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ALEXANDER POPE, LORD BURLINGTON AND PALLADIO'S *FABBRICHE ANTICHE*

Eileen Harris

On his second visit to Italy in 1719, Lord Burlington purchased a collection of Palladio's drawings of Roman antiquities from descendants of the Barbaro-Trevesan family, who were then the proprietors of the Villa Maser, where the great architect died in 1580.¹ These drawings were and still are believed to be connected with the books on the baths, amphitheatres, and other ancient edifices which Palladio had said on several occasions in his *Quattro Libri* (1570) he hoped 'to put out soon' but which never appeared.²

It was perfectly reasonable for Burlington to presume that Palladio would have included in his intended publication his written observations on the buildings which he had measured, studied and with great pains reconstructed, even though he professed to attach much more importance to his drawings than to words.³ As might be expected, the lost manuscript became a prime desideratum, and the great hope of its discovery, which Burlington cherished in vain, may well have been one of the main causes of his delay in publishing the engravings of Palladio's reconstructions as a proper book.

The title *Fabbriche Antiche Designata Da Andrea Palladio Vicentino E Date In Luce Da Riccardo Conte Di Burlington Londra MDCCXXX* is inscribed on the base of a Doric aedicule, said to be invented by Palladio, in which stands a copy of the bust purporting to be of him that Rysbrack made for Burlington.⁴ The composition was Kent's, engraved by Paul Fourdrinier. On the basis of this title it has always been taken for granted that the *Fabbriche Antiche* as we know it, with its engraved preface 'Al Intendente Lettore' and twenty-four leaves of plates, was completed in 1730. That however is almost certainly not the case.

In 1734 George Vertue visited Burlington for the first time at Chiswick House. There he saw 'infinite numbers of Designs of Palladio of which some has been engraved at his Lordships expence, to make a book, wanting only one leaf this two year (as a preface to it) he showed it me himself & promis'd me a Coppy of it when done, tho' he intends not to part with above 20 (a great honour & favour to come)'.⁵ The only drawings by Palladio in Burlington's collection that are known to have been engraved are his designs for S. Giorgio Maggiore in Venice published in *The Designs of Inigo Jones* (1727)⁶; a plan and elevation of a small three-bay villa; the plans, elevations, sections and capitals of the Roman baths that make up the *Fabbriche*; and a section of the Roman theatre at Verona.⁷ Apart from the proof plate of the latter, there is absolutely no evidence of any engravings having been made of the 'drawings of arches, theatres, temples and other ancient buildings' which Burlington said in his preface he would put into another volume to follow the baths, 'when there is time'.

If the volume on the baths had been completed as a book by 1734, then Vertue, who engraved the head-piece to the preface (again depicting Rysbrack's bust of the pseudo-Palladio), would undoubtedly have known about it; consequently what he saw at Chiswick would not have seemed quite so amazing to him and would have been described as a second volume. It was almost certainly the engravings of the baths that Burlington showed him and these were evidently still unpublished as a book when the Veronese antiquarian and man of letters, Marchese Francesco Scipione Maffei, visited Chiswick in May 1736.⁸ A fairly full and glowing account of Burlington's collection of Palladio's drawings of Roman buildings and their usefulness to the study of antiquity was published by Maffei in 1738. Not only does it make no mention of an existing book

but indeed it looks forward to such a publication. 'Gran beneficio farà Mylord al publica, se darà esecuzione al nobile pensiero che ha, de comunicare a tutti quel tesoro imprimendolo. Ci potrebbe aggiungere alcuna cosa di suo, e d'Inigo Jones, che su discepolo del Palladio e che fu il Palladio dell'Inghilterra.'⁹ Could Maffei's suggestion that Burlington might add something of his own have been inspired by his seeing the volume of engravings (now at Chatsworth) of Palladio's reconstructions of the baths, lacking only the one leaf of preface and bound up with proofs of Burlington's designs of Chiswick and the York Assembly Rooms similarly printed in bistre?

The 'preface' or introductory text needed 'to make a book' had been a subject of discussion between Burlington and Pope late in 1730, perhaps when the title-page was engraved or at the very latest early in 1731. As a result of that discussion Pope sent Burlington a rough draft of his *Epistle* to him with the following letter dated 4 April [1731]:

My Lord, – I send you the Inclosed with great pleasure to myself. It has been above ten years on my conscience to leave some Testimony of my Esteem for your Lordship among my writings. I wish it were worthier of you. As to the Thought which was just suggested when last I saw you, of its attending the Book, I would have your Lordship think further of it, & upon a considerate perusal, If you still think so, the few Words I've added in this paper may perhaps serve two ends at once, & ease you too in another respect. In short tis all submitted to your own best Judgement: Do with it, & with me, as you will. Only I beg your Lordship will not show the thing in manuscript, till the proper time: It may yet receive Improvement, & will, to the last day it's in my power. Some lines are added toward the End on the common Enemy, the Bad Imitators & Pretenders, which perhaps are properer there, than in your own mouth . . . ¹⁰

From this it is evident firstly that Burlington, hearing that Pope wished to write a laudatory poem in his honour, 'just suggested' the possibility that it might accompany his book, the *Fabbriche*; secondly that he also planned to write something himself (a preface) for the book in which he intended to attack his and Pope's 'common Enemy, the Bad Imitators & Pretenders'. Despite Pope's belief that it would be more appropriate for such an attack to appear in the *Epistle*, to which he added the lines,

In you, my Lord, Taste sanctifies Expence,
For Splendor borrows all her Rays from Sense.
You show us Rome was glorious, not profuse,
And pompous buildings once were things of Use.
Just as they are, yet shall your noble Rules
Fill half the Land with Imitating Fools,
Who random Drawings from your Sheets shall take,
And of one Beauty many Blunders make.¹¹

Burlington stuck to his original plan. His preface, as it finally appeared, ends with a jibe at an age which has shown itself so disposed to expensive building and yet so full of ignorant pretenders who lead the others out of the true path of the art of architecture. 'Non posso alle fine, far a men d'asserire che gli studi di si grand Uomo debbano essere tanto pui stimabile quanto opportunissimo Presenti all' Èta nostre, di cui niun altra forse dimostro mai maggiore disposizioni e dispendiose Fabbriche; nè produsse pui ignoranti Pretendori che guidano altrui fuor delle vere Traccie di tanto bell'Arte.'

The *Epistle*, instead of being published with the *Fabbriche*, was 'improved' and enlarged and issued on its own on 13th December 1731. Though it doubtlessly had Burlington's full approval, it could hardly be used to accompany his Palladian plates entirely on their own with only one leaf of proposed preface and no notes or observations or descriptive text of any kind pertaining to the Roman baths and Palladio's reconstructions of them. Nor could so topical a poem be held back in the hopes of Palladio's lost manuscript being discovered or until a suitable substitute was acquired from another

author. Pope nonetheless considered it right and necessary to explain the origin of the piece in its title, *An Epistle to the Right Honourable Richard, Earl of Burlington, Occasion'd by his Publishing Palladio's Designs of the Baths, Arches, Theatres, &c. of Ancient Rome*. This announced to the public for the first time all that Burlington intended to give them under the general heading, *Fabbriche Antiche*. The contrast of that nobleman's taste, good sense and magnanimity in using his wealth to have his treasures engraved and the ignorant, pretentious displays of wealth normally encountered was the subject of the *Epistle*.

The effect of the *Epistle* was instantly to make taste in architecture and Burlington's hold upon it a subject of debate – between James Ralph and Batty Langley in the popular press – and of attack – in *The Miscellany on Taste* published on 15th January 1732 and in the pseudo-Hogarth print 'The Man of Taste' caricaturing Burlington, Kent and Pope.

The engraving of the baths was completed, according to Vertue, around 1732, but precisely when it was begun is not known. It is unlikely to have been before the publication in 1727 of *The Designs of Inigo Jones* and was most probably after the untimely death of Robert Castell in Fleet Prison in December 1728, just six months after he had announced proposals for publishing an edition of Vitruvius illustrated with Palladio's and Pirro Ligorio's drawings of ancient buildings in Burlington's collection. The *Fabbriche* was no ordinary undertaking, for Burlington decided to have facsimiles of the drawings produced by adding mezzotint shading to the line engravings and printed the plates in bistre to simulate the sepia ink of the originals. Old master drawings were then being reproduced by this method; never before had it been used for architectural material.

Only finished drawings by Palladio and those, according to Burlington, that were not too large were selected for reproduction. Thus, because all the plans of the Baths of Agrippa in his collection were incomplete sketches, no plan of that building was engraved.¹² Close copies of the originals were drawn in sepia pen and wash by Isaac Ware for the engraver Paul Fourdrinier.¹³ The transcribing of the inscriptions and measurements on the drawings is careless by comparison, there being several discrepancies and omissions.¹⁴ None of the plates is numbered and many have no captions.

The intention probably was to add these finishing touches after a descriptive text was obtained and the preface finally composed. Having waited in vain for at least five years, Burlington seems suddenly to have decided to use the plates that he had on hand, just as they were, to print a limited number of copies of the book and distribute them to his friends.¹⁵ Exactly when the printing was done is unknown. It could have been as late as 1740, the date inscribed in the copy presented by Burlington to the Topham Library at Eton College.¹⁶

The contribution to taste and judgement that Burlington set out to make and Pope applauded in his *Epistle* was not achieved by the limited edition of the incomplete *Fabbriche Antiche*. It was the increase in archaeological studies of ancient buildings in the 1750s that aroused great interest in and demand for the book. Just when they were most wanted copies were unobtainable. There were none on the market for Adam to buy in September 1755, with the result that the family copy had to be sent to him in Rome from Edinburgh.¹⁷ He had then decided to produce a book on the Baths of Diocletian and Caracalla in which he intended 'to show the Baths in their present ruinous condition and from that to make other designs of them as they were entire and in their glory, in which project Lord Burlington's book has been of unspeakable service as he is vastly exact in his measurement and in Palladio's time they were much more entire so that I get great light from him'.¹⁸ A few months later, having examined the ruins themselves, he concluded that Palladio was 'most faulty in many things and very unjust in his measurements, not so much in his plans as in the sections and elevations of which he has been very negligent and done many things by fancy where there were remains enough to point out the truth'.¹⁹ Some of these faults were, as we have seen, not Palladio's

but Ware's and Fourdrinier's. Though Adam evidently collected masses of drawings for his book on the baths, he, like Palladio and Burlington, failed to write the description for it and it came to nothing.

Meanwhile, after Burlington's death in December 1753, Ware 'formed a plan of reprinting' the *Fabbriche*.²⁰ This work, which was in progress when he died in 1766, was enlarged, brought up to contemporary archaeological standards (which included replacing Rysbrack's pseudo-portrait of Palladio with a copy of the genuine portrait by Maganza)²¹ and published in 1772 by Ware's pupil, Charles Cameron. Palladio's drawings published by Burlington were subsequently recopied for Bertotti-Scamozzi's *Terme dei Romani*, which appeared in a folio edition in 1785 and in quarto in 1797.

* This piece is extracted from *British Architectural Books 1556-1785* by Eileen Harris, with contributions by Nick Savage. To be published in September 1990 by Cambridge University Press.

NOTES

1. C. M. Sicca, 'Il Palladianismo in Inghilterra' *Palladio La Sua Bredita Nel Mondo* (1980), 39. This outright purchase in Venice, discovered by Professor L. Puppi, contradicts the romantic legend related by Burlington in his preface to the *Fabbriche Antiche* of his exciting discovery of the drawings at the Villa Maser.

2. A. Palladio, *The Four Books . . . Published by Isaac Ware* (1738), bk. III, [57], 77; bk. IV, 105.

3. *Ibid.*, bk. III [57].

4. The precise source of the aedicule is not known. Rysbrack's bust of Palladio is thought to have been made for Burlington around 1725. See M. I. Webb, *Michael Rysbrack Sculptor* (1954), 80, fig. 36, 102-3.

5. Vertue, *Notebooks*, Vol. III, 73. That this was his first experience of the collections is clear from his excited description of the paintings and the numerous drawings by Inigo Jones and Palladio. Though the entry in his notebook is not itself dated it appears in sequence with others that do bear that date. Burlington moved his collections from Burlington House to Chiswick in 1733.

6. I. Jones, *The Designs of Inigo Jones* (1727), vol. II, pl. 57-63.

7. RIBA Burlington-Devonshire Coll., IX/10 of which there is a proof plate, Chatsworth Boy. Coll. [31], 11. A copy of this drawing, probably by Flitcroft, was owned by Pope, who showed it to Scipione Maffei when he visited him at Twickenham in 1736. See M. R. Brownell, *Alexander Pope and the Arts of Georgian England* (1978), 285.

8. G. Silvestri, *Un Europeo Del'Settecento* (1954), 164-5.

9. F. S. Maffei, *Osservazioni Letterarie* (1738), vol. III, 207-8.

10. A. Pope, *Correspondence*, ed. G. Sherburn (1956), vol. III, 187-8.

11. A. Pope, *Epistle to the Right Honourable Richard Earl of Burlington* (1731), line 23ff. Although in the published version these lines occur towards the middle of the poem, in the manuscript sent to Burlington they are, as his letter says, towards the end. A copy in Burlington's letter is preserved at Chatsworth 143.17. See also A. Pope, *Epistles to Several Persons*, ed. F. W. Bateson (1951), 135, pp. xxv-xxvii.

12. The finished plan now in the Museo Civico, Vicenza, belonged to Tommaso Temanza and was

reproduced in Bertotti-Scamozzi's edition of the *Terme*. Cameron, however, drew his own plan. See G. G. Zorzi, *I Disegni dell' Antichità* (1958), 72, fig. 136, 64-73, for further discussion of all Palladio's drawings of the Roman baths.

13. His drawings of the capitals, the plan of the Baths of Diocletian and sections of the Baths of Constantine are missing. Those of the Baths of Vespasian are at Chatsworth and all the others are at the RIBA Drawings Coll.

14. Zorzi, *op. cit.*

15. According to Thomas Osborne, junior, *Catalogus Bibliothecae Harleianae* (1744), vol. III, no. 660, 'There were no more than 100 . . . printed (as I am informed) and those only for Presents'. Vertue's report of Burlington's intention not to part with above twenty copies seems nearer the mark.

16. This copy in Eton College Library is inscribed *Librum Hunc in Tophamiana Collocandum dedit, qui edendum curavit, illustrissimus comes Burlingtoniensis AD MDCCXL*. The copy in the British Art Centre, Yale University, is inscribed by Burlington to his cousin, John Boyle, 5th Earl of Cork and Orrery, and dated 12th June 1741. The Soane Museum copy came from General James Dormer of Rousham, who died in December 1741. A presentation copy to Doge Pietro Grimani dated 1746 is in the Centro Internazionale di Studi di Architettura, Vicenza. The copy in the Fowler Coll., Johns Hopkins Univ., Baltimore, is inscribed to Philip Miller, the landscape gardener. Richard Topham, who died in 1729, shared Burlington's interest in architecture and there are some drawings after the antique in the Topham Library which appear to have a Burlington provenance.

17. J. Fleming, 'Journey to Spalatro', *Architectural Review* (1958), CXXIII, 103, n.6.

18. J. Fleming, *Robert Adam and His Circle* (1962), 217 quoting a letter to James Adam of Sep. 1756.

19. *Ibid.*, 218.

20. T. Talbot-Rice and A. Tait, *Charles Cameron* (1967-8), 11, reprinting Cameron's proposals for this *Thermae*.

21. This was first published in Muttoni's *Architettura di Andrea Palladio* (1740-8) and later in Temanza's life of Palladio, 1762, which was most likely the source used by Cameron. See H. Burns, *Andrea Palladio*, Arts Council Exhibition (1975), 72-3; D. Lewis, *The Drawings of Andrea Palladio* (1981-2), 3, 9 no.3.