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# 'TO INTRODUCE THE *TEMPLE* BEAUTIES': APPROACHING PALLADIAN PORTICOES

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Richard Riddell

This paper will examine some aspects of the introduction and reception of porticoes as an integral part of English Palladianism. Then, interpreting more literally the second part of its title, some of the often highly inventive and peculiarly English solutions adopted to the problem of gaining dignified access to the interiors of buildings, with particular reference to porticoed country houses, will be discussed.

Patrons and potential builders who knew their Cicero, as did Roger North – and those who did not could have been informed by John Evelyn in 1706<sup>1</sup> – would have been reminded that the *fastigium* or temple front on a house connoted the social distinction, dignity, nobility and moral virtue of its occupant. Julius Caesar, for example, had been granted a dispensation to set one on his private house. Without a pediment and columns, Cicero believed important buildings to be entirely lacking in dignity. Because they were derived from temples, porticoes retained their capacity somehow to charge the atmosphere and space in and around them as well as hallow the ground before them. Certain rites of passage were associated with porticoes, as to who was qualified to approach and enter them – a notion exemplified by John Caius's (admittedly exceptional) schematization at Cambridge, whereby no man was considered fit to enter the Gate of Honour unless he had first passed through the Gate of Virtue.

Beauty was equated with Virtue, and Virtue with Reason; but Magnificence, as defined by Aristotle, was also a characteristic of the virtuous man, and the virtuous man would know how to build with propriety. In English writings on architecture of the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries, from those of Evelyn and Pratt onwards, the most frequently recurring epithet applied to porticoes was 'noble'. At a time when the whole classical world, instilled through education, was seen as an omnipresent backdrop, from which exemplars of conduct could be drawn and against which achievements could be measured; in an age when Britain saw herself increasingly as the worthy heir and rightful successor to Imperial Rome; and during a period in which 'nobility' was very much in the air, it would be hardly surprising to find the most noble and magnificent of architectural features, the portico, being considered highly expressive of that distinction and nobility to which so many aspired. 'No production in Architecture', wrote Sir John Vanbrugh in 1711, is 'so solemnly Magnificent'.<sup>2</sup>

This is not to suggest that the processes which led to a greater use of the portico were entirely cerebral or rational. It takes no account, for example, of the immense aesthetic appeal of porticoes – their geometric configuration, solid and void, light and shade, proportion and scale – part of what James Adam considered to be 'movement', so necessary for 'great elegance in the elevation'. There was, further, the legitimizing authority of Palladio himself who, in what he believed to have been his recreation of the ancient house,<sup>3</sup> so successfully combined the portico and villa and who seems to have taken temple fronts and other motifs from Antiquity, less by virtue of their having been antique than because he could obtain from the most impressive architecture of the past those structural advantages and visual effects – form, proportion, projection and recession, light and space – that best suited his architectural intentions.



FIG. 1. The Vyne

Lord Shaftesbury's advocating a national style and Colen Campbell's fortuitous manifesto led to a continuation of the revival, initiated by Inigo Jones, of Palladio's architecture and resulted in a return, not directly to the buildings of Antiquity themselves, but to a more objective and reasoned approach to classical canons, thought to be embodied in Palladio's work. Palladianism was characterized by rationality of design, discreteness of parts, regularity of planning, and sobriety of form and decoration. But one of its principal formal elements was of templar derivation, the portico, and it was the revival of Palladianism that was to give to the use of the portico in British architecture an impetus that would be exceeded only by that of the Greek Revival in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries.

Robert Morris, perhaps the most articulate writer on English Palladian architectural theory, noted in his seventh Lecture of 1734, that 'Portico's undoubtedly give a Grace and Nobleness to a Design' and, in relation to country houses, that 'Pediments are generally, and indeed the most *beautiful* Manner of covering a Portico . . . most of the antient Temples of Greece had their Entrances in the same Manner; and many Noble Palaces still are adorn'd with them'.<sup>4</sup>

Of porticoes executed under the influence of Jones's Palladian revival, the earliest in relation to an English country house – with the possible exception of Byfleet – is that generally agreed to have been added by John Webb to The Vyne in 1654 (Fig. 1). The portico is a projecting tetrastyle, *in antis*, the outer columns being square in section, but all are of the Corinthian order. The structure is of brick covered with stucco, except the side walls, which are brick pierced with square-headed openings to the ground. The combination of materials is one favoured by Palladio, but the pediment, with its

exaggerated dentils, is not stone but painted wood.

Other houses by Webb after Inigo Jones in which porticoes played a significant role in the design included Gunnersbury of about 1658-63 (a variation on Jones's initial project for the Prince's Lodging at Newmarket) and Amesbury of about 1660. Both were still heavily dependent on Palladio – the former with a hexastyle recessed portico *in antis* (a pedimented version of Jones's Ionic loggia at the Queen's House), the latter with a projection tetrastyle portico *in antis* using a Composite order (a kind of jacked-up version of The Vyne portico on a rusticated base), and both having the order introduced at principal floor level creating, in effect, *loggie*.

The English nobility's preference for living in the country and the recent growth in the magnificence of their houses were noted by Thomas Sprat in 1667.<sup>5</sup> At Rougham, in the early 1690s, Roger North added a giant Ionic tetrastyle portico to the south front of his remodelled house. It too had square, Scamozzi-like outer piers and a curiously placed balustrade between the columns at first-floor level, for which the only precedent seems to have been Palladio's unfinished court at the Villa Sarego.

Many of these porticoes using a giant order were, however, additions to older structures and therefore not part of a unified conception in which the columns of the portico acted as a modular determinant of the buildings' dimensions. Even in what is usually considered as the first proto-Palladian revival house, Benson's Wilbury, derived from Amesbury, this is not completely the case. Vanbrugh's north portico at Blenheim – the first free-standing, temple portico on an English country house to be conceived and executed as part of a unified plan – with its coupled outer columns and piers, whilst providing a climax to the composition (unlike the portico at Holkham, which acts as a fulcrum) does not fulfil entirely the modular requirement of the elevation.

So although there were, in fact, precedents for the literal application of porticoes to English country houses, when Campbell stated his intention, in the second volume of his *Vitruvius Britannicus* of 1717, 'to introduce the *Temple Beauties* in a private Building', he clearly had something even more thoroughly templar in mind. At Wanstead (according to Campbell, the 'first just Hexastyle') and its vast progeny the portico was accorded pride of place, rising above the roof-line, and the promise of an inner temple-like space reaching back into and through the house was fulfilled. But the means by which these houses were approached were, for the most part, not in the least temple-like, often being circuitous and complex.

Most of Palladio's own villas are approached directly by single, sometimes broken, flights of steps between retaining walls, leading directly to, and the full width of the portico, as at the Villa Badoer. The most complex is at the Villa Foscari where stairs, projecting forwards at right angles from the corners of the façade make a quarter turn at a half landing before arriving under the portico. Without balustrade or side supports, these stairs are of a type later favoured by Robert Morris.

By contrast, Lord Burlington's approaches to the unpedimented portico of Tottenham Park comprise simple, lateral stairs but with a balustrade which continues across the portico between the columns. This last feature derives from the central portion of Jones' loggia at the Queen's House, itself based not on a Palladian villa, but on that by Scamozzi, at the Villa Molin. As Campbell originally intended, Stourhead, too, would have had a similar feature.

What is almost certainly Vanbrugh's north portico at Stowe, with its square angle piers and with side openings reminiscent of the same Scamozzi villa as well as Palladio's Villa Rotonda, is approached by an unbroken, wide flight between walls. At Seaton Delaval, the similar but longer and broken flight is only one of a number of Palladian elements detectable in an otherwise Baroque composition (Fig. 2). It is perhaps worth



FIG. 2. Seaton Delaval

noting, in those buildings which date from 1720 – Tottenham, Stourhead, Stowe and Seaton Delaval – that the main, ostensibly purist protagonists of the Palladian revival looked at architects other than Palladio himself, whilst the leading architect of the English Baroque, always surprising in the eclecticism of his sources, displays a more Palladian spirit in his porticoes.

It should be pointed out that, following their introduction, free-standing porticoes were not universally adopted. It does not seem possible to view their use as in any sense developmental or leading on from applied temple fronts, or, what Lord Lyttelton referred to in a letter to Sanderson Miller of 1755 as, the ‘sham portico’.<sup>6</sup> The latter, at Hagley, was undoubtedly an effective and cheaper substitute (as at Campbell’s Newby), since porticoes were expensive to build. The majority of houses, however, continued to be articulated by other, less costly means, such as a giant order of pilasters, providing grandeur cheaply.

Of the many variations that Burlington made on his Palladian model for Chiswick, the approach to the portico is among the most original (Fig. 3). By doubling the flights below the half-landings, he provided a choice of four starting points for an ascent to

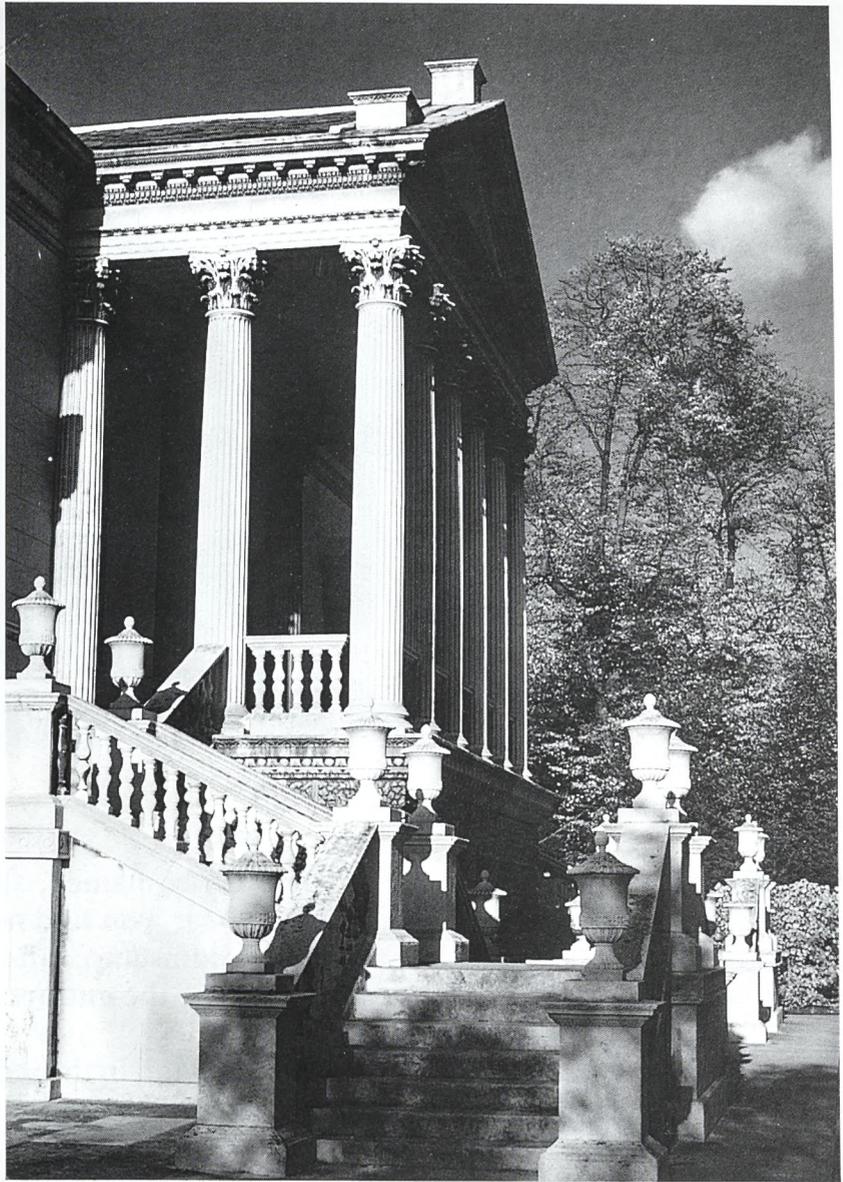


FIG. 3. Chiswick

the portico, slowing down the visitor's approach and, by means of changes of direction, offered a variety of aspects in which the portico appears to be constantly recomposing itself. This was to become a common device, though often without the second, outer flights; but the most complicated arrangement, had it been executed, would have been that proposed by Sir William Chambers in about 1763 for a palace at Richmond, where two cruciform complexes of stairs, achieved by projecting flights forwards as well as to the sides, and surrounded by a continuous flight of steps with eleven facets, would have given a choice of six starting points for the ascent to a giant hexastyle portico.

A significant function of the portico is that it should both welcome and impress at the same time. But an equally important function is to emphasize centrality and to indicate the prospect of an entry. The portico at Prior Park by John Wood – 'a juster Hexastyle', he claimed, than Campbell's Wanstead – at first appeared without any obvious means of access (Fig. 4). At Holkham, William Kent proposed alternative staircases; either a double approach with a quarter turn on each side of the portico or small curved or double perrons on either side leading, in both cases, from a half-landing to the portico. In the event, neither seems to have been adopted, for in 1767, Arthur Young noted that 'The portico is in a fine taste, and the Corinthian pillars beautifully proportioned.

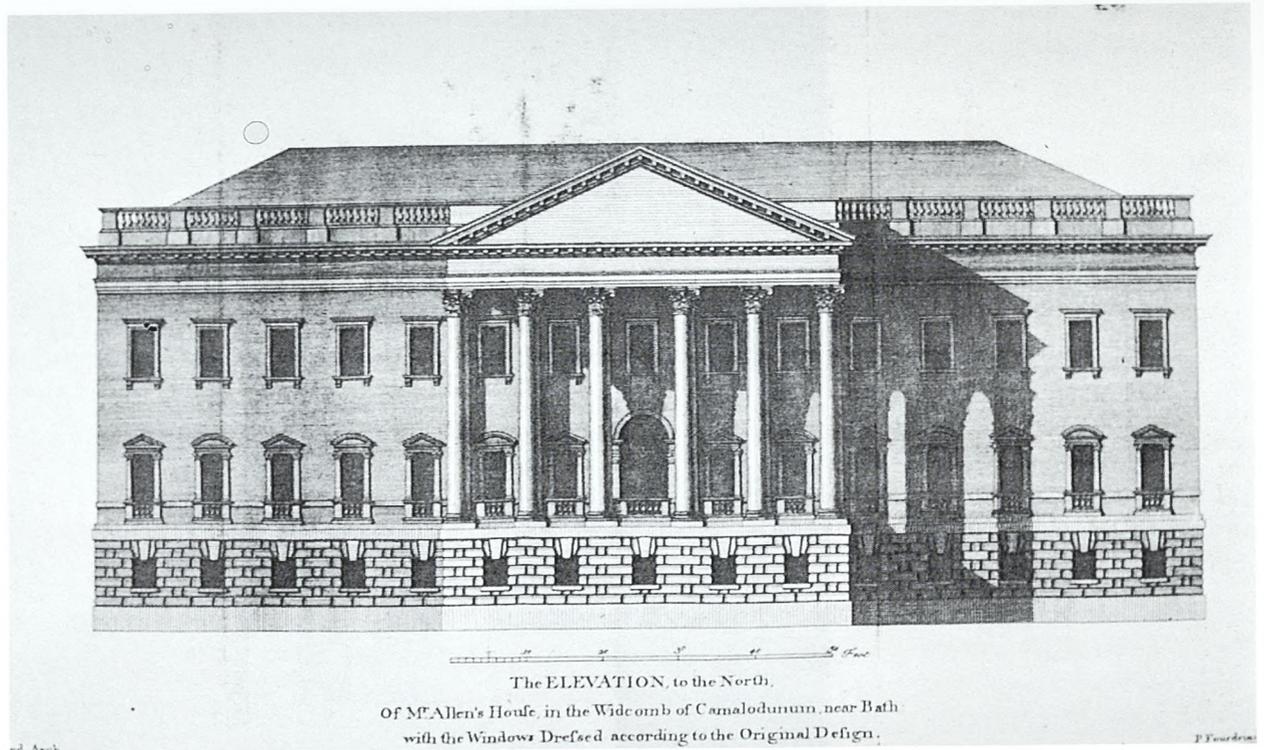


FIG. 4. Prior Park

This central front in every respect that can be named, appears all lightness, elegance, and proportion: – But when you advance near, you find no entrance to the house; there are no stairs up to the portico; and this circumstance, after so fine an approach, and so long seeing the portico, and expecting it to be the entrance, becomes a disappointment, and a fault in the building'.<sup>7</sup>

Of the many country houses built in England in the second quarter of the eighteenth century which are generally thought of as Palladian in the widest sense, it would seem that, in whatever respects they might be so considered, few have porticoes directly inspired by Palladio's own works, either executed or theoretical, and even fewer are approached in ways that he would have utilized. It is with the second and later generations of Palladian architects, right through to the 1770s, such as Miller at Croome Court, Donowell at West Wycombe, Brown at Fisherwick, Claremont and Broadlands, and Pitt on the south front at Stowe, that a directness and simplicity of approach, with wide, frontal flights that Palladio would have recognized are to be found. It has to be admitted that in many cases the reduction of the Palladian portico to a standard formula meant that the portico had, by these dates, become something of an architectural cliché. But, whereas in earlier houses movement and changes of direction and viewpoint had been achieved by means of complex staircases, through a curious double paradox in which symmetrical and formal houses found themselves surrounded by increasingly irregular and informal or picturesque parks, changing viewpoints were achieved on a much larger scale as the result of a greater variety of directions in approaches not just to the portico but to the whole house. In 1722, James Macky noted at Cannons that the 'Avenue fronts an Angle of the House, and thereby showing you two Fronts at once, makes the House seem at a Distance the larger'.<sup>8</sup> Lord Kames observed in 1762, 'An avenue ought not to be directed in a straight line upon a dwelling-house: better far an oblique approach in a waving line . . . In a direct approach, the first appearance continues the same to the end: we see a house at a distance, and we see it all along in the same spot without



FIG. 5. Basildon Park



FIG. 6. Constable Burton



FIG. 7. Wrotham Park

variety. In an oblique approach, the intervening objects put the house seemingly in motion: it moves with the passenger, and appears to direct its course, so as hospitably to intercept him. An oblique approach contributes also to variety: the house being seen successively in different directions, takes on at every step a new figure'.<sup>9</sup> In the 1780s, Lord Torrington advised 'Make the approach to your house as meandering as possible the better to discover the view'.<sup>10</sup>

To whatever extent Carr may be thought of as Palladian, his internalizing of a double curved perron behind triple-arched openings at Basildon (Fig. 5) was an inventive solution, whilst his use of the recessed portico at Constable Burton from 1762-8 (Fig. 6) at a time when the projecting type was more popular harks back not only to Gibbs's unpedimented portico almost fifty years earlier on the south front of Sudbrook (even down to the stair arrangement), but also to Palladio's Villa Emo at Fanzolo, which Carr was to take also as his model for Newark Town Hall in 1773-6, Basildon Park in 1776, and his unexecuted design for Nuneham of 1778. His staircase, as executed, at Constable Burton looks back to an even earlier, French Renaissance precedent: the original portico and staircase in the Cour de l'Ovale at Fontainebleau of about 1531.

It may be useful to trace briefly the use of a form of approach which pre-dates Palladio; which, nevertheless was adopted not only for numerous English Palladian houses but also for more neo-classical houses in the late eighteenth century; and that is, the double curved perron. Notable Italian Renaissance and Mannerist examples from the mid-sixteenth century, at a time when staircases – both external and internal – assumed unprecedented architectural significance, include the Medici villas at Poggio a Caiano and Pratolino and the Villa Farnese at Caprarola. At Fontainebleau, Lemercier added a bold, sweeping staircase to the Cour du Cheval Blanc in 1634. Jones's use of such a feature at the Queen's House also involved viewing staircases increasingly not

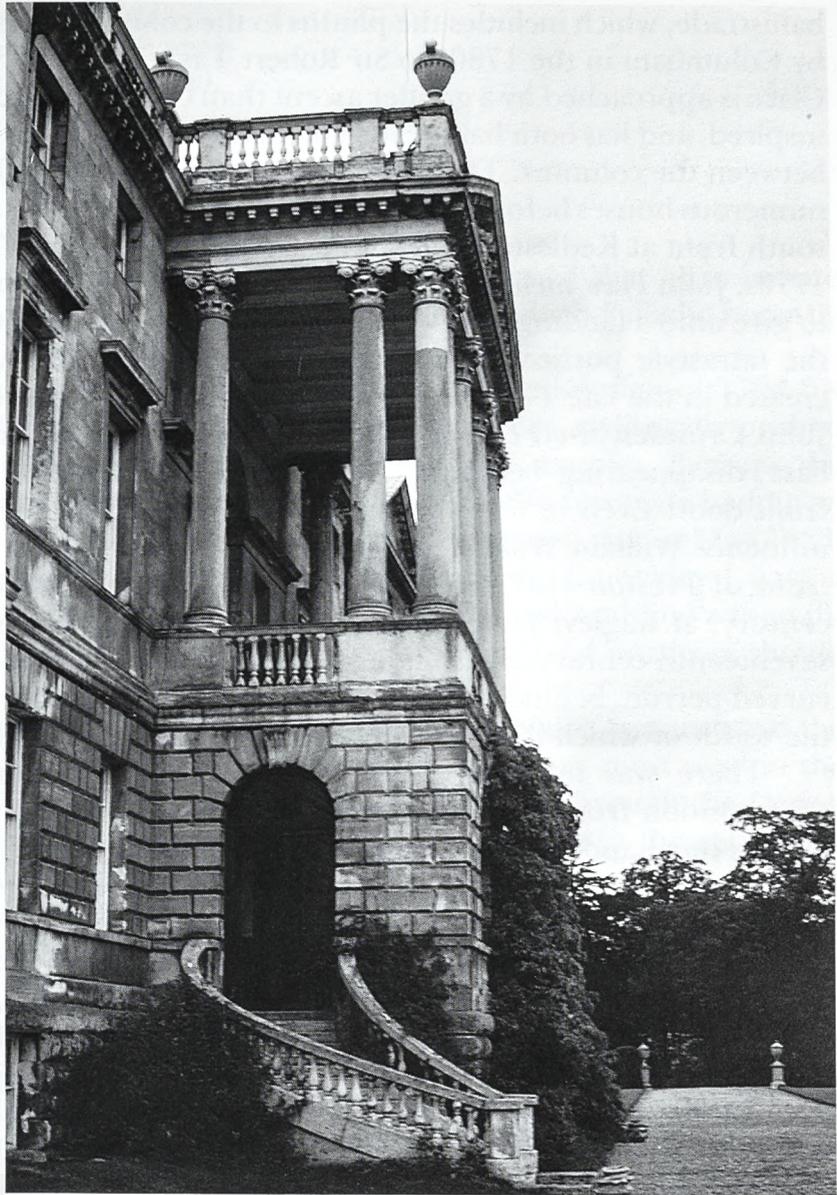


FIG. 8. Sandbeck Park

just as functional structures but as works of art in their own right. Admittedly, the stairs at Greenwich do not give onto a portico but they serve the same purpose of giving access to the first-floor level on the north side.

Curved perrons were designed for Stoke Edith in about 1710 and a double curved perron was proposed in 1723-5 for Hopetoun House by William Adam. In 1730-5 he combined such a staircase with an applied temple front at Duff House. Isaac Ware included the feature at Woodcote Park, c.1755, but the first important combination with a portico in the Palladian revival comes also from Ware at Wrotham in the 1750s (Fig. 7). Foremark Hall, of 1759-61, was a variation on Wrotham and, if Sir John Clerk's designs of about 1760 for Penicuik had been executed that house too, would have included such features. Ware's now-demolished Amisfield, almost contemporary with Wrotham, with its pedimented loggia-portico over an arcaded rusticated base, may have been in James Paine's mind when designing Sandbeck, where a similar feature occurred in the mid-1760s, and to which he added curved staircases (Fig. 8). At Roehampton, of the same date, and in the first of his Palladian villas, Chambers used quite steep, curving stairs with what appear to be iron balusters (they are iron now, but not to the design shown in *Vitruvius Britannicus* IV), the handrails rising to the level of the top of the stone

balustrade, which includes the plinths to the columns. The unpedimented portico added by Columbani in the 1780s to Sir Robert Taylor's villa of the previous decade at Mount Clare is approached by a gentler ascent than Chambers's, by which it was almost certainly inspired, and has both balustrade and hand-rail of iron which continue across the portico between the columns. The formula of portico and curved perron was to be repeated in numerous houses before the end of the century; further examples include Robert Adam's south front at Kedleston and Carr's Tabley, both of the 1760s. At Belle Isle, in the mid-1770s, John Plaw included curving stairs which rise from between the two outer columns to give onto a landing which is the width of the central opening of the portico, all within the tetrastyle portico itself, of his Pantheon-like villa. A similar, narrow landing was created in the late 1770s at Belfield where, in a comparatively small, neo-classical villa, John Crunden used curved flights of stairs which rise from the sides of a rusticated base, disappearing behind it, until they almost meet at column-base level before the front door. Even in the work of Robert Mitchell, whose neo-classical designs were to influence William Wilkins at Grange Park, the Palladian formula appears at the south front of Preston Hall, built between 1791 and about 1800. Towards the end of the century, at Ragley, James Wyatt added a monumental portico to Robert Hooke's late seventeenth-century house, and made the approach an equally monumental double curved perron, behind which runs a tunnel porte-cochère for direct ground level access, the width of which is marginally less than the depth of the portico.

There was in Britain an aspect to portico building that was inherent in its transposition from the Mediterranean to northern Europe, and that was the weather. On the one hand, porticoes in this country fulfilled admirably on public buildings their original function of providing shelter – although less from the sun than from the rain – but there were many complaints in country houses about their being dark and draughty. Sarah, Duchess of Marlborough, wrote in 1732 'I note one aversion our present architects have, which is light, that is the reverse of my inclination',<sup>11</sup> and James Ralph appealed in 1734 'to all persons who build sumptuously, to calculate their buildings according to the point of light from whence they are to be viewed'.<sup>12</sup> Speaking of the integral portico *in antis*, and criticizing the Queen's House and Gunnersbury in particular, North had written that 'this robs the house of a principal room, and interrupts the file of rooms, which is a prime beauty, and, which is worse, it darkens the best rooms . . . In Italy, this is proper and usefull, because it abates heat, and averts the force of the sun's light, which is offensive, and is also *fresco* and *aieroso*; not so agreeable here as with them, but at few times; wee have generally speaking, too much air, and too little heat, and therefore need not spoil an order of rooms to obtain one and abate the other'.<sup>13</sup> Robert Morris also remarked on the necessity, because of climate and compared with ancient and Mediterranean practice, for roofs and pediments which were 'more acute in their Pitch'.<sup>14</sup>

Echoing Aristotle, on ostentatious building, Pope, in his *Epistle* to Lord Burlington of 1735, in which he chides the vanity of grand building in the Palladian style, saw draughty porticoes as one of the prices to be paid for such vanity. He warned of 'imitating fools', those who would front their houses with porticoes and

'Shall call the winds through long arcades to roar,  
Proud to catch cold at a Venetian door;  
Conscious they act a true Palladian part,  
And, if they starve, they starve by rules of art'.<sup>15</sup>

The same theme was taken up in 1771 by James Cawthorn:

'Is there a portal, colonnade, or dome,  
The pride of Naples, or the boast of Rome?  
We raise it here in storms of wind and hail,  
On the bleak bosom of a sunless vale:  
Careless alike of climate, soil and place,  
The cast of Nature and the smiles of Grace'.<sup>16</sup>

Ideologically, Palladio had a defender in John Gwynn, who argued that 'if to imitate Palladio be a fault, it must also be a fault to imitate the Ancients, which Palladio honestly confesses he did'.<sup>17</sup>

Chambers' unexecuted design for Llanaeron and his executed design of 1762 for Duddington, together with Robert Adam's slightly later Shardeloes, stylistically pushed the Palladian formula to its limit by turning villas almost into temples. Perhaps the ultimate house as temple, Grange Park, was one of C. R. Cockerell's favourite buildings; he thought there was 'nothing like it this side of Arcadia'. But after a visit in May 1823, he doubted 'whether portico is quite suited to our climate in the finest day I have a ripresa of that keen & cruel north east wind which I felt in jan<sup>y</sup>, and – adding a thought that was perhaps in Jones's mind at the Queen's House – 'in England porticoes should be loggia porticoes'.<sup>18</sup>

In mitigation, Robert Morris pointed out that most country house owners spent the winter in their London houses and that 'As these [country] seats are most used in the warmest seasons of the year, shade is chiefly wanted; and VISTA's through the Design each way, besides the Pleasures of some distant Prospect, are inlets to the refreshing Breezes, which enliven the Spirits, and by cooling the Rooms, make the Seasons more agreeable: The Entrances should be Grand'.<sup>19</sup> In the early nineteenth century it was observed of Italian palaces, with their 'Vitruvian decorum', that 'in the distribution of the houses the grand object is the picturesque. Nothing is done for the comfortable, a term unknown to the Italian language, and a state unfelt in a hot country. Even in England, where it is most studied and best understood, the comfortable is rather a winter-idea and a winter-feeling'.<sup>20</sup> Not only was Palladianism an essentially provincial affair in Britain but it fared less well in its purer than its more utilitarian forms because of the climatic differences and the need for more light and warmth in this country.

A somewhat proprietary attitude which denied the feasibility of the transposition and association of architectural forms from one age and culture to another that was at the very heart of British neo-classicism, was taken in 1755 by Batista Angeloni towards ancient Roman architecture: 'The very remains of ancient Rome are a delight, which can never take place in this country [England]; for tho' buildings may tumble into dust in all nations, what land can boast to have produced such illustrious inhabitants, whose characters are constantly annex'd to the ruins of Rome?'.<sup>21</sup> Doubtless many Britons would have countered that they regarded themselves as precisely such characters.

There has always been a tension between an architect's respectability in his demonstrating the correct use of the orders and architectural forms and his licence in changing these in an individual way for the purposes of effect or in order to achieve a personal, identifiable style. On the other hand, any ideal of adhering to authenticity of architectural sources often ran counter to the requirement of making buildings suitable to their location. Gwynn suggested in 1742 that decorum in an architect embraced not only adherence to the rules of architecture and considerations of site (including the *genius loci*), propriety to the owner and to usage but also, in the conflict between fidelity to models – classical or Palladian – and what has been called 'the peculiarly English re-interpretation of decorum of situation' demanded by climate, that an architect's skill lay

in successfully adapting classical forms to English requirements.<sup>22</sup> Ware, one of Palladio's greatest advocates, disapproved of the contemporary conviction, as he saw it, that the guiding principle should be to 'transfer the buildings of Italy right or wrong, suited or unsuited to the purpose in England; and this', he continues, 'if done exactly, the builder has been taught to consider a merit in his profession'.<sup>23</sup> In the same year, 1756, after the rejection of his French-inspired proposals for Harewood, heavily influenced by Roman neo-classicism and incorporating porticoes, Chambers learned a salutary lesson and wrote ruefully that buildings should be 'Adapted to the Customs & Fashions of our Time, to the Climate and Manners of our Country, and to the Wants & Feelings of its Inhabitants'.<sup>24</sup>

At the Restoration, Evelyn had expressed the hope that Charles II would promote 'noble Buildings . . . and all Royal Magnificences'.<sup>25</sup> Fifty years later, with the shift of influence in architecture from the court to the landed élite, Shaftesbury placed his hopes for a patriotic style in 'publick Structures' and those 'rais'd by private Men, [which] are of such Grandure and Magnificence, as to become National Ornaments'.<sup>26</sup> In yet another fifty years Gwynn was able to write that 'Publick magnificence may be considered as a political and moral advantage to every nation'<sup>27</sup> and, for the next century, it was to be the portico that was to be the principal architectural expression of Britain's 'political and moral advantage' in the world.

From a stylistic viewpoint, the polemics of the late eighteenth century and early nineteenth were to result in a preference for the Parthenon rather than the Pantheon. The Greek Revival, with its more rigorously neo-classical approach to archaeological material, mostly temples, saw a renewed upsurge of interest in the portico. But the inherent requirements for architects to demonstrate their knowledge of, and respect for, the authenticity and integrity of their sources sometimes led them to emphasize scholarship at the expense of inventiveness. Consequently, the portico was often made to carry too great a weight of meaning in relation to the rest of the building, sometimes with incongruous results, and this was one of the grounds on which Cockerell condemned the course that the movement took. The indiscriminate use of porticoes and temple forms on a wide variety of building types represented a breakdown of decorum as it had earlier been understood in Aristotelian, Ciceronian and Vitruvian terms.

Views on Palladio and Palladianism during the Greek Revival underwent a transformation. In 1796, Charles Heathcote Tatham, one of the most uncompromising of neo-classical architects, considered the Villa Rotonda, '(having seen Chiswick) the chef d'oeuvre of modern architecture of any kind, and that it is in point of invention as much as the art itself is susceptible of . . . If such a villa could be transported into England it would set our Nobility and Gentry at loggerheads to purchase it'.<sup>28</sup> Thirty years later, Joseph Woods had some reservations about the suitability of the Villa Rotonda as a model: 'It would be difficult to accommodate the design to our climate and manners, without spoiling it, even if we should find for it a suitable situation. In this most essential particular, the three imitations which we have, are all remarkably deficient'.<sup>29</sup> At the same time a preference, comparable in some respects with nascent Pre-Raphaelite ideals in painting, began to emerge for pre-Palladian architecture. To John Jenkins and William Hosking 'That which prevailed before the time of Palladio and his imitators is by far the best . . . [it] is simple and harmonious, unshackled by rule, but governed by instinctive good taste'.<sup>30</sup> Nevertheless, Palladio continued to be admired for his 'certain justness of proportion' and because 'he has not adopted the theoretical rules of another, but has drawn them all [columns, capitals, entablatures, &c.] from what he felt to be pleasing to himself, and suited to his own style of art; but they are not good, when united to a more solid and less ornamental manner . . . Palladio's columns are mostly mere

ornament; but . . . it is impossible to feel this to be a fault'.<sup>31</sup>

By the end of the Georgian period, with the increasing popularity of the Italian palazzo style, it was to Palladio and his influence that much of what was felt to be the aridity of architectural invention in Britain was attributed. In this country, according to William Leeds 'the comparatively dry and meagre Palladian manner obtained almost exclusive preference' as a result of excessive publicity.<sup>32</sup> The Palladian style, 'if not the most vicious and extravagant, is almost the poorest and most insipid . . . wherein the orders and the application of them are reduced to a convenient enough workmanlike system, but are more or less enfeebled in character, while the details are comparatively mean, and mannered also to say nothing of the glaring solecisms that are to be met with in the work of Palladio himself . . . the epithet *Palladian* has been adopted as expressing almost the quintessence of what is excellent in Italian architecture'. However, 'it were an injustice to the latter to estimate it as a style by Palladianism, which is only one, and if not the very worst, by no means the very best branch of it'.<sup>33</sup> What was almost the coup de grâce was delivered by Hosking: 'Palladio made greater use of insulated columns than the Italian architects generally, but his ordinances are deficient in every quality that produces beauty: his porticoes may be Vitruvian, but they certainly are not classic'.<sup>34</sup>

The present was repeatedly seen in terms of the past. Undoubtedly, much classical allusion has to be seen as part of a convention. But there was a sense, which emerges particularly from the writings of Robert Morris, in which the Ancients were seen not just as part of a past to be emulated but as somehow still present, witnessing contemporary architecture, for which their approval was sought. Sir Christopher Wren, in whose work the portico first assumed greatest importance in British architecture, wrote simply that the portico was an adornment, 'both for Beauty and Convenience'.<sup>35</sup> But perhaps the most expressive thoughts remain those of Morris, for whom, in porticoes 'something Majestick strikes the Imagination . . . compare the Portico of St *Martin's* Church with some of the ancient Temples of *Greece*, in the works of *Vitruvius*, or the *Pantheon* at *Rome*, and there you will discover true elegance of Design, and a happy refinement of Taste. To see Buildings of more than 2000 years distance in Date be thought worthy of Imitation, shows not only the excellency of Architecture in those Times, but the Genius of this present Age, who can divest themselves of modern Error, to trace the Paths of Antiquity'.<sup>36</sup>

#### NOTES

1. J. Evelyn, *An Account of Architects and Architecture* (London, 1706), p.50.

2. K. Downes, *Vanbrugh* (London, 1977), p.257.

3. R. Wittkower, *Architectural Principles in the Age of Humanism* (London, 1967), p.74; J. Rykwert, *On Adam's House in Paradise* (London, 1981), p.116.

4. R. Morris, *Lectures on Architecture* (London, 1734), pp.114-5.

5. T. Sprat, *The History of the Royal-Society of London* (London, 1667), pp.41, 394.

6. A. Bolton, *Country Life*, XXXVIII 980 (1915), pp.523-4.

7. A. Young, *A Six Weeks Tour through the Southern Counties of England and Wales* (London, 1768), p.6.

8. J. Macky, *A Journey through England* (London, 1714-23), II, p.6.

9. H. Home, Lord Kames, *Elements of Criticism* (Edinburgh, 1762), III, pp. 312-3.

10. J. Byng, *The Torrington Diaries* (London, 1934-8), I, p.333.

11. G. Scott Thomson, *Letters of a Grandmother* (London, 1943), p.54.

12. J. Ralph, *Critical Review of the Publick Buildings in London and Westminster* (London, 1734), p.117.

13. R. North, *Of Building*, eds. H. Colvin and J. Newman (Oxford, 1981), p.62.

14. R. Morris, *An Essay in Defence of Ancient Architecture* (London, 1728), p.94.

15. A. Pope, *Epistle to . . . Burlington* (Moral Essay IV) (London, 1735), ll. 35-8.

16. J. Cawthorn, *Of Taste* (London, 1771), ll. 69-74.

17. J. Gwynn, *London and Westminster Improved . . . with Observations on the State of Arts and Artists in Great-Britain* (London, 1766), p.36.

18. D. Watkin, *The Life and Works of C. R. Cockerell* (London, 1974), p. 71. Repton, who regarded

comfort and picturesqueness as incompatible, had earlier made the point even more strongly than Cockerell when he cautioned against allowing fashion to 'perpetuate absurdities'. 'Of this kind was the general rage . . . for introducing the Architecture of a hot country, ill adapted to a cold one; as a Grecian and Roman portico to the north front of an English house'. H. Repton, *An Enquiry into the Changes of Taste in Landscape Gardening* (London, 1806), p.4.

19. Morris, *op. cit.* (1734), p.89.

20. J. Forsyth, *Remarks on Antiquities, Arts and Letters during an Excursion in Italy, in the Years 1802 and 1803* (3rd ed., Geneva, 1824), p.236.

21. J. Shebbeare, *Letters on the English Nation* (London, 1755), II, p.168.

22. J. Gwynn, *The Art of Architecture* (London, 1742); reprinted, ed. W. A. Gibson, in *The Augustan Reprint Society* 144 (1970), p. ix. The dilemma was later clearly expressed by Repton: in imitating 'the harmony of proportions and symmetrical beauty of a Grecian Temple . . . Shall we imitate the thing and forget its application? No; let us . . . never forget that we are building a house'. H. Repton, *Observations on the Theory and Practice of Landscape Gardening* (London, 1803), p.207. Sir John Soane made these and similar points about Palladio and porticoes in his lectures from 1815 onwards. See ed. A. Bolton, *Sir John Soane: Lectures on Architecture* (London, 1929), pp. 142, 144, 149-50, 163.

23. I. Ware, *A Complete Body of Architecture* (London, 1756), p.694.

24. J. Harris, *Sir William Chambers* (London,

1970), p.40. Knight later made a similar point, that 'the house of an English nobleman of the eighteenth or nineteenth century is neither a Grecian Temple, a Gothic Abbey, nor a feudal Castle; and if the style of distribution or decoration of either be employed in it, such changes and modifications should be admitted, as may adapt it to existing circumstances; otherwise the scale of its exactitude becomes that of its incongruity, and the deviation from principle proportioned to the fidelity of imitation'. R. Payne Knight, *An Analytical Enquiry into the Principles of Taste* (London, 1805), p.179.

25. J. Evelyn, *Fumifugium . . .* (London, 1661), Dedication.

26. A. A. Cooper, 3rd Earl of Shaftesbury, *A Letter Concerning the Art, or Science of Design* (London, 1712), p.402.

27. Gwynn, *op. cit.* (1766), p.xiv.

28. Tatham to Henry Holland, 15 July 1976, V&A, D 1479-'89, f.28.

29. J. Woods, *Letters of an Architect, from France, Italy, and Greece* (London, 1828), I, p.243.

30. J. Jenkins and W. Hosking, *A Selection of Architectural and other Ornament; Greek, Roman & Italian* (London, 1827), p.2.

31. Woods, *op. cit.*, p.239.

32. W. H. Leeds, *An Essay on the Present State of Architectural Study and the Revival of the Italian Style* (London, 1839), p.21.

33. *Ibid.*, pp.18, 19.

34. *Ibid.*, p.18.

35. *Wren Society* XIII (1936), p.16.

36. Morris, *op. cit.* (1734), pp.114, 132.

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