980) — reported his firm among the bankers at Rome and located at via del Corso 232.<sup>45</sup> Yet Plowden

<sup>41</sup> For instance, Smith was 'domito in Roma nella Villa Palatina detta Miltz [*sic*]'. Giovanni Tassi, notarial deed (sale of water supply), 19 August 1848. Rome, ASR — SIS, Trenta Notai Capitolini, Ufficio 23.

<sup>42</sup> The drawing can be dated between Smith's acquisition of Villa Mills (1846) and Francis II of Bourbon's sale of the Orti Farnesiani to Napoleon III (1861).

<sup>43</sup> ASR — GP, Direzione generale del bollo, vol. 555.

<sup>44</sup> I would like to thank Francis Plowden for the information provided on the bank. The formula 'Plowden, Cholmeley and Co.' figures in *The Roman Advertiser*, 11 November 1848: 236.

<sup>45</sup> 'Carlo Plowden, Ugo Cholmeley e Comp. pubblici Banchieri' were domiciled 'in Roma piazza di Sciarra num. 234' according to the *Diario di Roma*, 1846/1: 4. Cholmeley was domiciled 'nel



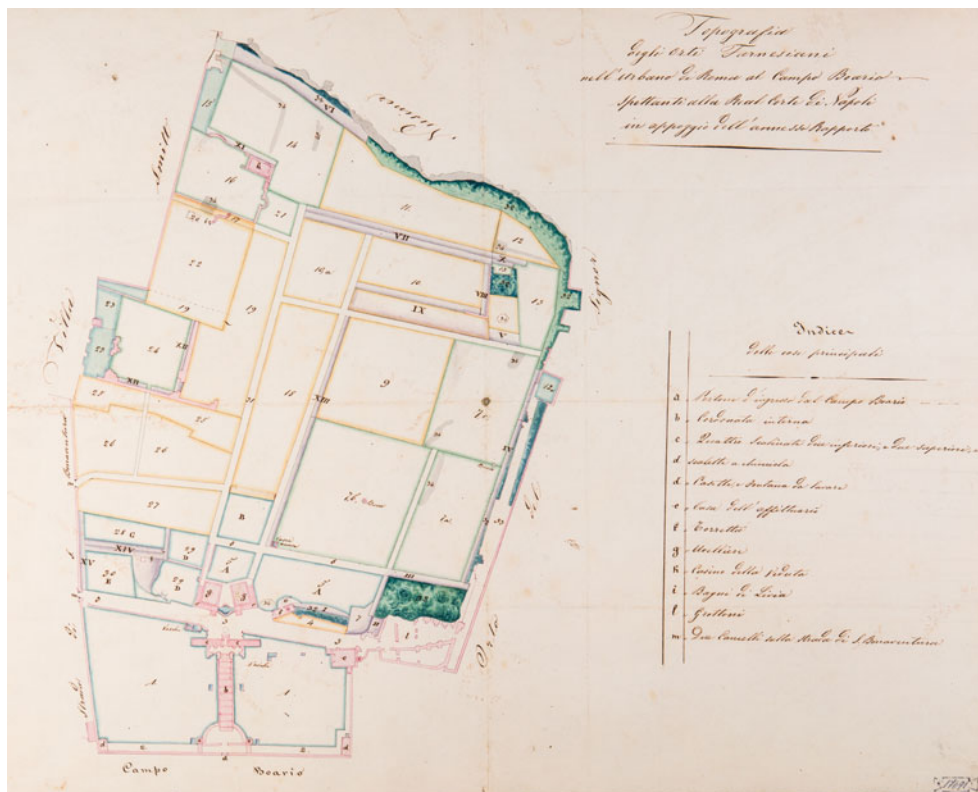


Fig. 15. *Topografia degli Orti Farnesiani nell'urbano di Roma al Campo Boario spettanti alla Real Corte di Napoli in appoggio dell'annesso rapporto*, [between 1846 and 1851], ink and watercolour on paper, 38.5 × 48 cm. Rome, BiASA, Archivio Rodolfo Lanciani, Roma XI.7.II.29, 17691. Courtesy of the Istituto Nazionale di Archeologia e Storia dell'Arte.

& Cholmeley carried out business that was not limited to banking. Blurbs in *The Roman Advertiser* (11 November 1848: 236) declared that the firm offered shipping services (including works of art) to 'English Visitors to Rome and to the Continent generally'. While the services that had been offered to Smith remain obscure — perhaps support with his relocation and the shipping of his artworks — the British official owed some favours to the bankers. They managed to acquire the estate on the Palatine for the 'very limited sum' of 9,218 scudi.<sup>46</sup> It is likely that Plowden and Cholmeley saw this as an

Palazzo Piazza di Sciarra n. 234' according to Camillo Diamilla, notarial deed (sale of a property), 31 December 1855. Rome, ASR — SIS, Trenta Notai Capitolini, Ufficio 31.

<sup>46</sup> 'per un particolare riguardo avuto ai nobili Sig.r Conte Carlo Plowden, e Cav.r Ugo Cholmeley e Compagni per i moltissimi favori da loro ricevuti s'indusse alienarla ai medesimi per la limitatissima somma di scudi novemila duecentodiciotto a forma dell'apoca privata redatta li 22 marzo 1851'. Camillo Diamilla, notarial deed (sale of a property), 31 December 1855. Rome, ASR — SIS, Trenta Notai Capitolini, Ufficio 31.



Fig. 16. Portrait of Charles Plowden. Mayer & Pierson, 1860s, albumen carte-de-visite, 8.8 × 5.6 cm. London, NPG, Photographs Collection, NPG Ax46372. Courtesy of the National Portrait Gallery.

investment opportunity. It most certainly was a lucrative investment. On 31 December 1855, Cholmeley, representing the firm, and Giovanna Carlotta Rossi, 25th Mother Superior of the Monastery of Visitation, signed a long-winded deed through which the estate passed to the nuns for the considerable sum of 30,000 scudi.<sup>47</sup>

<sup>47</sup> 'Ma essendosi in appresso presentata per fortunata combinazione favorevole occasione di poter comprare la così detta Villa Mills sita nel palatino, per la limitata somma di scudi trentamila dopo che le Rev. Monache furono assicurate da persone intelligenti, e capaci di loro fiducia appositamente

The sale to a Catholic institution was not surprising. Catholics formed the core clientele of Plowden, Cholmeley & Co., which forged profitable relationships with the Catholic Church.<sup>48</sup> An obituary released in *The Tablet* (23 April 1870: 533) to record the death of Cholmeley noted that the loss of ‘the well-known banker . . . will be much felt by the English Catholics now or formerly resident in Rome’. Smith’s ownership of the estate, which followed Pius IX’s accession to the Holy See (16 June 1846), spanned one of the most curious moments in Anglo-Italian relations, when, as S. Matsumoto-Best, (2003) has discussed, significant diplomatic attempts were being made to bring together two such traditionally hostile powers as Britain and the Catholic Church. The sale to the Monastery of Visitation sheds new light on the survival of a close relationship between the two after the failure of this policy, and discloses the mediating role that Plowden, Cholmeley & Co. had in the transition from a British phase to a ‘papal’ phase of the property on the Palatine.

The ties of the bank spanned well beyond religious entities, as the firm ‘Plowden’ had among its clients the British Academy of Arts in Rome, the enterprise formalized by a group of British artists in 1823 and closed in 1936 (Wells, 1978: 107). This information opens a fascinating line of enquiry into the relations between the bank, the Academy and Smith — who had based his career upon the arts. His arrival in Rome might have been influenced by the presence of the British institute and the intention to connect with the artists who still visited the city in the middle of the nineteenth century. Unfortunately, the records of the Academy, which were available until 1940, became lost (Munro, 1953: 42–3). However, the notarial deed through which, on 28 May 1850, Smith appointed ‘Lorenzo’ Macdonald as one of his proxies (the other one being Costa) hints at a proximity to Lawrence Macdonald (1799–1878), the Scottish sculptor who had been among those artists who had set about founding the British Academy of Arts in Rome.<sup>49</sup>

One might wonder why Smith sold the property, and why he did so a few years after the acquisition from Mills and the efforts put into the improvement of the estate. His stay in the peninsula proved far from idyllic. Following the mourning of the couple in Venice, things did not get better in Rome, as regards both the volatile political situation and more private affairs. On 5 May 1851, Smith handed over to notary Luigi Hilbrat two love letters, written in Italian and addressed to Julia.<sup>50</sup> The two messages, in the same handwriting and

---

dirette in detta Villa che era espedientissimo acquistarla per il prezzo di scudi trentamila, e dopo esservisi recate sul luogo non poterono non ravvisare propizia tale occasione’. Camillo Diamilla, notarial deed (sale of a property), 31 December 1855. Rome, ASR — SIS, Trenta Notai Capitolini, Ufficio 31. On Giovanna Carlotta Rossi, see ‘Catalogo delle Superiori che hanno governato questa casa di Roma dalla sua fondazione avvenuta il dì 9 aprile 1671’. Rome, AMV.

<sup>48</sup> I am once again indebted to Francis Plowden for this information.

<sup>49</sup> Giovanni Tassi, notarial deed (appointment), 28 May 1850. Rome, ASR — SIS, Trenta Notai Capitolini, Ufficio 23.

<sup>50</sup> Luigi Hilbrat, notarial deed (deposit), 5 May 1851. Rome, ASR — SIS, Trenta Notai Capitolini, Ufficio 16. According to the act, Smith was still domiciled on the Palatine at that time

opening with ‘My angel’ (‘Angiolo mio’) and ‘My soul’ (‘Anima mia’), were seemingly handed over as evidence of Julia’s conjugal infidelity. Three days later, on 8 May, His Excellency Girolamo Odescalchi presented to notary Filippo Ciccolini a missive dated 25 February 1850.<sup>51</sup> Julia — ‘persecuted for eleven months without having committed any crime’ — seeks the written support of the cardinal vicar, who, she alleges, verbally expressed his conviction ‘that she had been unfairly mistreated in this unfortunate affair’.<sup>52</sup> The same folio includes the cardinal vicar’s response to this plea, acknowledging that, while ‘the Ecclesiastical Authority had to take drastic actions against her last year due to unfavourable circumstances’, this made ‘her stand out for her wise conduct’ and showcased ‘how wrongly she was blamed for those shortcomings’.<sup>53</sup>

The tale of the Smiths offers inspiration for a novel. I have located the burial place of the colonel at the very entrance (to the left) of Saint Michael the Archangel Churchyard in Teignmouth, Devon. The burial monument — with a rectangular base evolving into a delicate horizontal cross and displaying simple trefoil motifs — carries, on one side, the epitaph ‘In Memory of MARY SMITH. daughter of James and Mary Smith. who died January 29<sup>th</sup> 1872. Aged 83 Years. Also of ROBERT SMITH. C.B. son of James and Mary Smith. late Colonel of the Bengal Engineers. who died September 16<sup>th</sup> 1873. Aged 86 Years.’ and, on the other, ‘In Memory of MARY. the wife of James Smith Esq.r who died July 28<sup>th</sup> 1838. Aged 78 Years. Also of JAMES SMITH Esq.r who died March 9<sup>th</sup> 1839. Aged 99 Years.’ Robert was buried with his sister, alongside their parents. This hints at an attachment to his original family and the country where he grew up. It also suggests estrangement from Julia and their offspring. A will written in 1850 in Paris indicated his unmarried sister as the heir of his entire estate (Shorto, 2018: 105). In the late summer of 1851, he returned to Torquay, where Mary, following the deaths of their parents, had purchased a house on Warren Road (Shorto, 2018: 105). He acquired some five and a half acres of land in Paignton and embarked on the lavish construction of Redcliffe Towers (R. Head, 28 May 1981; James, 2018). After the stay in Italy, he allegedly disposed of a significant sum and, after his death

---

(despite the sale to the bankers). The brief notes on the correspondence, that, according to Hilbrat, were added by Smith, suggest that Smith knew Italian.

<sup>51</sup> Filippo Ciccolini, notarial deed (deposit), 8 May 1851. Rome, ASR — SIS, Trenta Notai Capitolini, Ufficio 32.

<sup>52</sup> ‘perseguitata durante undici mesi senza aver comesso [*sic*] alcun delitto,’ ... ‘La Vostra Eminenza ha degnato manifestare di viva voce la propria convinzione che sia stata ingiustamente maltrattata in questo disgraziato affare.’ Julia Smith to the cardinal vicar (25 February 1850), in Filippo Ciccolini, notarial deed (deposit), 8 May 1851. Rome, ASR — SIS, Trenta Notai Capitolini, Ufficio 32.

<sup>53</sup> ‘se da un complesso di sfavorevoli circostanze sorpresa l’Autorità Ecclesiastica dovè l’anno scorso adottare qualche misura di rigore a di lei carico, questo fatto peraltro non servì che a far meglio risaltare la di lei savia condotta, e quanto a torto le si addebitassero quelle mancanze’. Cardinal vicar to Julia Smith (no date), in Filippo Ciccolini, notarial deed (deposit), 8 May 1851. Rome, ASR — SIS, Trenta Notai Capitolini, Ufficio 32.

— occurring ‘at Florence Villa, Torquay, aged 86’ (*Colburn’s United Service Magazine*, October 1873: 261) — his estranged son Robert Claude inherited £90,000 (as Mary had died shortly before her brother) (James, 2018: 290, 295). According to *The Law Times Reports* (In the Goods of Co. R. Smith, 28 February 1874), Robert Claude ‘was formerly an officer in her Majesty’s service, but he quitted it in 1864, under circumstances which incurred his father’s displeasure’. In the letter to the cardinal vicar — demonstrating that, in early 1850, she was in peril of her future — Julia lamented being ‘deprived of all that is indispensable and of all that she had been enjoying since her childhood’.<sup>54</sup> After that, all trace of her is lost. R. Head (28 May 1981: 1524) has alleged that she had died by 1850. According to the Commissions and Inquisitions of Lunacy, the colonel was certified insane in 1872 (Shorto, 2018: 109). Would the tale of the Smiths offer inspiration for a crime fiction more than a romantic novel? The setting points towards a *Gothic* novel.

## THE GORDIAN KNOT

In a circular letter from the Roman Monastery of Visitation dated 20 May 1859, Maria Agostina Del Monte, its 24th Mother Superior, commented that ‘the exterior [of the new house of the institute] is quite bizarre and peculiar’.<sup>55</sup> An albumen print by Tommaso Cuccioni, showing the hill from the Aventine a few years after the acquisition of the estate by the order, captures the rotunda of the villa emerging from the cypresses on the left — with its finials and hanging arches — juxtaposed to, and acting as a counterpoint to, the ruins of the Palatine Stadium and the Palace of Severus (Fig. 17). This albumen print — one of the earliest representations of the edifice in its neo-Gothic form — and the remark of the Mother Superior raise the question as to who was the patron of the medievalist renovation of the *Domus Augustana*.

Jannattoni (1987) has attributed this patronage to the ‘scozzese’ Mills, as if the makeover was an attempt to highlight his Scottish heritage. In doing so, he has drawn on a persistent and long-lasting trope, which can be tied to a passage of the chapter on ‘Scottish Memorials in Rome’ in Lanciani’s *New Tales of Old Rome* (1901: 325–6). Here the archaeologist and collector mentions that ‘This Scotch gentleman caused the Casino ... to be reconstructed in the Tudor style

<sup>54</sup> ‘che si trova ora priva di tutto ciò che e [sic] indispensabile e di tutto quello che ha goduto fino della sua infanzia’. Julia Smith to the cardinal vicar (25 February 1850), in Filippo Ciccolini, notarial deed (deposit), 8 May 1851. Rome, ASR — SIS, Trenta Notai Capitolini, Ufficio 32. It is likely that Smith gained rights to Julia’s property.

<sup>55</sup> ‘all’esterno ha un’apparenza assai bizzarra e singolare’. Maria Agostina Del Monte, circular letter, 20 May 1859, 14. Rome, AMV. On Maria Agostina del Monte, see ‘Catalogo delle Superiori che hanno governato questa casa di Roma dalla sua fondazione avvenuta il dì 9 aprile 1671’. Rome, AMV.



Fig. 17. Tommaso Cuccioni, *Il Palatino visto dall'Aventino*, c. 1860, albumen print, 37 × 52 cm, MR, Archivio Fotografico, Fondo Cianfarani, AF — 22782. Courtesy of the Sovrintendenza Capitolina — Museo di Roma.

with Gothic battlements', and notes that the gates of the estate showed 'the emblem of the Thistle'. With the publication by the acclaimed pioneer in the study of Rome, the trope was canonized: Mills was Scottish and was behind the neo-Gothic intervention.<sup>56</sup> This is problematic on various levels. First, Mills's attachment to, and pride in, his Scottish descent is yet to be upheld by primary evidence.<sup>57</sup> Second, Smith might have been interested in manifesting the same attachment and pride, something which could explain the adjective 'scozzese' adopted by A. Rufini (1857: 41) just a few years after the lieutenant-colonel's return to England. After all, his family claimed to have come originally from Scotland, and his son applied for Scottish arms in 1876 (Shorto, 2018: 84–5). Last but not least, Lanciani has failed to highlight that, as the photographic print of the British School at Rome shows, alongside a sculptured roundel with the thistle (on the gatepost to the right), the entrance from via dei Cerchi exhibited a roundel with the rose (on the gatepost to the left) (Fig. 18). Nor

<sup>56</sup> For instance, Morton, 1958: 156, has later echoed that 'The last occupant of Domitian's palace was a Scot named Charles Mills, who built himself a Gothic villa.'

<sup>57</sup> According to Morton, 1958: 419, 'the thistles were probably a sign of pride in his mother's descent from Governor Hamilton of the Leeward Islands'.



Fig. 18. Detail from John Henry Parker, *Palatine*, between 1864 and 1866, photographic print on card, image 19 × 26, on card 22 × 30 cm. Rome, BSR PA, John Henry Parker Collection, jhp-0108. Courtesy of the British School at Rome.

does he mention that the roundels upon the spandrels of the loggia of the villa showed the floral symbols of Scotland and England, but also the shamrock of Ireland — either separately or in conjunction — and a mounted Saint George (England's patron saint) killing the dragon (Fig. 19). More than a 'Scottish' patronage, the renovated villa can be seen as an architectural attempt to embrace and showcase a national identity of the British Isles. Acting as a nationalistic banner of the Kingdom of Great Britain and Ireland in Italy, the neo-Gothic intervention might convincingly be traced back to the British phase of the estate (sometime between 1818 and 1855).

Despite common misconceptions and enduring assumptions, neo-medieval architecture was a remarkable phenomenon in pre-unification Italy, which mirrored the anxieties and challenges of the Age of Revolutions, and the ambitions of the *Risorgimento*. Yet if the Gothic Revival remains a sporadic anomaly in Rome, it was even more sporadic there prior to its 'Capture' in 1870. In the capital of the Papal States more than in other Italian contexts, one

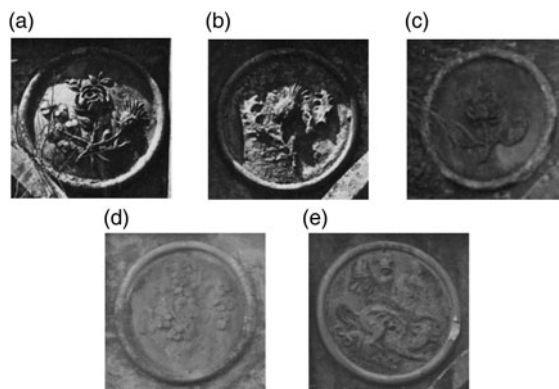


Fig. 19. Selection of roundels from the northeast loggia of Villa Smith, Rome. Details from photographic prints on card of the Soprintendenza alle Antichità Palatino e Foro Romano. Rome, ASPArCo, Archivio Fotografico, Villa Mills, VM-FN (the three flowers in conjunction and the thistle: 020-asf022639; the rose: 008-asf022625; the shamrock: 013-asf022630; Saint George: 002-asf022617). Courtesy of the Ministero della Cultura — Parco Archeologico del Colosseo.

could underline a meaningful resistance to the Gothic Revival. The villa on the Palatine is thus a curious, if exceptional, case. The Gothic Revival also manifested in pre-unification Rome at Palazzo Torlonia and Villa Torlonia as part of the interventions commissioned from G.B. Caretti (Checchetelli, 1842: 13–14, 47, 56–7, 76, 82, 85–6), in G. Vantaggi’s design for the Church of the Sacred Heart of Jesus at Villa Lante (1843) (Angeli, 1902: 123) and in G. Bianchedi’s refurbishment of the Basilica of Saint Mary above Minerva (1848–55) (*Del Tempio*, 1855). Yet in these cases the neo-Gothic is hidden from view in the cityscape of Rome as it is limited to the interiors; whereas the Gothic Revival was recognizable from a distance in the case of the British villa, and exhibited on a hilltop in the heart of the Eternal City. A peculiar choice for Rome, the neo-Gothic design can be seen as a meaningful signifier of ‘Britishness’ — an operation which E.W. Pugin later reiterated in Rome in his (unrealized) design for the collegiate chapel of Saint Thomas of Canterbury, commissioned in 1864 by the Venerable English College (Richardson, 2007). While ‘acclimatizing’ the British Gothic Revival to Rome, the villa on the Palatine explicitly referenced the ‘Orient’. Orientalist architecture was by no means exceptional in Italy. In Rome itself, orientalism and medievalism coexisted in G. Jappelli’s designs for the gardens of Villa Torlonia (Checchetelli, 1842: 92–7). Yet through the intertwining of Indian aesthetic and British symbolism (in the form, for instance, of the Mughal arches and the floral emblems, respectively), the villa on the Palatine can be framed as a potent nationalistic initiative (see Figs 4, 5, 19). It sheds new light on British imperialist fantasies and underpins how these, while extending far beyond the borders of the formal/informal empire, reached the cradle of the Roman Empire.



While it is unlikely that ‘Classic Gell’ was into medievalism and orientalism, at least to the extent of embarking on a large-scale renovation — something that he probably could not even afford — the Middle Ages and the Orient held a fascination for a certain Mills, as witnessed by the publication of *An History of Muhammedanism* (1817), *The History of the Crusades* (1820) and *The History of Chivalry* (1825). Yet the author of these works, whom some have confused with our Charles Andrew Mills, was the English historian Charles Mills (1788–1826) from Croom’s Hill, Greenwich. The son of Peter Matthew Mills ‘of Twickenham’, where Horace Walpole had completed his Strawberry Hill (1749–76), it is tempting to imagine Charles Andrew growing fascinated by (what has been consecrated as) the dazzling wellspring of the Gothic Revival.<sup>58</sup> Yet the dominating symmetrical design — which reveals an attempt to instil order into an otherwise irregular site — the prominence of the central rotunda, and the direct quotations from India make the neo-Gothic villa of the Palatine visually less close to Walpole’s asymmetrical compound than it is to the mansions that Smith, after selling the property in the Papal States, realized in England and in the Kingdom of Piedmont-Sardinia (in today’s France) (Figs 20 and 21).<sup>59</sup> The so-called ‘Redcliffe Towers’ in Paignton (1852–64) (James, 2018) and the ‘Château de l’Anglais’, ‘Château de Mont Boron’ or ‘Château Smith’ in Nice (1856–73) (Didier-Moulonguet, 1978; Gayraud, 2011) provide durable evidence that Smith joined the architectural currents of medievalism and orientalism, and hint at his involvement in the makeover of the villa on the Palatine. It can be hypothesized that this villa, which recalls the architecture of the Indian subcontinent, and his own architectural work in that context, was not just the result of the patronage but also the design of the British official. Despite the sporadic references to Smith in connection with the Roman estate, some authors have (briefly) hypothesized his involvement. James (2018: 287) has noted that ‘it seems likely that the design of the new additions to the Villa Mills was by Smith, not Mills’. According to Garcia Barraco (2014: 33–4), instead, Smith added orientalist features to a pre-existing neo-Gothic edifice by Mills. Yet no primary evidence has been provided to support such hypotheses. One could also argue, for instance, that Mills was the patron of the neo-Gothic refurbishment and that Smith later reiterated the forms of the Roman villa in Paignton and Nice. Shorto (2018: 102–3) has suggested that the double-sided loggia was an addition by Mills and that ‘Smith purchased the house because it reminded him of Delhi, not that he altered it to look more like Delhi.’ To sustain this, she has claimed that Smith did not invest any money in major additions and that there are no requests on record to alter the house (Shorto, 2018: 103).

Let’s go back to the photographic print in the Parker Collection and zoom in on the gateposts (see Fig. 18). Construction permits and building-related

<sup>58</sup> Will of Peter Matthew Mills, 17 July 1792. Richmond, TNA, PROB 11/1221/118. On Strawberry Hill, see Harney, 2013; Reeve, 2020.

<sup>59</sup> Nice was ceded to France in 1860.



Fig. 20. Redcliffe Towers, Paignton. *Mr Smith's House, Paignton*, c. 1880 (presented to King George V when Duke of York, 7 November 1892), albumen print on card, 8.2 × 8.4 cm (image). London, RCT, RCIN 2584447. Courtesy of the Royal Collection Trust / © His Majesty King Charles III 2023.

documentation are valuable sources for determining the patronage, construction phases and author of architectural renovations. Unfortunately for those interested in architectural history (and luckily for the patron of the medievalist makeover of the Palatine), home renovations in the nineteenth century did not require the same amount of paperwork and permits that are requested today. Yet one thing the municipality of Rome particularly cared about was works that would have some kind of impact on public spaces, such as streets. As previously discussed, the submission of a formal request to build the entrance in via dei Cerchi has enabled the attribution of the gate to Smith. Through a visual comparison between the two roundels (one with the rose; the other with the thistle) on the gateposts of that entrance and those on the spandrels of the



Fig. 21. Château Smith, Nice. *Chateau Mont-Boron*, late nineteenth century, cabinet card, 10.8 × 16.4 cm. Courtesy of the author.

neo-Gothic loggias of the villa, a convincing case can be made that Smith, rather than Mills, was responsible for the medievalist–orientalist renovation (see Fig. 19).

The patronage of the neo-Gothic makeover can be confirmed through groundbreaking archival documentation. In the notarial deed for the sale of the estate to the nuns, notary Camillo Diamilla officially reported, indeed, that ‘Mr. Colonel Smith [employed] a vast sum in building and decorating works to transform the little house into a noble palace, including the commission of various embellishments, ornaments, decorations, and extensions, as well as the rich, vast, and fleeting arcades.’<sup>60</sup> The neo-Gothic villa that once incorporated the *Domus Augustana*, known as ‘Villa Mills’, can be renamed ‘Villa Smith’.

## FRAMING (VILLA) MILLS

Mills is buried in the Non-Catholic Cemetery in Rome, in the Zona Vecchia (Shelley’s section), gravestone S177, plot eighteen in the twelfth row. The

<sup>60</sup> ‘il Sig.r Colonnello Smith dopo gli enunciati acquisti sebbene impiegasse ingenti somme nelle spese di costruzione, e di abbellimenti per aver ridotto il Casino a nobile Palazzetto, per avervi fatti eseguire moltissimi abbellimenti, ornati, decorazioni, ed ampliamenti, oltre i ricchi vasti, e vaghi portici, pure essendosi determinato di restituirsi in Inghilterra ... s’indusse alienarla’. Camillo Diamilla, notarial deed (sale of a property), 31 December 1855. Rome, ASR — SIS, Trenta Notai Capitolini, Ufficio 31.

rectangular grave is in an advanced state of decay and the epitaph — reported in the database of the cemetery as ‘CHARLES ANDREW MILLS ESG. [*sic*] 1846’ — was illegible during my visit, save for the Chi Rho symbol (of victory over death).<sup>61</sup> Scherer (1955: 124) has described the tomb as ‘an inconspicuous flat stone’ and has remarked that only the epitaph recalls ‘the eccentric Scot whose memory still haunts the halls where Domitian once held court’. A sense of disappointment is recognizable in Jannattoni’s (1987: 316–17) description of the tomb and epitaph, which ‘do not spring any surprise’ (‘Ma la tomba, e relativo epitaffio, non riserbano davvero alcuna sorpresa’). Yet strikingly surprising is the visual contrast between, on the one hand, the simple gravestone and, on the other, the elaborate neo-Gothic villa that for long has been considered the patronage of Mills. While Mills was not behind this lavish, if self-absorbed, intervention, he was, interestingly, behind the choice for his own modest burial. ‘Should I die in Rome’ he wrote in his Italian will, ‘I want to be decently buried, but with no useless and expensive pomp.’<sup>62</sup> Enough emerges from this testament to sketch the profile of a much less eccentric Mills than the one that has been drawn in the literature — which has often (trivially) remembered him as a peculiar foreigner who threw parties above the Palace of the Caesars.

Mills’s enclosure on the Palatine consisted of a narrow slip of ground, with the entrance being upon the short side on via S. Bonaventura (Fig. 22). The other short side followed the line of the southwest end of the hill. Its long sides, which followed the orientation of the imperial structures, neighboured the Orti Farnesiani, to the northwest, and the Palatine Stadium, to the southeast.

According to Nibby (1827: 218), the location of the estate could be regarded as the most interesting in Rome due to the magnificent and extensive views and the ‘rimembranze antiche’ (literally, the ‘antique remembrances’). As depicted in a lithograph by Godefroy Engelmann (1788–1839), which offers a landscape view from the terrace in the western corner of the gardens, the property certainly offered a privileged viewpoint onto the surroundings, as well as onto the Roman past (Fig. 23). On the left, the southern boundary wall of the gardens leads towards the remains of the Palatine Stadium, passing through the same archway depicted in one of Charlotte Bonaparte’s drawings of the area. The caption below the illustration reads ‘Vigna Palatina’ rather than Villa Mills. Indeed, it is not uncommon for sources from especially the first half of the nineteenth century to refer to the villa and the estate, respectively, as ‘Villa Palatina’ and ‘Vigna Palatina’ — as the area had been long associated with the

<sup>61</sup> According to Morton, 1958: 420, the tombstone also ‘gives his age as eighty-six’ — and the entry in the burial register ‘gives it as eighty-seven’. Both of them are inaccurate if Charles Andrew was actually born in 1770.

<sup>62</sup> ‘Se accadrà la mia morte in Roma, voglio esser tumulato decentemente, ma senza pompa inutile, e dispendiosa.’ Will of Charles Andrew Mills, 17 March 1834, in Antonio Pagnoncelli, ‘Istrometro di aperizione, e pubblicazione del testamento della Ch. Me. Carlo Andrea Mills’, 4 October 1846. Rome, ASC, Protonotaro del Senatore, serie I, vol. 97.

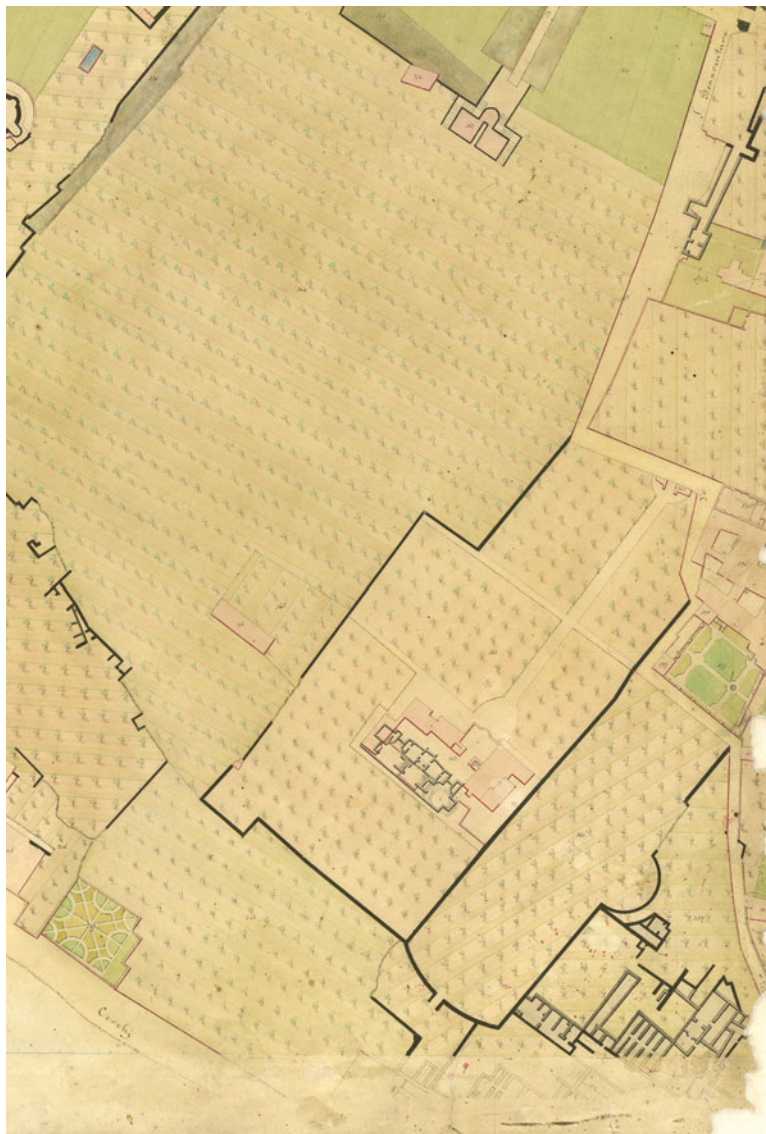


Fig. 22. Detail of the Rione X (Campitelli) from the urban cadastre of Rome (1818–24). Rome, ASR — SIS, Presidenza generale del censo, Catasto urbano di Roma, Rione X, Piante, Foglio II. Courtesy of the Ministero della Cultura — Archivio di Stato di Roma.

Palatine vineyards. ‘In order to go to the Vigna Palatina, or Mr. Mills’s villa,’ G. Head wrote (1849: 68),

it is necessary, after leaving the entrance of the Ort Farnesiani, to advance farther up the Via di Polvereira [*sic*] ... [A]fter proceeding a short distance the way suddenly inclines at a right angle to the left, or southward, towards the convent and little church of S. Buonaventura, where the road terminates by a *cul de sac*. Here, on the right-hand side immediately before arriving at the church and convent is the entrance of the Vigna Palatina.



Fig. 23. Godefroy Engelmann, *Vigna Palatina*, c. 1840, lithograph, 18.4 × 24.9 cm. Rome, BiASA, Archivio Rodolfo Lanciani, Roma XI.7.V.20, 17745. Courtesy of the Istituto Nazionale di Archeologia e Storia dell'Arte.

(see Fig. 22). The name 'Vigna Palatina' was reported to appear at the entrance to the gardens (Nibby, 1827: 217).<sup>63</sup>

The remains of antiquity on the Palatine contributed greatly to the reputation of the property. 'In addition to the natural beauty of the situation,' G. Head (1849: 70) wrote, 'the classical reminiscences attached to the surrounding objects compose the principal attraction of the villa.' Mills himself seems to have nurtured a particular interest in that heritage. According to C.I. Hemans (1874: 204), 'the most important among the *scavi* on the Palatine, in the present century, were directed by Antonio Nibby (1825–6) in the grounds of the Villa Mills', as that 'well known archaeologist was convinced that the ruins of the Augustan palace were here brought to light'. The same Nibby (1827: 218) noted that the southern portion of the gardens, which, he alleged, rises entirely above the ruins of the house of Augustus, was the most delightful. Yet, in continuing that the '[early] modern embellishments' ('*abbellimenti moderni*'),

<sup>63</sup> The French version reports that the inscription read, instead, 'Villa Palatina' (Nibby and Vasi, 1845: 143).

in the form of (what today is known as) the Loggia Stati–Mattei, added to the prestige of the estate, he interestingly manifested appreciation for the non-antique heritage of the Palatine (Nibby, 1827: 218). The pictorial works did not fail to impress also the more critical G. Head (1849: 70), according to whom the mansion ‘is only remarkable on account of its portico’. Most importantly, after ‘The neglect of the last owners of this garden had almost caused the loss of these beautiful paintings,’ Mills reportedly had ‘them restored with fine care by Camuccini, minus a painting that was deemed irremediable’ (Nibby, 1827: 219).<sup>64</sup> While suggesting that Mills similarly nurtured something of an interest in the heritage of the estate (broadly), this also interestingly attests that he put some effort into its preservation.

Entering the enclosure from via S. Bonaventura, and proceeding along an axial path through the gardens, one encountered the villa after covering about half the length of the site (see Fig. 22). I have located a hitherto unknown plan of Villa Mills among the illustrations comprised in architect Costantino Thon’s (1828) work on the Palace of the Caesars, of which a copy is conserved at the Biblioteca Romana Sarti (Fig. 24). In the map depicting the ‘current state’ of the Palatine Hill, Thon included a floor plan of the villa in the ‘Giardino del Sig.r Mills [*sic*]’. The layout of the edifice was ruled by the pre-existing Roman structures it incorporated, as well as by its archaeological landscape. Visitors were welcomed by a passage which separated the west wing from the east wing. This passage led on to the ruins of the *peristilium* of the *Domus Augustana* and the southern portion of the gardens, which offered a special view of the surroundings. The villa followed the orientation of the Roman structures; it did not echo the axiality, symmetry and regularity of the imperial palace. The passage itself (today walled up) was not aligned with the centre of the *Domus Augustana*, and fell instead within its western portion. While the east wing was characterized by the Loggia Stati–Mattei, an L-shaped west wing reached out to the final section of the gardens. The irregular layout — that one could hypothesize as being the result of various building campaigns and adjustments — hints that the edifice was accommodated to the elaborate and multilayered site.

Similar conclusions might be drawn from an analysis of the visual sources offering depictions of the elevations of the villa — which, according to the Countess of Blessington (1839: 470), was ‘arranged with exquisite taste’. The prints of Luigi Rossini (1790–1857), a prolific artist from Ravenna and one of the great illustrators of the marvels of the Eternal City, are precious instruments for the study of modern Rome (Luigi Rossini, 1982; Rossini, 2019), as they are for the study of Villa Mills (Garcia Barraco, 2014: 61–3). His extremely detailed panoramic view from the campanile of Saint Mary ‘Nova’, attached to the monumental publication *I sette colli di Roma antica e moderna* (Rossini,

<sup>64</sup> ‘La trascuratezza degli ultimi proprietari di questo giardino aveva fatto quasi perdere queste belle pitture, ma il sig. Mills le ha fatte restaurare [*sic*] con molta cura dal Camuccini, meno un quadro che era irrimediabile.’

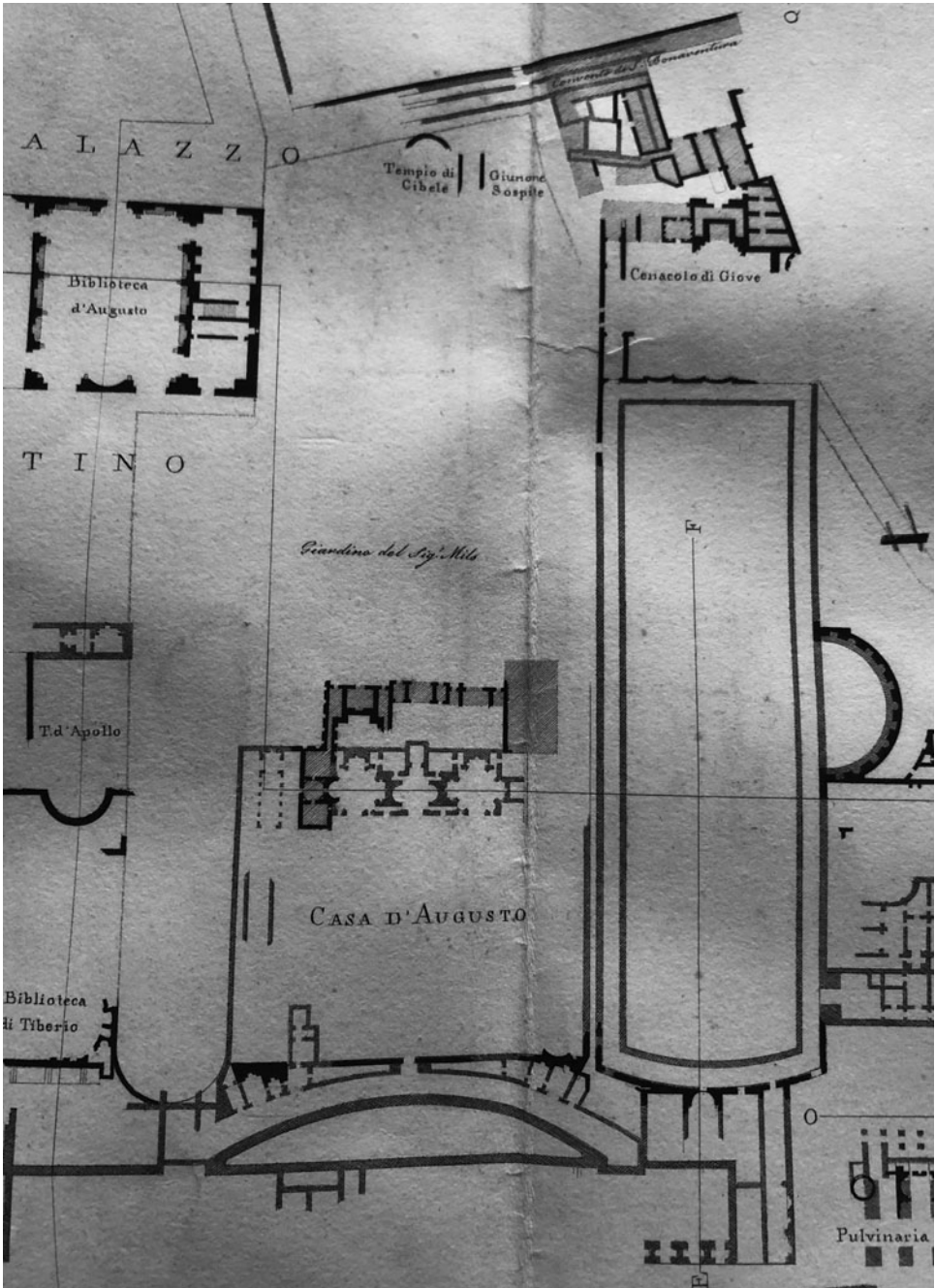


Fig. 24. Floor plan of Villa Mills. Detail from Costantino Thon, *Pianta dello stato attuale del Palazzo dei Cesari*, in Thon (1828). Rome, BRS. Courtesy of the Istituzione Sistema Biblioteche e Centri Culturali di Roma Capitale — Biblioteca Romana Sarti.





Fig. 25. Portion of a panoramic view of Rome with Villa Mills in the background left. Luigi Rossini, *Panorama di Roma dal campanile di Santa Maria Nova*, 1827, etching, in Rossini (1828–9). Rome, MR, Gabinetto delle Stampe, MR — 38918 c. Courtesy of the Sovrintendenza Capitolina — Museo di Roma.

1828–9), includes Villa Mills (Fig. 25). A street leads uphill, from the Arch of Titus, in the foreground. Partially hidden from view, the villa can be spotted in the background, with pitched roofs, preceded by a rusticated gateway. In this panorama, Rossini depicts an irregular edifice which seemingly matches the general layout provided by the urban cadastre. This, added to the representation of the central passage leading to the back of the gardens, enables us to argue that the etching provides a realistic depiction of the estate owned by Mills. Much less realistic appears to be the depiction offered by an etching dedicated to the Palatine Hill viewed from the Aventine (Fig. 26). This print gives an idea of the extraordinary location of the estate on the imperial hilltop. Yet the villa, which is only vaguely sketched and seemingly idealized and monumentalized, hardly matches the location and layout documented in the urban cadastre.

A detailed lithograph by the French artist Jean Louis Tirpenne, dated around 1830, shows an edifice in a bucolic setting (Fig. 27). A woman and a man stand at the centre of the composition, near two towering cypresses. The caption of the print, below the names of the artist and of the lithographers (Lith. de Therry Freres), reads ‘Vigna Palatina.’ A visual comparison between this print and a photo of Villa Smith convincingly shows that the former provides a realistic view of a portion of the southwestern elevation of Villa Mills (Fig. 28).<sup>65</sup> On the right, a few steps lead towards a set of two doors to the edifice. The doors are topped by a pair of oval windows and, above these, a

<sup>65</sup> The print appears in Olthof’s (2019: 27) essay on the villa.



Fig. 26. Luigi Rossini, *Il Monte Palatino*, 1827, etching, 55.8 × 81.5 cm, in Rossini (1828–9). Rome, MR, Gabinetto delle Stampe, MR — 38930. Courtesy of the Sovrintendenza Capitolina — Museo di Roma.

pair of squared windows. A gable with a single opening completes the elevation. The identification of the edifice represented by Tirpenne as Villa Mills can be strengthened through a comparison with a photo of Villa Smith during its demolition (Fig. 29). A few differences occur between the triumphal archway depicted in the print and the triumphal archway (of the passage connecting the two portions of the gardens) captured in the photo. Most notably, the round arch of the former is replaced by an ogee arch, an operation which can be attributed to Mr Smith. The general layout remains, nonetheless, the same.

Tirpenne's print provides a partial depiction of Villa Mills, as it includes the east wing (the one which housed the Loggia Stati-Mattei) and a portion of the central building, which was surmounted by a pitched roof. Yet, alongside Rossini's representation of the main front, the print suggests that Villa Mills did not resemble the *venustas* and pomp of the imperial palace, nor did it showcase the self-evident monumentality of Villa Smith. This visual analysis can be supported by textual evidence — in the form of G. Head's account (1849: 70) — suggesting that the mansion was 'on a very limited scale as regards dimensions'. Indeed, in one of the illustrations provided to illustrate the Roman Forum in E. Pistoletti's (1841) description of Rome and its surroundings, the edifice can hardly be distinguished on the right end of the Palatine, in the shadow (Fig. 30). As modest as a house which incorporated the walls of an



Fig. 27. Southwest view of Villa Mills. Jean Louis Tirpenne, *Vigna Palatina*, c. 1830, lithograph, 18.1 × 24.5 cm. Rome, BiASA, Archivio Rodolfo Lanciani, Roma XI.7.III.20, 17716. Courtesy of the Istituto Nazionale di Archeologia e Storia dell'Arte.

imperial palace can be, Villa Mills was considerably more modest than Villa Smith.

A visual antithesis to the latter, the former was strikingly different from the one that has been long assumed. The modesty of Villa Mills, contrasting with the wit of Villa Smith, allows for a proper revision of the character of Mills. The same applies to its Italianate design, which is diametrically opposite to the explicitly imperialist and 'British' dimension of the neo-Gothic villa. This is a dimension which does not sit well with Mills's unresolved issues with Britain after his dismissal from the post in Guadeloupe, nor with his public support of Caroline. An important aspect remains to be addressed: what is the legacy, if any, of Mills's tenure of the property on the Palatine Hill?

Let's go back to his Italian testament. Paradoxically, while the name 'Mills' still lingers on the Palatine, Mills's generic instructions to sell the villa after his death do not disclose any particular effort to keep his name attached to it. This,



Fig. 28. South view of Villa Smith. Giovanni Gargioli, n.d., photographic print. Rome, ASGFN, E1944. Courtesy of the Ministero della Cultura — Istituto Centrale per il Catalogo e la Documentazione.

alongside the explicit intention to be buried ‘with no useless and expensive pomp’, hints that Mills was much more modest than has been assumed. It also leads to the hypothesis that he did not embark on an extravagant makeover of the edifice.

Through the drawing of the area produced during Gell’s tenure, it can be suggested that Mills did not revolutionize the general layout of the gardens, as the axial path — a key feature of the estate until the twentieth century — predates Mills’s acquisition (see Fig. 11). Textual evidence nonetheless indicates that he commissioned significant gardening works. Nibby (1827: 217–18) noted that the ‘the delightful garden erected in the early sixteenth century by the Matteis, and then later owned by the Spada family, the Magnanis, and the Coloccis’, had been ‘restored to its primitive amenity’ by the ‘English gentleman’.<sup>66</sup> The note is quite remarkable, and not just because it enables us to situate these works within a few years from the acquisition from Gell. It is remarkable mostly because it hints that Mills aimed to restore the early modern ‘amenity’ of the estate. Even so, the gardens of Villa Mills were much more

<sup>66</sup> ‘si annunzia un delizioso giardino eretto nel principio del secolo XVI dai Mattei, e poi successivamente posseduto dalla famiglia Spada, dai Magnani, e dai Colocci ... Carlo Mills, gentiluomo inglese, e suo proprietario attuale, ... lo ha restituito alla sua amenità primitiva.’



Fig. 29. Southwest view of the *Domus Augustana* prior to the completion of the demolitions. Soprintendenza alle Antichità Palatino e Foro Romano, *Villa Mills*, *portichetto barocco*, August 1927, photographic print on card. ASPArCo, Archivio Fotografico, Villa Mills, VM-FN 042-asf022664. Courtesy of the Ministero della Cultura — Parco Archeologico del Colosseo.

than a ‘restoration’ of a pre-existing design. G. Head (1849: 69) highlighted the fact that the whole enclosure was ‘laid down in shrubbery, gravel walks, and flower beds, altogether in the style of an English garden, with the exception of one or two walks shaded by trellises from the extreme heat of the sun in summer, after the fashion of the warmer climates’. A trellis also appears in Engelmann’s depiction of the estate (see Fig. 23). G. Head (1849: 69) continued that, ‘In conformity also with the taste of the country, there may be remarked, planted on pedestals at the angles, several terra cotta vases, manufactured in Naples, of beautifully red material, and exquisite classical form, that of an oblate spheroid, fluted on the exterior, with three rings in lions’ mouths for handles, and resting on three lions’ claws.’ This passage is revealing. First, it highlights a predisposition towards classical forms, rather than, let’s say, medieval and/or oriental(ist). While this classical setting might have matched Mills’s own interests, it remains unclear whether or not the objects displayed in the gardens had been there prior to the works he commissioned, and prior to his acquisition from Gell. In this connection, it is not to be excluded that the latter played a significant role in the refurbishment of the gardens — especially considering the presence of objects from Naples. G. Head’s account is revealing



Fig. 30. View of Rome with Villa Mills in the background right. Gaetano Cottafavi, *Foro Romano*, in Pistolesi (1841). Rome, BSR L, 600.389. Courtesy of the British School at Rome.

also because it spells out that the gardens of Villa Mills were the result of the encounter between the English garden tradition and Italy's weather, historical forms and colours.

Moving to Villa Mills, the paperwork, dated 17 February 1825, submitted by Mills to the Camerlengato to obtain the permit to continue the excavations after the discovery of a section of a fluted column, informs that some kind of works occurred in the section of the edifice towards the Orti Farnesiani.<sup>67</sup> The manuscript, from which one can highlight Mills's attention to heritage, only vaguely refers to 'rural works' ('lavori rustici') in the area. It does not hint at a campaign involving the whole edifice. Yet no evidence has been disclosed to indicate that Mills pursued an extensive renovation of the villa. The price agreed with Smith for the acquisition of the property was higher than the one that Mills had paid Gell. There are no elements in the deed between Mills and Smith to suggest that this higher price was due to interventions in the villa, nor to indicate that the estate acquired by the latter in 1846 differed significantly from the one that the former had obtained in 1821.<sup>68</sup> Had significant works

<sup>67</sup> Charles Andrew Mills to Monsignore G. Groppelli, 17 February 1825. Rome, ASR — SIS, Camerlengato, parte II, busta 155, fascicolo 201.

<sup>68</sup> It must be noted that, with the acquisition of 'La Villa denominata Mills' (the estate), alongside the 'Palazzo' (the villa itself), Smith obtained, with a few exceptions, 'tutti gli altri oggetti, ed utensili di qualsiasi sorte'. While it is safe to believe that Smith obtained a significant portion of Mills's

occurred in the property under Mills's tenure, it would be surprising not to find them mentioned in the deed: in the deed for the sale to the nuns, a big deal was made of the works pursued by Smith. It would be even more surprising when one takes into account the meticulousness of Damiani in drafting the deed for the transaction between Mills and Smith. Indeed, this includes Pagnoncelli's declaration that the sale did not pertain to the water supplies of *Acqua Felice* — which had been sold to the *Torlonias* in 1842.<sup>69</sup> It is possible to claim that Mills mostly preserved the pre-existing structures, and that *Villa Mills* did not differ much from the early modern edifice that had been owned by the *Magnanis*. Thus, a visual comparison between the general layout of 'Villa Spada/Magnani' as represented in *Giambattista Nolli's* (1701–1756) map of Rome (1748) and that of *Villa Mills* in *Thon's* map invites the conclusion that no major changes occurred in the general layout of the property between the mid-eighteenth century and Mills's tenure, except, most evidently, from some changes in proximity to the *Orti Farnesiani* (Fig. 31; see Fig. 24).

## CONCLUSION

In a handbook dedicated to 'the Students of Classical and Christian Antiquity', *Hemans* (1874: 205) commented that 'No spot in Europe perhaps could be better suited [than the Palatine] to awaken thoughts or suggest questionings on the great problems of History.' The history of the *Villa Palatina* from the 1810s to the 1850s invites us to reflect on the ways in which modern Rome, no less than, let's say, 'classical and Christian antiquity', can awaken thoughts or suggest questionings. This history pointedly offers an insight as to how architecture and British presence in pre-unification Rome were negotiated and enacted against the backdrop of earth-shaking events and wider cultural and political challenges. Some of the difficulties faced by *Gell* and *Mills* differed greatly from those of the *Smiths* and the bankers. If *Napoleon's* final defeat opened up new opportunities for a vigorous return of the British to Italy, the modes of this return and its social and spatial implications were an open question in the context of the Restoration. By the time of *Smith's* acquisition of the Palatine estate, a solid network had been constructed in the Eternal City, in

---

personal belongings, it is likely that *Gell* — despite similarly leaving 'tutti gli oggetti e miglioramenti, che vi si trovano' to his successor — had moved out many of his goods with the acquisition by *Mills* and the decision to move to *Naples*. See *Mario Damiani*, notarial deed (sale of a property), 6 April 1846. Rome, ASR — SIS, *Trenta Notai Capitolini*, Ufficio 3; *Luigi Galleani*, notarial deed (sale of a property), 9 February 1821. Rome, ASR — SIS, *Trenta Notai Capitolini*, Ufficio 19.

<sup>69</sup> 'nella presente vendita restano pur'anco escluse le tre once di *acqua Felice* senza conduttura, che una volta formavano parte della proprietà di quella villa, essendo stata già la med.a quantità di *acqua dal prelo.*o Sig.r venditore *Mills* venduta a S.E. il Sig.r Principe D. *Alessandro Torlonia* ... li 4 Febraro 1842'. *Mario Damiani*, notarial deed (sale of a property), 6 April 1846. Rome, ASR — SIR, *Trenta Notai Capitolini*, Ufficio 3.



Fig. 31. Villa Spada and the Palatine Hill, Rome. Detail of Giambattista Nolli, *Nuova pianta di Roma*, 1748, etching. Rome, BH, Dg 140-3481/c gr. Courtesy of the Bibliotheca Hertziana — Max Planck Institute for Art History.

which Plowden and Cholmeley became meaningful actors. New anxieties arose towards the mid-nineteenth century with the upsurge of revolutionary activity, the parenthesis of the Roman Republic and the beginning of a high phase of the Italian Risorgimento — one in which, after Pius IX's withdrawal from the 'Italian' cause (1848), the role of the papacy was fundamentally unresolved if not problematic. In spite of the different challenges that were presented, on the one hand, to Gell and Mills and, on the other, to the Smiths and the bankers, a protracted one, which spans the entire British phase of the Villa Palatina, is to be found in the relation between the foreigner and the local.

That the villa on the Palatine was owned by an uninterrupted sequence of Britons for almost five decades suggests a great deal about the social and spatial dynamics of foreign presence in pre-unification Rome. It is tempting to read Britain's return to the Eternal City as the establishment of a British 'colony' in the Papal States. Sydney Owenson, the Irish novelist known as 'Lady Morgan' (1821: 392), did describe 'The Via del Babuino, the Piazza di Spagna and one or two streets in their vicinity' as 'literally British colonies'. The place where anglophones most congregated in the Eternal City — and also the place where Mills himself moved in the last phases of his life — the area of Piazza di Spagna and its surroundings, became well known in the nineteenth century as the 'English Ghetto' (*Transalpine Memoirs*, 1826: 33). While illuminating in some respects, such expressions can be misleading. Situated in the Rione Campitelli, the Villa Palatina directs attention to the interaction of Britain and the urban fabric of Rome far beyond the surroundings of Piazza di Spagna, problematizing a narrow association between the British and a spatially



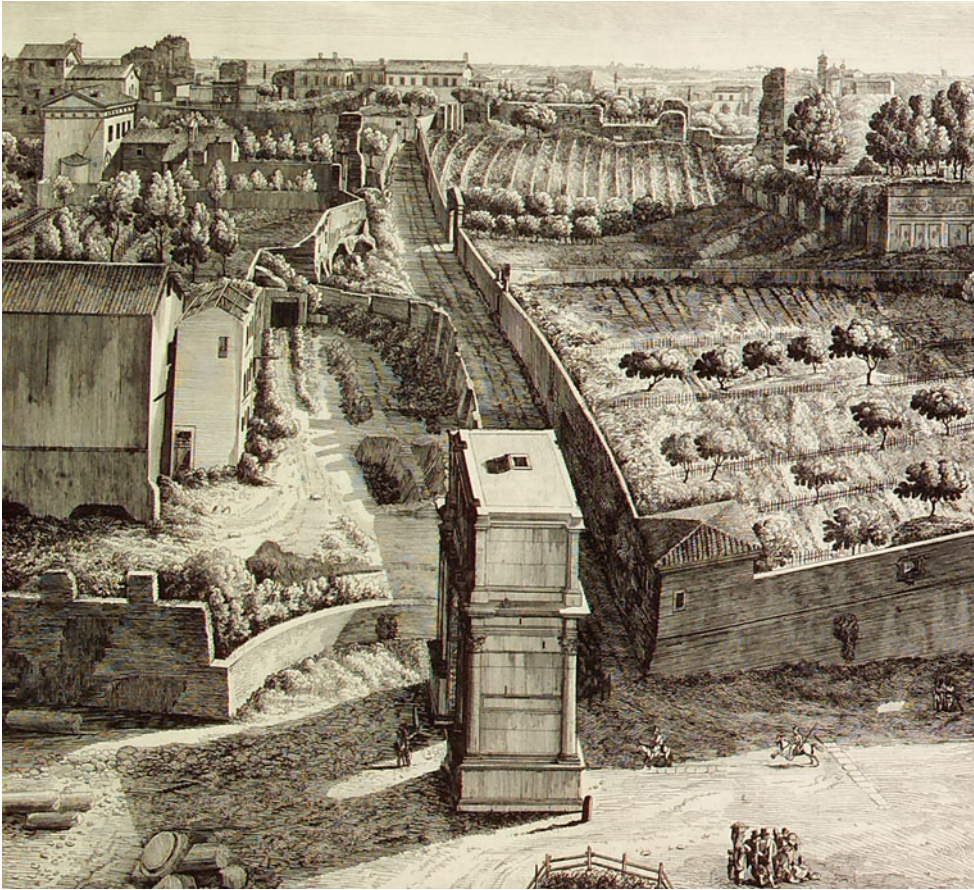


Fig. 32. In the foreground: the Arch of Titus. In the background: Villa Mills. Detail from Luigi Rossini, *Panorama di Roma dal campanile di Santa Maria Nova*, 1827, etching, in Rossini (1828–9). Rome, MR, Gabinetto delle Stampe, MR — 38918 c. Courtesy of the Sovrintendenza Capitolina — Museo di Roma.

delimited British ‘quarter’. At the same time, the fact that, under the tenure of Mills, the property on the Palatine was a privileged meeting place for the anglophone community in the city should not lead to the hasty conclusion that modern Rome worked on the basis of separation between the foreigner and the local. By overemphasizing the notions of ‘colony’ and ‘ghetto’, one can underestimate that a significant aspect of foreign presence in Risorgimento Rome did not necessarily reside in a strict separation from the locals but in a tension of overlapping sociocultural spheres. The case of the Villa Palatina highlights how the built environment served as a reflection of this underlying tension. Mills extended a warm welcome beyond the social borders of the British community and was well known by the Roman citizens. Altogether, paper trails provide evidence that relations were established between the foreigners who inhabited/owned the *Domus Augustana* and the locals, and even between the former and the Catholic Church. One thinks of Julia’s plea to the



Fig. 33. In the foreground: the Arch of Titus. In the background: Villa Smith and the expansion commissioned by the Sisters of Visitation. Detail from unknown photographer active in Rome, *Veduta aerea dell'arco di Tito e del Palatino*, 1924, silver bromide gelatin print. Rome, MR, Archivio Fotografico, AF — 3790. Courtesy of the Sovrintendenza Capitolina — Museo di Roma.

cardinal vicar, but also of the bankers' proximity to the Catholic intelligentsia in Rome and the sale of the property on the Palatine to the Monastery of Visitation.<sup>70</sup> While issues surrounding the relationship between the British and the Catholic Church had been a hot topic since the Restoration, Pius IX's willingness to explore closer ties with Britain directed new attention to these issues.

We need look no further than Rancurel to discover that the British phase was a meaningful one for the estate in terms of heritage. This does not mean that excavations on the site did not occur. Yet Mills's interest in the property was the opposite of those that, à la Rancurel, were mostly concerned with the valuable artefacts themselves. In addition, Mills showed a new attention towards the *longue durée* history of the Palatine and a new awareness of the rights of the public to have access to the extraordinary site. At the same time,

<sup>70</sup> The fact that Julia lamented being deprived of her own goods and that the nuns were 'assured by intelligent people' that it was convenient to buy the villa for 30,000 scudi raises questions of female subordination and gender equality.

the estate was much more than an archaeological site. Gell, Mills and the Smiths set up home on the Palatine. While redeeming the figure of Mills himself, Villa Mills unveils a particular narrative of the British diaspora. It unveils a diasporic narrative of acceptance, valorization and celebration of the local as means of self-identification — a narrative that, as the broad aesthetic differences illustrate, contrasts with that of Villa Smith (Figs 32 and 33). Smith remade the Palatine Hill in his own image. The villa became a monument to everything for which the lieutenant-colonel stood. This had much to do with empire, nationhood and self-aggrandisement. Thus, Rome's imperial hill started to cast the shadows of the British Empire.

Address for correspondence:

Dr Tommaso Zerbi

Bibliotheca Hertziana — Max Planck Institute for Art History

via Gregoriana 28, Rome 00187, Italy

[tommasozerbi.tz@gmail.com](mailto:tommasozerbi.tz@gmail.com)

## REFERENCES

### Abbreviations

AAR	=	American Academy in Rome
AMV	=	Archivio del Monastero della Visitazione di Santa Maria
AN	=	Aerofototeca Nazionale
ASC	=	Archivio Storico Capitolino
ASGFN	=	Archivio Storico del Gabinetto Fotografico Nazionale
ASM	=	Archivio Storico Municipale
ASPArCo	=	Archivio Storico del Parco Archeologico del Colosseo
ASR — SIS	=	Archivio di Stato di Roma — Sant'Ivo alla Sapienza
ASR — GP	=	Archivio di Stato di Roma — Galla Placidia
BH	=	Bibliotheca Hertziana
BiASA	=	Biblioteca di Archeologia e Storia dell'Arte
BL	=	British Library
BRS	=	Biblioteca Romana Sarti
BSR L	=	British School at Rome Library
BSR PA	=	British School at Rome Photographic Archive
ENBSA	=	École Nationale Supérieure des Beaux-Arts
FCC	=	Fondazione Camillo Caetani
MN	=	Museo Napoleonico
MR	=	Museo di Roma
NPG	=	National Portrait Gallery
RCT	=	Royal Collection Trust
TNA	=	The National Archives

## Secondary sources

- Angeli, D. (1902) *Le chiese di Roma: Guida storica e artistica delle basiliche, chiese e oratorii della città di Roma*. Rome, Società Editrice Dante Alighieri.
- Archer, M. (1972) An artist engineer: Colonel Robert Smith in India (1805–1830). *The Connoisseur* 179/720: 78–88.
- Augenti, A. (1996) *Il Palatino nel medioevo: Archeologia e topografia (secoli VI–XIII)*. Rome, 'L'Erma' di Bretschneider.
- Baroni, S. and Parapatti, E. (1997) *Palatino Loggia Mattei: La volta affrescata della Loggia Mattei con l'esposizione di ventidue dipinti del Metropolitan Museum of Art*. Milan, Electa.
- Bartocchini, F. (1985). *Roma nell'Ottocento*, 2 vols. Rome, Cappelli.
- Bartoli, A. (1907) Scoperta dell'oratorio e del monastero di S. Cesario sul Palatino. *Nuovo Bollettino di Archeologia Cristiana* 13: 191–204.
- Bartoli, A. (1908) La Villa Mills sul Palatino. *Rassegna Contemporanea* 1/1: 89–102.
- Bartoli, A. (1929) Scavi del Palatino (*Domus Augustana*) 1926–1928. *Notizie degli Scavi di Antichità* 7: 3–29.
- Bartoli, A. (1938) *Domus Augustana*. Rome, Istituto di Studi Romani.
- Biographical Dictionary of Civil Engineers in Great Britain and Ireland* (2002), vol. I. London, Thomas Telford.
- Blessington, M.G., Countess of (1839) *The Idler in Italy* II. London, Henry Colburn, Publisher.
- Bonfigli, F.S. (1854) *Roma veduta in otto giorni*. Rome, Presso la Libreria Inglese e Americana di Luigi Piale.
- Bremner, G.A. (2020) A tale of two churches: 'Protestant' architecture and the politics of religion in late nineteenth-century Rome. *Papers of the British School at Rome* 88: 259–96.
- Byron, G.G. (Lord) (1818) *Childe Harold's Pilgrimage: Canto the Fourth*. London, John Murray.
- Cadell, W.A. (1820) *A Journey in Carniola, Italy, and France, in the Years 1817, 1818* I. Edinburgh, Printed for Archibald Constable and Co.
- Caetani, E. (2005) La tragedia della Famiglia Bathurst. In L. Fiorani (ed.) *Alcuni ricordi di Michelangelo Caetani Duca di Sermoneta raccolti dalla sua vedova e pubblicati pel suo centenario*: 101–9. Rome, 'L'Erma' di Bretschneider.
- Cancogni, D. (1909) *Le rovine del Palatino: Guida storico-artistica*. Milan, Ulrico Hoepli Editore-Libraio della Real Casa.
- Casiello, S. (2005) *La cultura del restauro: Teorie e fondatori* (third edition). Venice, Marsilio.
- Champ, J. (2009) La rivoluzione, la restaurazione e il Venerabile Collegio Inglese nel diciannovesimo secolo. In *La chiesa del Collegio Inglese a Roma: La storia, il restauro*: 52–67. Rome, Gangemi.
- Checchetelli, G. (1842) *Una giornata di osservazione nel palazzo e nella villa di S.E. il sig. principe D. Alessandro Torlonia*. Rome, Tipografia di Crispino Puccinelli.
- Clay, E. and Frederiksen, M. (1976) (eds) *Sir William Gell in Italy: Letters to the Society of Dilettanti, 1831–1835*. London, Hamish Hamilton.
- Coarelli, F. (2012) *Palatium: Il Palatino dalle origini all'impero*. Rome, Edizioni Quasar.
- Colburn's United Service Magazine and Naval and Military Journal* (October 1873).
- Contarini, G.B. (1844) *Lapidi sepolcrali erette nel nostro secolo a' morti esistenti sì nelle chiese di Venezia, come nel cimitero*. Venice, Tip. all'Ancona.
- Cortilli, F. (2021) Gli affreschi della Loggia Stati Mattei sul Palatino: I cartoni preparatori e disegni attribuiti a Giulio Romano. In P. Assmann, S. L'Occaso, M.C. Loi, F. Moschini, A. Russo and M. Zurla (eds) *Giulio Romano: Pittore, architetto, artista universale* (Proceedings of the conference, Mantua and Rome, 14–18 October 2019): 311–18. Rome, Accademia Nazionale di San Luca.
- Del Tempio di S. Maria Sopra Minerva restaurato e abbellito: Descrizione storico-artistica* (1855). Rome, Tipografia di Gaetano Chiassi.

- Diario del settimo Congresso degli Scienziati Italiani in Napoli dal 20 di settembre a' 5 di ottobre dell'anno 1845* (1845). Toledo, Stabilimento Tipografico di Gaetano Nobile.
- Diario di Roma* 1846/1 (8 January 1846).
- Diario di Roma* 1846/80 (6 October 1846).
- Didier-Moulonguet, L. (1978) Nice: Le château de l'Anglais. *Monuments Historiques* 1: 31–3.
- Dodwell, E. (1834) *Views and Description of Cyclopiian, or, Pelasgic Remains in Greece and Italy*. London, Adolphus Richer and Co.
- Garcia Barraco, M.E. (2014) *Villa Mills sul Palatino e la Domus Augustana*. Rome, Arbor Sapientiae.
- Gayraud, D. (2011) Le Château Smith, dit Château de l'Anglais ou Château de Mont Boron. *Nice Historique* 113/1: 46–63.
- Gell, W. (1804) *The Topography of Troy, and Its Vicinity; Illustrated and Explained by Drawings and Descriptions*. London, For T.N. Longman and O. Rees.
- Gell, W. (1834) *The Topography of Rome and Its Vicinity*, 2 vols. London, Saunders and Otley.
- Gell, W. (1837) *Pompeiana: The Topography, Edifices and Ornaments of Pompeii, the Result of Excavations since 1819*. I. London, L. A. Lewis.
- Gell, W. and Gandy, J.P. (1817–19) *Pompeiana: The Topography, Edifices, and Ornaments of Pompeii*. London, Printed for Rodwell and Martin.
- Gell, W. and Nibby, A. (1820) *Le mura di Roma*. Rome, Presso Vincenzo Poggioli Stampatore Camerale.
- Giornale Costituzionale del Regno delle Due Sicilie* 104 (6 November 1820): 417–18.
- Gorgone, G. and Cannelli, C. (1999) (eds) *Il salotto delle caricature: Acquerelli di Filippo Caetani 1830–1860* (Exhibition catalogue, Rome, 4 November 1999–9 January 2000). Rome, 'L'Erma' di Bretschneider.
- Grenville, R.P.T.N.B.C., Duke of Buckingham and Chandos (1862) *The Private Diary of Richard, Duke of Buckingham and Chandos*, K.G. III. London, Hurst and Blackett, Publishers.
- Harney, M. (2013) *Place-Making for the Imagination: Horace Walpole and Strawberry Hill*. Farnham, Ashgate.
- Head, G. (1849) *Rome: A Tour of Many Days* II. London, Longman, Brown, Green, and Longmans.
- Head, R. (21 May 1981) From obsession to obscurity: Colonel Robert Smith, artist, architect and engineer. *Country Life* 169/4370: 1432–4.
- Head, R. (28 May 1981) Indian fantasy in Devon: Colonel Robert Smith, artist, architect and engineer. *Country Life* 169/4371: 1524–8.
- Header, H. (1975) The making of the Roman Republic, 1848–1849. *History* 60/199: 169–84.
- Hemans, C.I. (1874) *Historic and Monumental Rome: A Handbook for the Students of Classical and Christian Antiquity in the Italian Capital*. London and Edinburgh, Williams and Norgate.
- Iacopi, I. (1997) *Gli scavi sul Colle Palatino: Testimonianze e documenti*. Milan, Electa.
- In the Goods of Co. R. Smith (28 February 1874). *The Law Times Reports* 29: 932.
- Insolera, I. (2018) *Modern Rome: From Napoleon to the Twenty-First Century*, trans. and ed. L. Bozzola, R. Einaudi and M. Zumaglini. Newcastle-upon-Tyne, Cambridge Scholars Publishing.
- James, D. (2018) A fairy place in Devon: Redcliffe Towers, built by Colonel Robert Smith (1787–1873), Bengal Engineers. In M. Finn and K. Smith (eds) *The East India Company at Home 1757–1857*: 277–97. London, UCL Press.
- Jannattoni, L. (1987) Uno scozzese sul Palatino: La villa neogotica di Charles Andrew Mills. *Strenna dei Romanisti* 48: 303–26.
- Lanciani, R. (1901) *New Tales of Old Rome*. London, Macmillan & Company, Ltd.
- Liversidge, M. and Edwards, C. (1996) (eds) *Imagining Rome: British Artists and Rome in the Nineteenth Century*. London, Merrell Publishers Ltd.
- Losty, J.P. (9 December 2013) Disentangling the Robert Smiths. *British Library Asian and African Studies Blog*. <https://blogs.bl.uk/asian-and-african/2013/12/disentangling-the-robert-smithsthe->

- [artistic-career-of-colonel-robert-smith-1787-1853-of-the-bengal-engineers-is-one-of-th.html](#) (accessed 27 April 2022).
- Luigi Rossini incisore: *Vedute di Roma 1817/1850* (Exhibition catalogue, Rome, 7 April–15 July 1982). Rome, Multigrafica Editrice.
- Mason, P. (2020) *The Modernists That Rome Made: Turner and Other Foreign Painters in Rome XVI–XIX Century*. Rome, Gangemi.
- Matsumoto-Best, S. (2003) *Britain and the Papacy in the Age of Revolution 1846–1851*. Woodbridge, The Boydell Press.
- Meeks, C.L.V. (1966) *Italian Architecture 1750–1914*. New Haven and London, Yale University Press.
- Melchiorri, G. (1840) *Guida metodica di Roma e suoi contorni*. Rome, Tipografia Puccinelli.
- Mills, C. (1817) *An History of Muhammedanism: Comprising the Life and Character of the Arabian Prophet and Succint Accounts of the Empires Founded by the Muhammedan Arms . . . with a View of the Present Extent and Influence of the Muhammedan Religion*. London, Printed for Black, Parbury, and Allen.
- Mills, C. (1820) *The History of the Crusades, for the Recovery and Possession of the Holy Land*. London, Printed for Longman, Hurst, Rees, Orme, and Brown.
- Mills, C. (1825) *The History of Chivalry or Knighthood and Its Times*, 2 vols. London, Printed for Longmans, Hurst, Rees, Orme, Brown and Green.
- Morganti, G. (2018) (ed.) *Il Palatino e il suo giardino segreto: Nel fascino degli Horti Farnesiani* (Exhibition catalogue, Rome, 9 March–28 October 2018). Milan, Electa.
- Morton, H.V. (1958) *A Traveller in Rome*. London, Methuen & Co Ltd.
- Munro, I.S. (11 December 1953) The British Academy of Arts in Rome. *Journal of the Royal Society of Arts* 102/4914: 42–56.
- Nibby, A. (1827) *Itinerario di Roma e delle sue vicinanze compilato secondo il metodo di M. Vasi I*. Rome, Nella Tipografia Poggioli.
- Nibby, A. and Vasi, M. (1845) *Itinéraire de Rome et ses environs I*. Rome, Propriété d'Augustin Valentini.
- Olthof, G. (2019) De Villa Mills: Een vergeten bizar landhuis bovenop de keizerlijke paleizen van de Palatijn'. *Roma Aeterna* 7/2: 18–33.
- Owenson, S. (Lady Morgan) (1821) *Italy II*. Paris, A. and W. Galignani.
- Pafumi, S. (2007) Per la ricostruzione degli arredi scultorei del Palazzo dei Cesari sul Palatino: Scavi e rinvenimenti dell'abate francese Paul Rancurel (1774–1777). *Bulletin Antieke Beschaving: Annual Papers on Mediterranean Archaeology* 82: 207–25.
- Pantazzi, S. (1980) 'The Roman Advertiser', 1846–1849. *Victorian Periodicals Review* 13/4: 119–24.
- Parker, J. and Wagner, C. (2020) (eds) *The Oxford Handbook of Victorian Medievalism*. Oxford, Oxford University Press.
- Phillimore, R.H. (1950) *Historical Records of the Survey of India II*. Dehradun, By Order of the Surveyor General of India.
- Piacentini, M. (1952) *Le vicende edilizie di Roma dal 1870 ad oggi*. Rome, Fratelli Palombi Editori.
- Pistolesi, E. (1841) *Descrizione di Roma e suoi contorni con nuovo metodo breve e facile per vedere la città in otto giorni adorna di incisioni de' primi bulini*. Rome, Giovanni Gallarini Librajo.
- Rawes, A. and Saglia, D. (2017) (eds) *Byron and Italy*. Manchester: Manchester University Press.
- Reeve, M.M. (2020) *Gothic Architecture and Sexuality in the Circle of Horace Walpole*. University Park, Penn State University Press.
- Riccio, B. (2013) (ed.) *William Gell, archeologo, viaggiatore e cortigiano: Un inglese nella Roma della Restaurazione*. Rome, Gangemi Editore.
- Richardson, C.M. (2007) Edward Pugin and English Catholic identity: the new church of the Venerable English College in Rome. *Journal of the Society of Architectural Historians* 66/3: 340–65.

- Rogers, N. (1975) (ed.) *Keats, Shelley & Rome: An Illustrated Miscellany*. New York, Haskell House Publishers.
- Rossini, L. (1828–9) *I sette colli di Roma antica e moderna con piante e restauri dei medesimi, e coi colli adiacenti con un panorama preso in luogo ove si veggono tutti i monumenti antichi . . .*. Rome, Tipografia Mercurj e Robaglia.
- Rossini, L. (2019) *Le antichità romane*, ed. U. Salwa. Naples, Edizioni Intra Moenia.
- Rufini, A. (1857) *Guida di Roma e suoi dintorni ornata di parecchie vedute della città e corredata di tutte quelle notizie che possono importare al viaggiatore*. Rome, Dalla Tipografia Forense.
- Rusconi, A.J. (1906) La Villa Mills sul Palatino. *Emporium* 24/140: 158–60.
- Ruspoli, I. (1846) *Avanzi e ricordi del monte Palatino tratti dal vero e posti in litografia*. Rome.
- Salmon, F. (1995) ‘Storming the Campo Vaccino’: British architects and the antique buildings of Rome after Waterloo. *Architectural History* 38: 146–75.
- Salmon, F. (2000) *Building on Ruins: The Rediscovery of Rome and English Architecture*. Aldershot, Ashgate.
- Scherer, M.R. (1955) *Marvels of Ancient Rome*. New York and London, Phaidon Press.
- Schoina, M. (2009) *Romantic ‘Anglo-Italians’: Configurations of Identity in Byron, the Shelleys, and the Pisan Circle*. Farnham, Ashgate.
- Shorto, S. (2018) *British Houses in Late Mughal Delhi*. Woodbridge, The Boydell Press.
- Spera, L. (2017) Note sull’oratorio di San Cesareo al Palatino. *Rivista di Archeologia Cristiana* 93: 505–60.
- Sweet, R. (2015) William Gell and ‘Pompeiana’ (1817–19 and 1832). *Papers of the British School at Rome* 83: 245–81.
- The Bankers’ Magazine: Journal of the Money Market, and Commercial Digest* 44 (1884).
- The Important and Eventful Trial of Queen Caroline, Consort of George IV for ‘Adulterous Intercourse’ with Bartolomo Bergami* (1820). London, Printed and Sold by Geo. Smeeton.
- The Roman Advertiser: Journal of Italian Intelligence, Science, Literature, Fine Arts & C.* 83 (11 November 1848).
- The Tablet: A Weekly Newspaper and Review* 35/1567 (23 April 1870).
- (Mrs.) Thistlethwayte (1853) *Memoirs and Correspondence of Dr. Henry Bathurst, Lord Bishop of Norwich*. London, Richard Bentley.
- Thompson, J. (2019) *Queen Caroline and Sir William Gell: A Study in Royal Patronage and Classical Scholarship*. Cham, Palgrave Macmillan.
- Thon, C. (1828) *Il Palazzo de’ Cesari sul monte Palatino*. Rome, P. La S. T.
- Transalpine Memoirs: Or, Anecdotes and Observations, Shewing the Actual State of Italy and the Italians, by an English Catholic* (1826), vol. I. Bath, Richard Cruttwell.
- Wallace-Hadrill, A. (2006) Roman topography and the prism of Sir William Gell. In L. Haselberger and J. Humphrey (eds), *Imaging Ancient Rome: Documentation, Visualization, Imagination*: 285–96. Portsmouth (RI), Journal of Roman Archaeology Supplementary Series.
- Wells, K.M. (1978) The British Academy of Arts in Rome 1823–1936. *Italian Studies* 33: 92–110.
- Whiteside, J. (1848) *Italy in the Nineteenth Century, Contrasted with Its Past Condition II*. London, Richard Bentley.