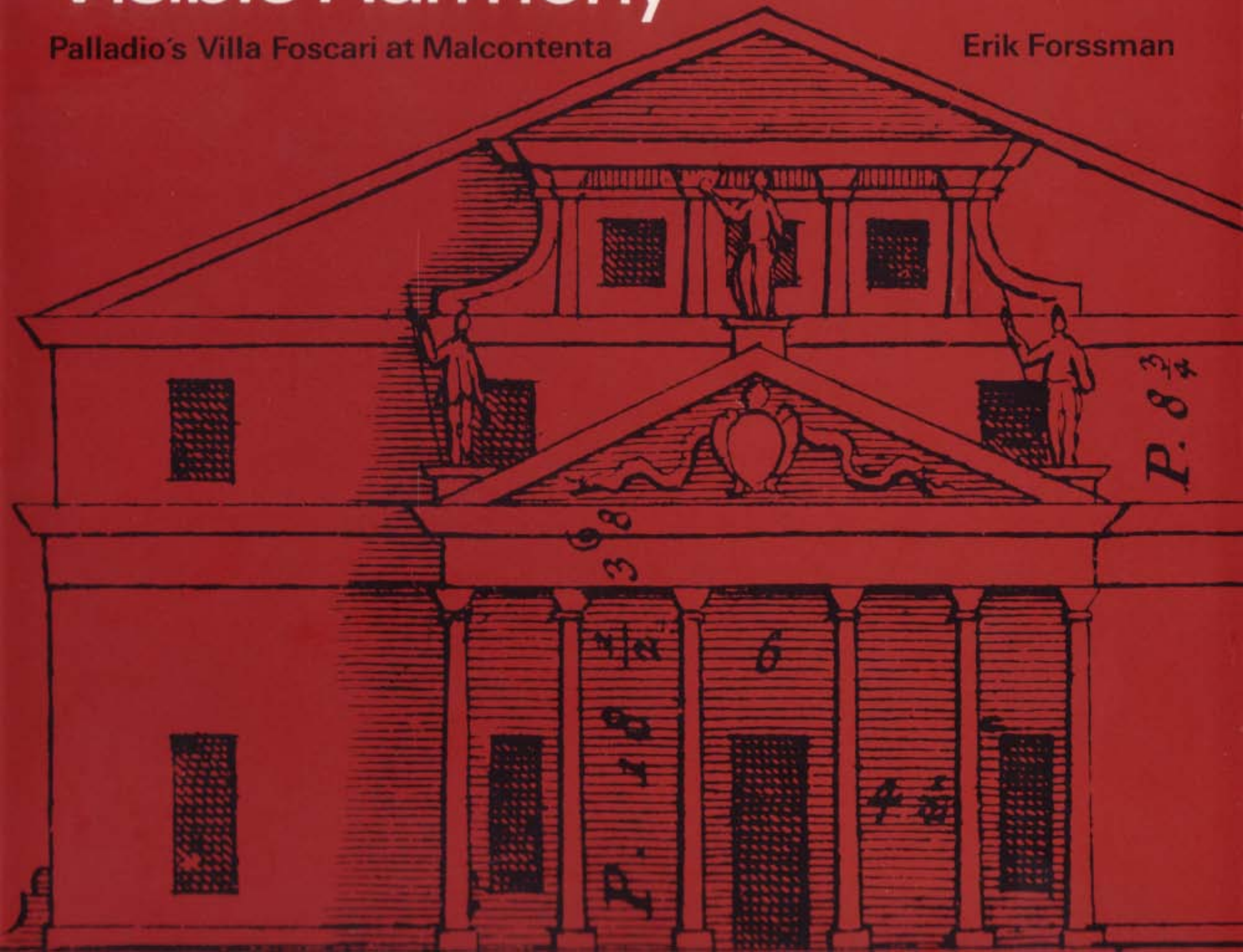


Visible Harmony

Palladio's Villa Foscari at Malcontenta

Erik Forssman



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Sveriges arkitekturmuseum
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The cover picture of the Villa Foscari is
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Foreword

During the Autumn of 1962 the Department of Architecture at the Royal Academy of Fine Arts in Stockholm was engaged in studies of the villa architecture of Palladio. A tour of all the existing villas terminated at the Villa Foscari, known as La Malcontenta, which was measured by the students. The aim of this exercise was simply to gain a more intimate contact with at least one of the principal works. This is a natural part of the training at a school engaged in the further education of active architects. There was another motive, however, viz. to compare the actual dimensions of the villa with those quoted in Palladio's *Quattro Libri* and by Bertotti-Scamozzi. It seemed important to determine the degree to which Palladio's intentions had been realized and also to establish the reliability of the beautiful illustrations in Bertotti-Scamozzi's work.

The publication of this book has been delayed by a shortage of funds. In the meantime, the project has been expanded beyond the original intentions. Professor Erik Forssman's essay deals not only with Villa Foscari and the problems of its dimensions but with the villas of Palladio in general, paying special attention to the influence on the architect of sources of Antiquity and Venetian traditions in building. Ove Hidemark and Göran Månsson, who participated in the surveying and drawing work, have contributed an analysis of the recorded dimensions and also a number of sketches. The book has been edited at the Swedish Museum of Architecture by Ann Katrin Atmer and printed with the aid of a grant from the Swedish Humanistic Research Council.

Why does the Villa Foscari, alias La Malcontenta, the villa chosen for our measurement study, make such a powerful impression? The peculiar atmosphere of the locale plays its part, of course. Neither the building nor its garden are exactly decayed but they are none the less marked by long periods of neglect. Tall wild-grown trees surround the great, weathered facade, while the muddy waters of the Brenta Canal flow slowly past. A gentle melancholy rests over the scene—a far cry from the atmosphere that once was intended. One cannot say that the future offers much hope: it is difficult to believe in a happy development of this tract, which is so dismally shadowed by the irresistably advancing industries of Mestre. Like the other villas, Villa Foscari is a relatively simple building. There is little of the splendour or architectural complexity that would have been quite in keeping with the times. The eye travels slowly across the principal elevation, noting its components rising above the worn and weathered steps, the tall base—a practical feature in this waterlogged terrain—and over it, high above the ground, the eight proud columns. That is all; yet this greyish-white building makes an impression that may be termed inescapable. Here one encounters, in concentrated form, something which is present in practically all that Palladio created, and which therefore deserves

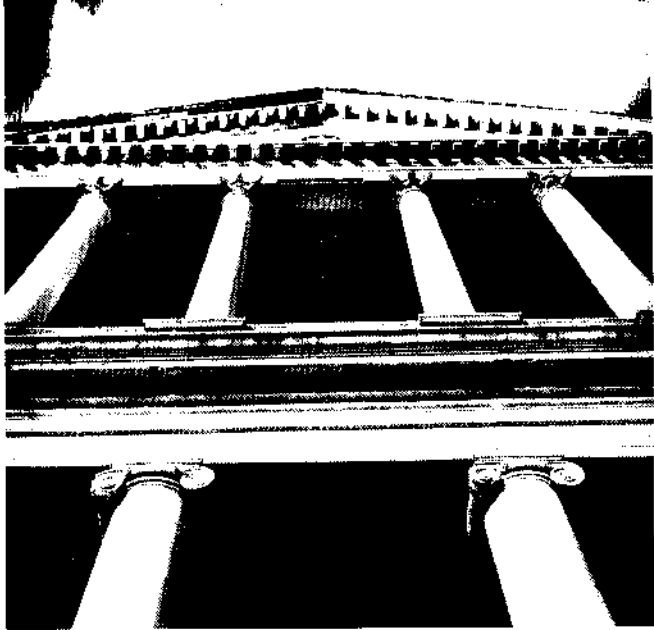
to be described and interpreted as a principal theme in his architecture. Its essence is this very sense of elevation, of proud, free stature. At the Villa Foscari, of course, the portico stands out as the principal medium for this expression. Powerful accentuation is given by the remarkable height of the base, which raises up the columns and, as it were, isolates them. They seem to stand in an exclusive world. The intercolumniation is adequate to permit each column to emerge plastically and with a strong volumetric effect by contrast with the flat and almost indifferent surfaces of the flanking sections. Regarded as a whole, however, there is no incompatibility between the portico and the rest of the villa. In a more stolid, less vocal manner, the block-like building expresses the same proud stature as the highly articulate portico at its front.

Certain features of Villa Foscari and its portico are among those often encountered in the villa architecture of Palladio. The wide intercolumniation frees the columns in an open space, where they rise as slender, sharply defined forms against a shadowy and indistinguishable background. The portico motif is contrasted with the flanking parts of the elevation, which appear to serve merely as planes enclosing a given space. The surrounding lower farm buildings have also played a part in the total effect. They underline the role of the corps de logis and add further weight to the portico as the focal point. The widely spaced columns, slender and serene in their detachment, stand at the centre of a total composition comprising buildings of varied heights.

In general, the colonnaded portico was the means Palladio most readily, and with the greatest versatility, employed to reach his ends. The porticoes on each of the four sides of the Villa Rotonda, with their steps and far-extended terrace walls reaching out into the surrounding landscape, are a well-known example. Of course, the heart of the entire composition is the heavy, closed block of the house, but the forms become slighter as radius increases. The farthest flung parts consist merely of a few low steps and lonely statues at the extremity of the walls. In certain other cases the portico is flush with the facade of the house. The house is opened, as it were, to admit the environment between the columns of the portico. This is the case with the garden elevation of the Villa Cornaro, with its superimposed orders and its intensive impression of proud freedom.

The portico, whether prostyle or in antis, expresses the will to unite house and landscape. This can also be expressed in a more concrete manner. The porticoes, with their steps and ramps, provide an invitation to the visitor to make his way conveniently and with dignity to the principal storey and into the central room, which constitutes the most important space in the villa and its universal meeting place. Viewed from another aspect, the row of columns with their interspaces call upon all within the house to survey the surroundings and then slowly walk out into the garden.

The scheme of elevation Palladio worked out for his churches utilizes in several important respects the same tools as his villa architecture. The church facades are also designed with an accentuated central section. Its



Garden elevation of Villa Cornaro, Piombino Dese



Elevation of San Giorgio Maggiore, Venice.

prominence has been underlined by a range of means, while the lateral portions have been repressed and their design confined to a less marked expression. San Giorgio Maggiore illustrates this most sharply, showing as it does the greatest distinction between the semi-columns of the portico on their high bases and the low, recessed ends.

The difference between the church and villa elevations lies on another plane. The villas exhibit a calm aspect, free from conflict, where the various parts are certainly subjected to a common system of proportions but nonetheless may be described as additive. No one form obscures or obstructs another. The form vocabulary in general is limited. The wall surfaces are spartanly decorated or almost bare, the vacant space between the smooth columns is large. In the church elevations, on the other hand, forms of different kinds are closely mixed. Moreover, the various components of the architecture are united in a far more complicated manner. The attached columns of the centre section pierce and rise above a lower and wider end face. The theme which in the villa elevations is expressed with such restraint and calm is exposed in the churches with a richer and more dramatic language of form. It is justified to speak of two keys, or *modi*, to use a term which was popular with contemporary art theorists. The facades of the villas are in one key, those of the churches in another. The former, which should be termed Ionic in view of the order adopted, express a state of elevated harmony and peace of mind. The latter, in Palladio's Corinthian key, may not be marked by disharmony but nonetheless express much sharper tensions.

Despite the difference between the two keys, they still exhibit similarities.

Both are used to express the same principal theme, this powerful sense of elevation and solemn stature. The impression could also be translated in terms from a social context. Palladio's architecture could be said to give expression to an awareness of aristocracy, an experience of proud superiority. In this it resembles other forms of art during the latter part of the 16th century—portrait painting, for example. In neither of these cases is it a question of expression of power, as much as of a kind of personal sense of quality, serene and sometimes even frigid. It is quite clear that certain of Palladio's buildings were designed as symbols of power—the palazzi are the principal examples—but the villas are remarkably free from such tendencies.

Here we also have the key to the difficulty of finding any real parallels to the work of Palladio among contemporary architecture. The desire to express power—military capacity or implacable authoritarianism—played an increasingly important role there. For that purpose, the age found an adequate language of form, sometimes austere, sometimes dramatized in echo of Michelangelo. That which Palladio's villa embodies has instead a personal stamp, an attitude to life based on sublime self-confidence but also on a calm mind and a comprehensive view. Taking this viewpoint, it is easy to appreciate the attraction of Palladian villa architecture for later generations. A villa of this kind is no castle, nor is it merely a decorated residence. It expresses a philosophical ideal which speaks more of personal qualities than of material or political resources.

Göran Lindahl

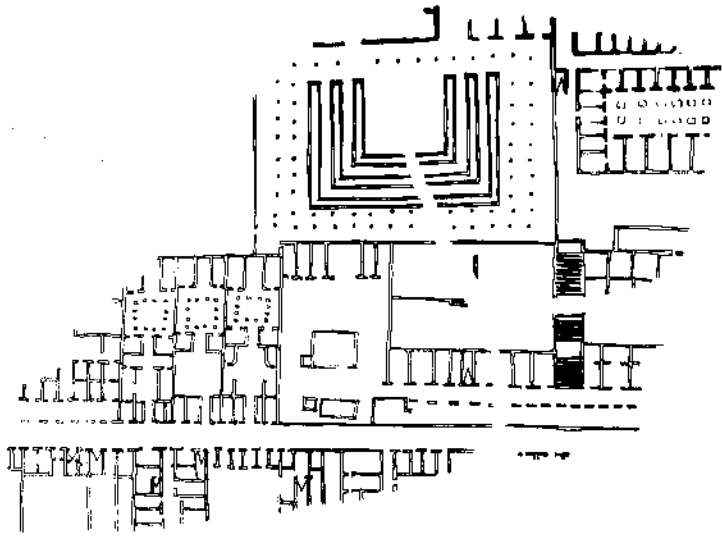
Antique and medieval traditions

The majority of Palladio's villas possess a simplicity and grandeur that suggest Greek architecture. The Ionic portico of Villa Foscari seems to be an intentional reminder that for centuries the Venetians dominated the Eastern Mediterranean and that during long periods they enjoyed more intensive connections with Greece than with Rome. When Palladio became an important architect the villa as building type already had a long history and his intentions and style cannot be understood without returning to Antiquity. However, there is no direct link between Greek architecture and the Venetian villas.

In general the Greeks did not exhibit much interest in the architecture of their private houses. Even in the time of Pericles, their homes were notably simple. Their great architectural creations were devoted to public life and religion. Citizens lived their lives mainly in the agora or on the temple steps, not in their homes. By modern standards, Greek cities were fairly small. Athens counted barely 100,000 inhabitants. It is clear that the Greeks of classical times felt no urge to flee from the congestion of the urban environment to seek peace and quiet in the country and it is therefore natural that the villa should not belong to the achievements of Greek architecture. During Hellenic times cities grew larger and higher domestic standards became common. The palace at Pergamum gives an example of the most representative element of the Hellenic residence: the peristyle as an architecturally defined outdoor living space. Soon however Rome, with probably a million or more inhabitants, overshadowed all the cities of Antiquity in terms of both size and density. It was here that the disadvantages of life in a stone jungle – inadequate light and air, difficulties of communication, congestion, and declining hygiene and morals in the most intensively populated districts – first began to appear. Contemporary authors tell us that it ultimately became both unhealthy and dangerous to live in Rome.

Such an environment stimulates the longing for the countryside and creates the basic requirement for villa architecture as a contrast to an undesirable urban setting. High officials, merchants and, indeed, anyone with sufficient means joined the flight from the city, at least during part of the year, and built houses just outside Rome or in Campania. During the 1st century A.D. there arose quite a wave of speculation in country properties. Pax Romana, which guaranteed the secure travel of individuals throughout the Empire, gave further encouragement to those contemplating a move to the country. The standards of luxury of the villas were steadily raised and eventually occasioned certain protests.

The new country dwellers had no desire to live more simply than they were accustomed to in the town, but carried their civilisation and cultural standards with them to the country. For this reason it is not easy to draw a



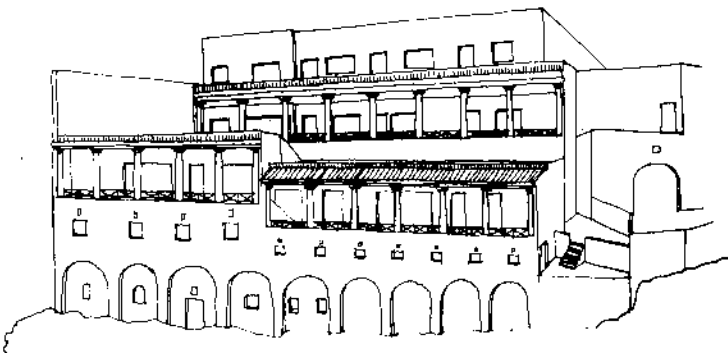
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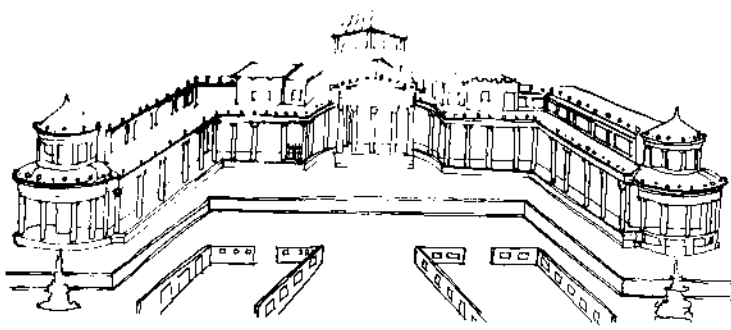
distinction between town house and villa nor to treat them as separate architectural phenomena. The characteristic feature of the Roman house was the atrium, colonnaded or astylar. During the 2nd century B.C. this had been merged with the Hellenic peristyle and subsequently Roman houses of any pretensions featured an atrium with surrounding rooms and a peristyle beyond – possibly also with circumferential rooms but often simply a colonnaded courtyard. Examples are found in Rome (recognizable in its clearest, almost abstracted, form in the Forma Urbis) and in Pompeii and its environs, where a great many houses of the type have been exposed. The well-known House of the Faun at Pompeii, with its twin atria as well as an inner, domestic peristyle and a large peristylar garden is of course on a main street of the city; but the villas in the suburbs, such as on the southern slopes beyond the old walls, have basically the same arrangement. Nor is the quality of the artistic decoration of these villas below that of the city prototype.

One may wonder, then, whether in the beginning the villa was no more than the typical Roman house, transferred to the country. But it was not quite so. Firstly, it was possible to build more spaciouly in Campania than in the city. The garden peristyle could be larger and additional gardens could be incorporated. Furthermore, it was possible to take advantage of the natural situation to provide views of the immediate or distant landscape. Thus a new attitude enters into the architecture of the villa. Whereas the town house presented a closed exterior aspect, obtaining its light from the atrium and peristyle within, while the Roman tenement blocks – the insulae – grew in height and made of the streets dark ravines, in the countryside the house could be opened through its porticoes to encompass the natural scene and gain a further living area where the delights of the rural setting could be enjoyed without exposure to sun or rain.

Porticoes of the kind were featured in the villas on the slopes outside Pompeii¹. At some time during late Republican days porticoes looking south were added to the rear of the atrium houses, the north, i. e. the entrance front, retaining its closed facade. This has been established only by way of excavations and reconstructions, but similar porticoes can be seen in Pompeian landscape paintings. In the third and fourth styles, i. e. during the four or five decades immediately prior to the obliteration of Pompeii in 79 A.D., innumerable portico villas were built in beautiful natural settings on sloping land or on the shores of lakes or the sea². Some of these have extended fronts and single or two-storeyed porticoes, others have a plan of L or U form. The sketchy frescoes do not allow us to determine the details of the ground plans of the villas of Imperial days, but excavations at Stabiae and, indeed, throughout the Empire, indicate that they lacked the atrium and peristyle of the Roman house and that the rooms were arranged in file behind and parallel with the portico. In some cases the colonnade did not extend the full length of the facade, but was recessed in antis between risalti. Unlike the genuine Roman house, which can be seen "in the flesh" at Pompeii, no such portico villa has survived intact, unless Diocletian's

Villa on sloping site near Pompeii





Roman portico villa

palace at Spalato, with its palatio and wide, open portico overlooking the sea, is regarded as a last magnificent exponent of the type.

Karl Swoboda has fully described the two types of Roman villa which came to dominate throughout the Empire from the time of the first Caesars, viz. the peristyle villa and the portico villa³. Both types are encountered simultaneously and there are probably other types which do not fit into this classification. There was constant interchange between private architecture in the city and in the country. Nero's Golden House was a villa in the city heart, which exhibited features from both palace and villa traditions. Hadrian's villa at Tivoli was in the country but comprises portions which are related to palace design or, at any rate, which cannot be classified under either of the above two types of villa.

When the architects of the Renaissance studied the meagre evidence of classical villas that was available to them, in ruins and frescoes, they must have gained a rather confusing impression. However, they had a third source of information on the Roman villa, viz. literature. First to be mentioned must be Vitruvius, who deals with the villa in his Book VI, Chapters 5 and 6. He makes a distinction that is perhaps more useful, or at any rate closer to reality, than the architectural historian's division between peristyle and portico. Vitruvius recognizes the villa suburbana and the villa rustica, i. e. the nearby resort of the urban dweller and the country residence, possibly far from the town, of the rural landowner.

Vitruvius devotes but one sentence to the villa suburbana, but it is highly indicative. After a description of the arrangement of the town mansion he concludes Chapter 5 as follows:

Moreover, we shall take account of these matters, not only when we build in town, but also in the country, except that, in town, the atria adjoin the entrance, whilst in the country the peristyles of mansions built town-fashion come first, then the atria surrounded by paved colonnades overlooking the palaestra and the ambulationes⁴.

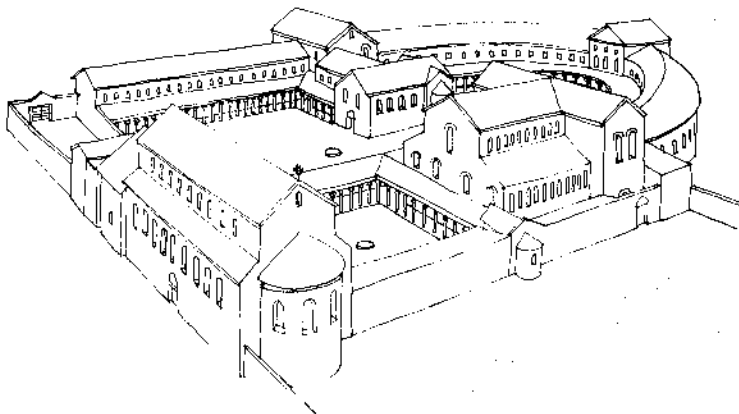
The following conclusions may be drawn from this. When Vitruvius wrote his treatise, around 20 B.C., it was clearly considered that the villa suburbana, which was a kind of second home, ought to be arranged in generally the same fashion as the town house. A difference, however, was that the atrium should be removed from the entrance to beyond the peristyle — quite contrary to accepted Roman notions. Presumably this implies that the peristylar villa was already tending to supersede the atrium; as it did, indeed, during the course of the Empire. Moreover, one should have a beautiful view from the atrium — which was thus at the rear of the peristylar garden — of the palaestra and ambulationes, which in this context must refer to spacious, extended porticoes. From all this it is apparent that the distinction between mansion and villa, between the peristylar villa and the portico villa as types, is less sharp than one would wish.

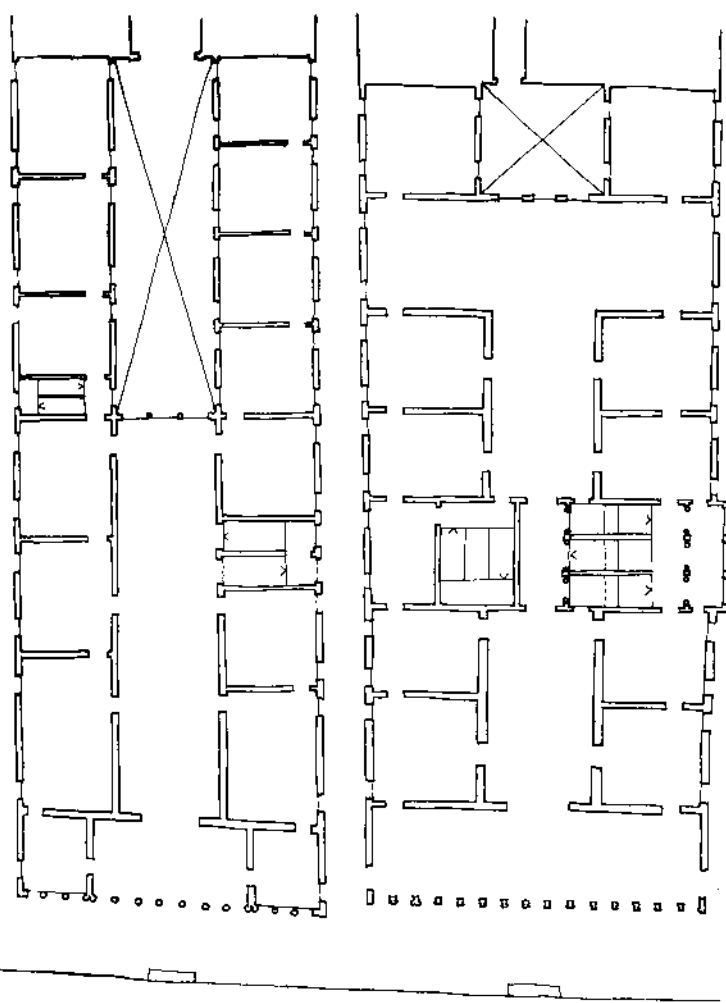
Vitruvius' villa suburbana features the axial alignment of rooms and courtyards which typifies the urban mansion while at the same time it stretches forth towards the landscape, in this case at the rear of the house. Vitruvius

says nothing of the facades of residential buildings, either in town or in the country. It must be assumed that the portico villa was not yet common in his day and that, in consequence, the street front and side elevations of Vitruvius' villa were blank in keeping with older Roman tradition. But his porticoes beyond the peristyle are at any rate predecessors to the covered colonnades of the villa. In fact, we have encountered such porticoes at the rear of the houses on the slopes outside Pompeii.

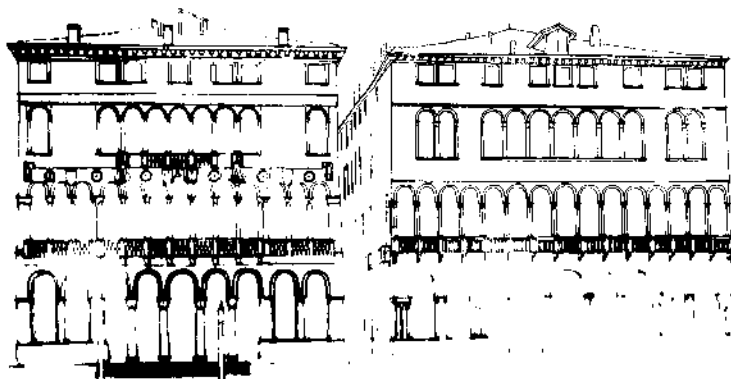
Vitruvius gives a good deal more space, in VI:6, to the villa rustica but he confines himself to various practical suggestions and mentions nothing of the arrangement of the different spaces. But this is no reason to assume that the great landowners' residences of late Augustan days were entirely unsophisticated. It would probably be difficult to draw a formal distinction between villas intended purely for occasional occupation by city dwellers and houses intended as permanent residences for landowners. With the fall of the Roman Empire and the ensuing violence and lawlessness, the conditions for the existence of the classical villa were lost. The humanistic society which had been fostered in the conducive environment of the villa, and to which the writers of Antiquity so eloquently testify, disappeared with the Roman rule. General insecurity made life in the countryside uncertain and full of risk. Nature was no longer the friend of mankind, she no longer had interest as an object of aesthetic appreciation – as can also be deduced from the art of the Dark Ages, which withdrew from nature. If temporary or permanent residence in the country was inevitable, a tower or the walls of a castle were the only feasible locations. Was there any place in medieval culture for the villa, as a concept or in reality? Hardly; but just as other cultural phenomena of the Middle Ages preserved certain traditions from Antiquity, so it may be said that civil architecture retained or re-adopted certain villa-like characteristics which were compatible with contemporary concepts of architecture. Charlemagne, for example, resided much in the country at one or the other of his various estates, called Pfalz, on whose products his court subsisted. His palace at Ingelheim had several peristyles linked with a couple of monumental halls and minor ancillary spaces. The defensive aspects, normally so decisive in medieval rural architecture, have no place whatsoever in this house of Charlemagne's. It has justifiably been compared with the classical peristylar villa⁵, and the similarity is not a coincidence: the Emperor wished to restore the old Roman Empire and consequently he consciously adopted its architecture, as a symbol of his claims. At his court, Vitruvius was known – though it is not clear whether this applies to the text in its entirety, or to only a part – and it is quite possible that in his Pfalz Charlemagne deliberately aimed to reproduce Roman imperial villas. At the height of the Middle Ages, the feudal castles show certain features in common with the classical villa: one hall usually has a sequence of large windows through which a view of the landscape can be enjoyed – a rudimentary portico, if you will. The Age of Chivalry had a lyrical attitude towards nature which easily led to the choice, on purely aesthetic grounds,

Charlemagne's Pfalz at Ingelheim





Ca' Loredan and Ca' Farsetti at the Rialto



of a location on a hilltop, with a view encompassing hills and valleys. At the same time, however, the location and arrangement of castles were dictated by defence considerations and, in general, the medieval castle cannot be taken as a successor to the villa of Antiquity.

The castles of Germany and France had a cultural and social function to fill, at least during the early part of the 13th century; but in Italy the focus of culture was always in the towns. Certainly secure towers and castles were necessities in the country districts of Italy also, but the profane culture of the Middle Ages blossomed in the urban palace. It is characteristic that during the rule of the Emperor Frederick II the south of Italy was an exception. His hunting lodge, Castel del Monte, was an occasional but magnificent residence in the country, and in some ways comparable to a villa. There were, however, no external resemblances to the Roman villa. Features typical of the villa were nonetheless preserved, even on Italian soil. The open elevation of the portico villa survives in the domestic architecture of the Middle Ages. Swoboda was the first to draw attention to the medieval architecture of Venice and in particular to the Fondaco dei Turchi on the Grand Canal, originally a palace of the 13th century. Here he has detected the portico villa, with risalti at the corners, and he considers that the elevation does not originate in Byzantium but indicates an uninterrupted tradition from Roman times⁶. He might equally well have cited the facades of Ca' Loredan or Ca' Farsetti at the Rialto. They could be taken to represent the portico villa without risalti – with continuous porticoes along the whole facade.

The layout of the Venetian palace also seems to preserve Roman building traditions: the portego has assumed the role of the atrium and the courtyard beyond, lacking a colonnade, has replaced the peristyle. The narrow sites, with a short front on the canal and another on the street, dictated an axial layout which also resembles the sequence of rooms on opposite sides of a central axis, as seen in the Roman house. Plans of original medieval terraces at the Rialto bear a remarkable resemblance to certain blocks in the Roman Forma Urbis. However, we lack many intermediate stages between the houses of the Caesars' days and those of the Venetian Middle Ages and, moreover, subsequent reconstructions have obscured the evidence. But these circumstances should not be entirely forgotten when we wonder why the Renaissance villa found its most classical expression in the Veneto.

The Renaissance villa: evolution and types

The rebirth of the classical villa in Italy was not originally an architectural event. On the contrary: the villa appeared first as a concept or vision in literature, and only subsequently did it find an architectural form⁷. The writings of Petrarch are the first in which we find a clearly expressed condemnation of the banefulness of city life and of the physically and mentally deleterious ways of the city dweller. In the town a man is an 'occupatus' – compelled to devote his time to numerous occupations which prevent concentration on his self and his relations to God. Virtue can be found only in isolation, i. e. in the country. Petrarch has not left any concrete description of a villa as an architectural creation, it is true, but he lived up to his own ideals by repeatedly escaping to the countryside. His last rural residence, at Arquà in the Veneto, is still in existence⁸. He lived here from 1369 until his death in 1374. It was no villa in the Renaissance sense, but simply a small house that might equally well have stood in a town. But it was situated in beautiful country and Petrarch was able to enjoy a broad view from its gothic windows. It was here that he wrote, in 1373:

Here, among the Euganean Hills, not more than ten miles from Padua, I have built a small but beautiful house, surrounded by olive groves and a vineyard, which yield all that is required by a small and readily contented family. And here, though in poor bodily health, I live in complete peace of mind, far from alarms, noise and commotion, read and write the whole time, and praise and thank my God⁹.

It has been maintained, quite correctly, that at root Petrarch was a city dweller, that in Italy as elsewhere culture had its roots in the largest cities, and that civilized life in the country existed only as a foil to the highly developed urbanisation of Italy.

Petrarch had the university city of Padua within easy reach and moreover he had his own library at his country residence. Even at the later date when the villa had become a status symbol for most of the signori of the Veneto, the literary, humanistic aspects of life in the rural setting remain an important factor.

Petrarch's attitude does, of course, reveal links with the attitudes of classical days. The Roman villa had also been a form of protest against the city and the Romans had also cultivated both body and spirit in the countryside. Among other evidence of this, we have the letters of Pliny the younger describing his two villas and his daily routine there. Petrarch adds a new, Christian aspect: life in the country is not merely pleasanter or healthier than life in the town, it is also on a higher moral plane. The city makes people nervous and dissipated. One can become a humanist only in the country.

Petrarch's dislike of the town also had political roots: the arrogance of tyrants and the endless martial conflicts between the city states. But the city environment itself, where 'cupiditas', 'ira' and 'libido' dominate, is already enough to destroy a human being. Petrarch was an itinerant philosopher. He had been able to observe many cities both within and beyond Italy's borders and it would be difficult to distinguish a particular place as inspiring his unsympathetic attitude towards the city. Of Italy's major urban centres, two in particular would have provided him with evidence: Florence and Venice. Rome, on the other hand, hardly gave the impression of a large city in the 14th century. As late as the early 15th century, she seems to have had little more than 13,000 inhabitants, while contemporary Venice counted about 200,000. For the population of Rome, the Aurelian Wall had become all too generous and the habitable buildings were thinly spread, almost as in the country¹⁰. But Venice was the most densely populated city of Italy and tended increasingly to grow upwards, as once Rome had done. The Venetian Republic adopted the most cynical political and economical practices of the age. In 1353 Petrarch stood before the Great Council to mediate in the conflict between Genoa and Venice – in vain, of course. It is quite feasible that to Venice may be attributed some of the negative features that Petrarch found in the city.

The Venetians were probably the first city-dwellers to respond to Petrarch's call and build humanist villas in the country. The conquest and pacification of the Terraferma – the stretch of country from Verona to Udine – during the 15th century created the opportunity for a large-scale emigration from the city. At any rate, there is a great number of 15th-century villas preserved in the Veneto. They are of the villa-castello type, i. e. they comprise a tower to which a portico of some kind has been added to give a more dignified appearance to the rural residence. The architectural history of these early villas of the Veneto is not yet sufficiently researched to permit any definite dating or relative chronology. It would seem, however, that here a villa philosophy found better conditions, and evolved earlier, than in any other part of Italy. Furthermore it can be noted that during the late Middle Ages and early Renaissance Venice was the only city in Italy where palaces need not resemble fortresses, where elevations had spacious loggias overlooking the canals and where, in consequence, there was a fund of inspiration for the villa builders of the Renaissance¹¹.

Before turning to reality, however, we must consider another literary concept of the villa which, as little as Petrarch's, was based on concrete experience but which nonetheless might give architects more material to ponder upon and utilize. In his Ten Books on Architecture, V:14–18 and IX:2–4, Alberti also dealt with the villa, basing his text on classical sources, mainly Vitruvius, though he must also have been acquainted with Petrarch's words in praise of the rural life:

In their country house, therefore, they enjoy the pleasures of light, air, spacious walks and fine prospects; in town, there are but few pleasures but those of luxury and the night¹²

It is true that Alberti makes a distinction between the villa rustica and the villa suburbana, but it appears as though the "gentleman's house" had the same dignity, whether at the centre of a group of estate buildings or isolated as a humanist villa. Palladio came to share these thoughts, of course. Alberti thus follows Vitruvius in that he sees no characteristic distinction between the city mansion and the gentleman's house in the country:

In our country house, with regard to those members which belong to the whole family in general, let us imitate the Prince's palace.

Conversely, wherever site conditions permit, the advantages of the villa should be added to the town house:

We should be sure to have a good courtyard, portico, places for exercise and some garden.

It is not easy to determine how Alberti envisaged this palace-like villa as an architectural creation. He clearly conceived of a kind of peristylar villa of a type which was to become reality in the future:

The courtyard, therefore, is the principal member, to which all the other, smaller members must correspond, as being in a manner a public marketplace to the whole house, which from this courtyard derives all the advantages of communication and light.

Some of his practical hints have surely been absorbed generally, for example:

a wise man should build rather for summer than for winter. We may easily arm ourselves against the cold by making all close and keeping good fires, but many more things are requisite against heat . . .

Building for a climate with mainly summer weather involved certain architectural consequences:

The ancients thought it best to place their porticoes fronting south, because the sun in summer running his course higher did not throw in his rays, where they would enter in winter.

Alberti discourses most readily when he comes to the situation of the villa in the landscape. The house should be placed so that 'il padrone' can

receive strangers handsomely and spaciouly, be seen by passengers for a good way round, and have a view of some city, towns, the sea, an open plain and the tops of some known hills and mountains. Let him have the delights of gardens and the diversions of fishing and hunting close under his eye.

Since Alberti does not either make any distinction between the villa rustica and the villa suburbana as regards situation, he says:

A country house ought to stand in such a place as may lie most convenient for the owner's house in town.

The distance from town should not be too great and communications should be good.

It ought not therefore to lie far from the city and the way to it should be both good and clear, so as he may go it either in summer or winter, either in coach or on foot, and if possible by water.

The Venetians had ideal villa sites available along the Brenta Canal. They satisfied most of the requirements stipulated by Alberti.

According to Alberti, the villa should have a lighter appearance than the city mansion; everything should seem lighthearted and inviting:

Let all things smile and seem to welcome the arrival of your guests.

There is accordingly a difference between ornament in the town and in the country,

for that in town ought to be much more grave than those for a house in the country, where all the gayest and most licentious embellishments are allowable.

Another requirement applying especially to the villa refers to light and air. Like the classical villa, the house should open upon the environment.

I would have the front and whole body of the house perfectly well lighted, and that it be open to receive a great deal of light and sun and a sufficient quantity of wholesome air.

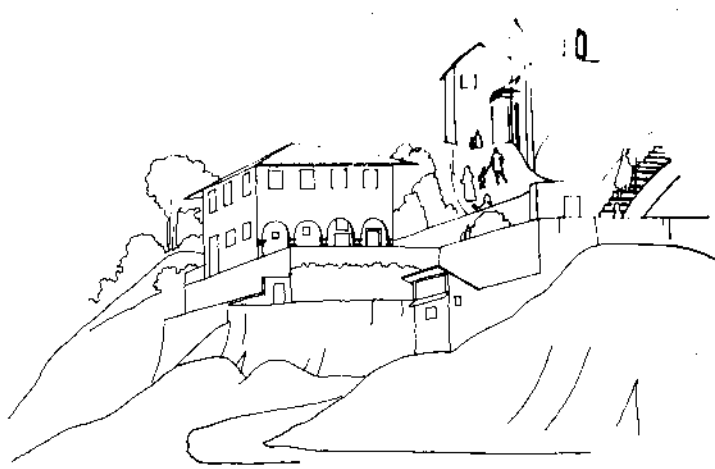
This selection of quotations indicates that Palladio had absorbed the majority of Alberti's basic tenets. That which in Alberti is still but ideas awaiting realization found in Palladio's villas, and especially the Villa Foscari, its classical form.

What was the purpose served by Alberti's villa suburbana, apart from being a healthier place of residence than the town house? He has himself expressed this through a verse of Martial's:

**You tell me, friend, you much desire to know,
What in my villa I can find to do?
I eat, drink, sing, play, bathe, sleep, eat again,
Or read, or wanton in the Muses train.**

This is a more superficial description of life in the country than that given by Pliny, and more secular in comparison with Petrarch, but at least reading and the Muses are included and, after Pliny, Petrarch and Alberti, these features are always associated with the style of life in the Italian villa. There was a long way yet to go, however, before the creation of an architectural form that fully corresponded to these ideas.

The villas used during the first half of the 15th century – which as yet have been only inadequately studied – seem to have embodied certain isolated requirements of those formulated in literature, but there was no system about this. Rather it took the form of additions to buildings which basically resembled farmhouses, forts or simple mansions. We find a few examples of such precursors in the country round Lucca: Villa Tronci, known as the Palazzina, at Carignano north-west of Lucca was probably a hunting box. It has been ascribed to the years before 1450¹³. This simple, rectangular building originally had three very large windows on its single principal storey, which was thus exposed to a panoramic view. Here, then, certain of Alberti's requirements were met, but only in a general way. It is not possible to decide whether the anonymous architect had been acquainted with contemporary discussions of the villa and the rural life, or had merely followed certain obvious directions given by the client.



Villa Medici at Fiesole

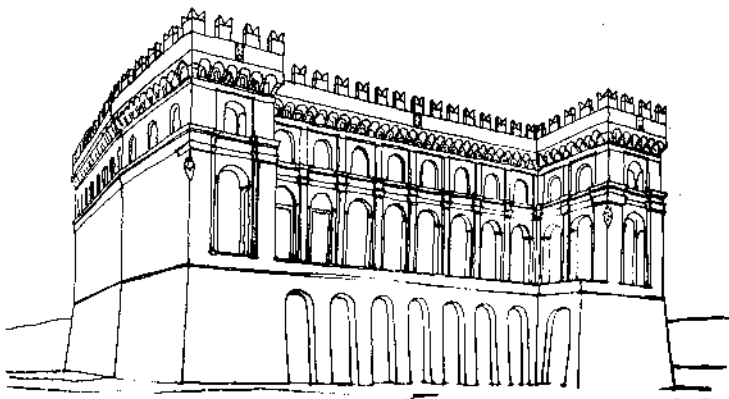
Some researchers underline the significance of Michelozzo's Villa Medici at Fiesole, built in 1458 - 62 for Cosimo dei Medici, as one of the first Italian humanist villas¹⁴. Its location is typical of the villa suburbana and it conforms to Pliny's and Alberti's requirements regarding the situation of a villa. This villa has two loggias facing east and west, and instead of a courtyard a hall, which however does not dominate the layout as it ought, nor receive sufficient light. It is doubtless true that Michelozzo's villa abandoned the closed, uninviting aspect of the fortress in favour of an incipient opening-up through loggias towards gardens and the landscape. If Michelozzo has had Alberti's writings as a point of departure, then it is their defective advice regarding the layout and elevations of the villa that has resulted in the somewhat tentative impression that this villa yet gives.

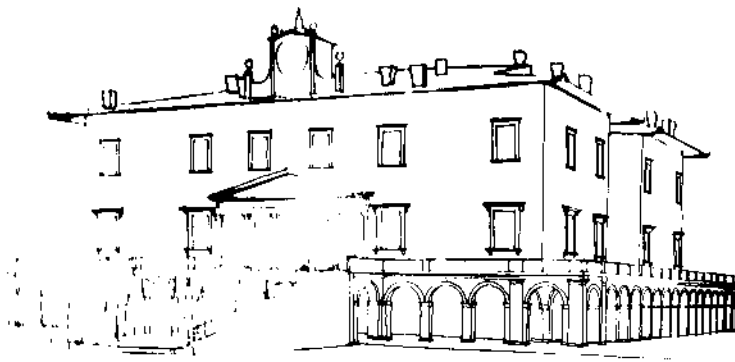
It is not until the 1480s that we find three buildings, in three different districts, that each represents a distinct type, all of which were of significance in following development. The first is the Belvedere in the Vatican, started in 1485 for Pope Innocent VIII, probably by Jacomo da Pietrasanta¹⁵. Here we have a portico villa with risalti, the layout and the north elevation of which reveal striking similarities to classical villas of the type. Thus the loggia is situated between two towerlike corners comprising rooms of various sizes and a chapel. In other words, it looks as though the Belvedere implied a revival of the Roman portico villas as shown in Pompeiiian painting; but it could also be interpreted as a result of the theoretical writings. The north aspect of the loggia of the Belvedere is, of course, inconsistent with Alberti's recommendations but might merely be due to the Pope's intention to use the palace only in summer.

Loggias flanked by unpierced walls on the lines of the antique portico villa also appear in contemporary major palace architecture: the Venetian facades had of course preserved this type of front and Luciano Laurana's loggias at the Ducal Palace in Urbino — with a magnificent view of the Umbrian landscape — are something in between palace and villa architecture. They were completed in the 1470s. Since the villa was still embryonic as a distinct architectural type, it was only natural at that time to seek inspiration in the more mature architecture of the palace.

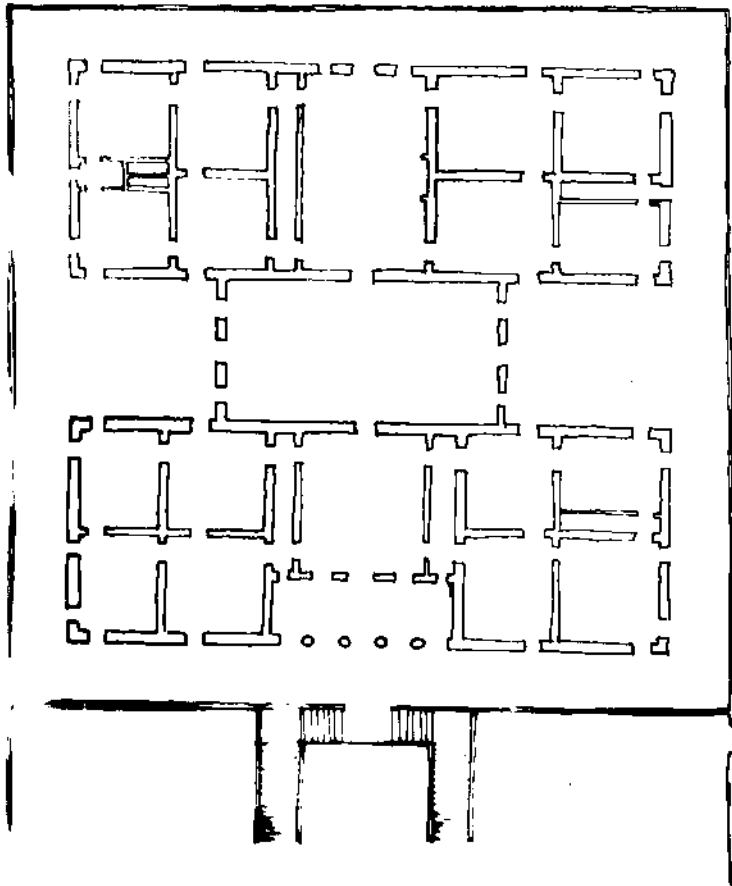
During the papacy of Julius II, Bramante drew his plans for the Cortile di Belvedere, which was to link the various parts of the Vatican, from the old Borgia tower to Innocent's Belvedere. The final result was a new "villa" that could match itself with Hadrian's Tivoli. The original Belvedere was thus reduced to an insignificant component in a vast whole, and today it is hard to realize that this, the oldest villa on Roman ground, was once a sensational novelty. In fact, it introduced the long series of portico villas of the High Renaissance. The Villa Farnesina, for example, with its loggias originally open to the north, between a couple of terminal risalti, is a direct successor to the Belvedere as far as external appearances are concerned. The Belvedere also made an impression on visitors from elsewhere in Italy, of course. A Venetian emissary visiting the house in 1523 reported enthusiastically in a letter home on the beautiful view from the loggia¹⁶.

The Belvedere at the Vatican





Villa Medici at Poggio a Caiano



Only the merest fragments remain of the frescoes in the loggia and chapel but we can extend our conception with the aid of earlier descriptions¹⁷. On the rear wall and one of the end walls of the loggia were six landscapes, views of Rome, Milan, Genoa, Florence, Venice and Naples. The painted-over remains of these can be distinguished. The artist, Pinturicchio, has thus not followed Vitruvius' instructions, which prescribe a particular type of landscape fresco to which we shall return later. According to Vasari, the views were chosen by Innocent VIII himself, probably to symbolize the power of the Church over all Italy. In any case, this seems to have been the first occasion on which the walls of a villa were decorated by landscapes having no element of history and this characteristic also spread to the Veneto.

The second villa of typological importance was the Villa Medici at Poggio a Caiano, built by Giuliano da Sangallo around 1485 for Lorenzo il Magnifico. Its situation in the landscape and certain features indicate that the architect and his client were aware of Alberti's writings¹⁸. Apart from this, it may be regarded as a more systematic extension of the beginnings found in the Medici villa at Fiesole. In other words, the new villa was not modelled according to classical examples but was inspired by literary studies and the local tradition of building in the 15th century. The solid, monolithic outline, with four corner towers each comprising a suite, dominates the distant impression. At closer quarters the pedimented loggia gains certain significance, but due more to its central location than to any intended monumentality in the feature itself. However important this feature may seem, and particularly with Palladio's villa porticoes in mind, the step is nonetheless a long one between this tentative early Renaissance loggia and the monumental frontispieces of the 16th century.

The base of the villa is possibly more important: an arcade forms a terrace on which one may walk right round the house. This device lifts the piano nobile high above the ground and has a practical purpose: the villa at Poggio a Caiano was not only a resort for humanists but also the hub of a farm. Thus the arcade conceals from the casual view the various spaces necessary to a rural household. When Giuliano da Sangallo incorporated the working spaces in the main complex, while concealing them behind the somewhat monotonous but monumental arcade, he found an entirely new solution to the perennial problem of the villa: the reconciliation of the 'grandezza' of the manor with the practical requirements of farming. Neither Vitruvius nor Alberti had any assistance to offer on this point. His "all under one roof" recipe reappears in a different form in certain of Palladio's villas. Possibly the extended arcades were also among the forerunners of the barchesse which were common in the Veneto and which Palladio also resorted to when he wished to give character to the non-representative parts of a villa. He arranged his barchesse not round the main building but extending from it as wings, but the intention was the same, as he himself writes:

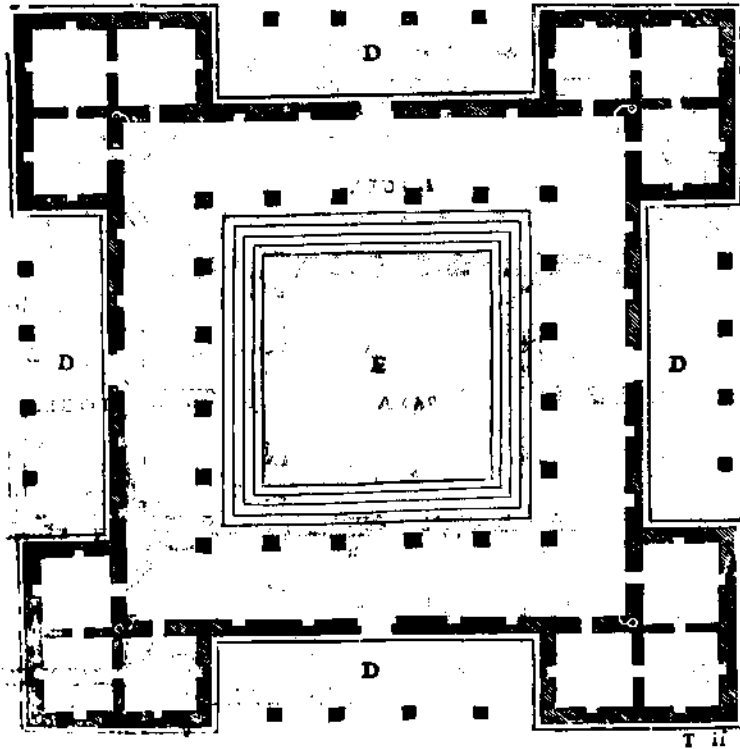
Just as the Lord has arranged it so that the most beautiful of our members are the most visible, while the others are concealed from the eye, so we should also ensure that the most beautiful and elegant parts of a building are located where best seen and the less beautiful are rendered unnoticeable as far as possible; since in these it is the intention to locate the vulgar accessories of the household and all which might spoil the most beautiful parts. It therefore pleases me that the wine cellars, storerooms for wood and provisions, kitchen, servants' room, laundry and ironing room, ovens and suchlike necessities of daily life should be arranged in the lowest part of the house, which I place somewhat below ground level. The storey above wins two advantages hereby: it is freed from all this and, no less important, it becomes a healthier place to live in since its floor is raised above the dampness of the ground. Moreover it will offer more beautiful prospects and will itself look more attractive from outside¹⁹.

Another novel feature of the villa at Poggio a Caiano was the axial arrangement of the rooms, with a transverse hall at the centre. For the first time, the hall is distinguished not only by somewhat larger dimensions but also by a dominating position at the centre of the building. As we have noted, Alberti recommended a courtyard as the heart of the villa, comparing it with a forum, from which all rooms of the house would obtain "the advantages of communication and light". It is not unreasonable to assume that the hall has here to play the role of the open court as focus of communications. It has been given a monumental aspect by extending through two storeys and is covered by a richly coffered vault. It is directly lighted from two directions and can be said to be much better illuminated than any previous hall in a Florentine villa. Pontormo's fresco in one of the lunettes, executed in 1521, and in which the figures are illusorily placed in the painted architecture, presages similar compositions in Venetian villas. This hall must be accorded significance when considering corresponding centrally located halls in Palladian villas²⁰.

The third type of villa is represented by the Villa Poggio Reale near Naples, which was widely renowned during the Renaissance. Construction commenced in 1487 after Alphonse of Aragon had summoned the Florentine architect Giuliano da Majano. We are familiar with this totally lost villa through contemporary descriptions and a drawing by Perruzzi²¹. Poggio Reale was a villa suburbana, with extensive gardens. The exterior of the main house is difficult to reconstruct, but it probably had solid walls. Four corner towers appeared with greater assertion than at Poggio a Caiano. The greatest difference and the decisive characteristic is the peristyle which occupied the centre of the villa. It served here as a sort of open reception room, but also as a communicating route between the four corner blocks. The relationship with Poggio a Caiano is clear and it is certain that both villas can be traced back to the angle-towered fortified house. At the same time, however, this villa, with its exclusive exterior, is integrated with a great axial system of plantations, terraces, canals, colonnades, statues and so forth, which was of course significant in the further development of the Renaissance garden, up to the Villa d'Este. Concentrating on the villa itself, however, it can be said that Poggio Reale was the first and most notable example of the peristylar villa since the days of Antiquity.



PIANTA DEL POGGIO REALE DI NAPOLI.



Villa Poggio Reale near Naples according to Serlio's Terzo Libro

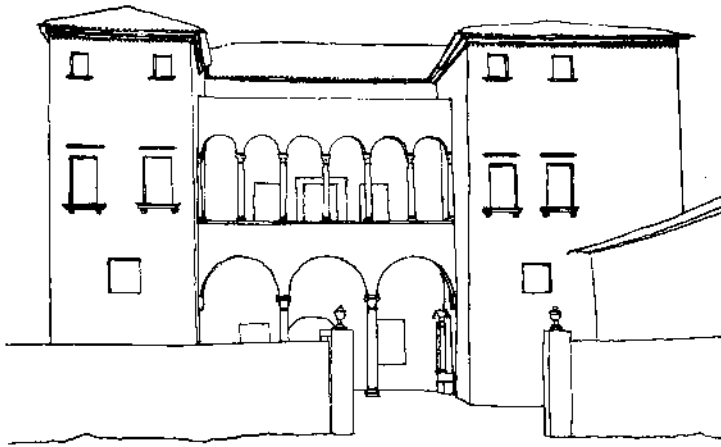
Knowledge of Poggio Reale was spread not so much by eye witnesses as by descriptions and the woodcuts in Serlio's Terzo Libro; Serlio had not either actually seen the villa, but based his design on the description given by Marcantonio Michiel, from whom he had obtained "this and many other things". Thus he shows a ground plan in which arbitrary modifications have been made. The court is made a square and is bounded by identical colonnades on all sides. He introduces four additional colonnades between the corner towers in the external walls so that, in contradiction to Perruzzi's drawing and the facts, the outline of the plan becomes a perfect square and the villa a combination of peristylar and portico villa.

Serlio realized quite clearly that Poggio Reale was an occasional residence, hardly suitable for permanent occupation or as the home of an agricultural landowner. He therefore designed another villa, known as the "Poggio Reale variant", in which he retained the corner towers and the external porticoes but substituted a hall for the peristyle. Moreover he provided more varied room dimensions and better communications between the four apartments. Thus his variant came closer to Poggio a Caiano, at the same time as it became more suitable for permanent residence and a more northern climate.

Even before 1500, then, all those features which had characterized villas in the days of Antiquity had again been revived. Both the peristylar villa and the portico villa, with or without risalti, had reappeared. Certain manifestations exhibited a striking similarity with their Roman counterparts, while others seemed rather to be a prolongation of essentially medieval building traditions. The two major Roman types seldom appeared in pure form in the following years. We have already seen how Serlio's representation of Poggio Reale was a mixture of peristylar and portico villa. Moreover, during the High Renaissance there appeared counterparts to the great Caesarean villas, for a while concentrated in a ring round Rome: Bramante's Cortile di Belvedere and Raphael's Villa Madama, for example, while not imitations of the true Caesarean villas, nonetheless had dimensions and a multitude of components that make them comparable. In such cases the tendency is towards the architectural organisation of a large open-air space surrounding the villa proper, or 'casa del padrone'. The villas of Vignola and Pirro Ligorio mark the peaks of this art. Such villas are no longer merely places of refuge for humanists who have tired of the city. That is just what the Medici villas were, on the other hand: they retained a fine balance between the building, its closest environment and nature. During the late Renaissance or Mannerist period the villa was to come to dominate over an artificial nature, true nature being excluded from the environment of the villa by a wall.

Further development in 16th-century Italy occurred in various regions which, while in communication with each other, nonetheless exhibit great differences. The villa found in time a characteristic and distinctive form in the Veneto and it is to this region alone that we shall now concentrate our attention.

Palladio as villa architect



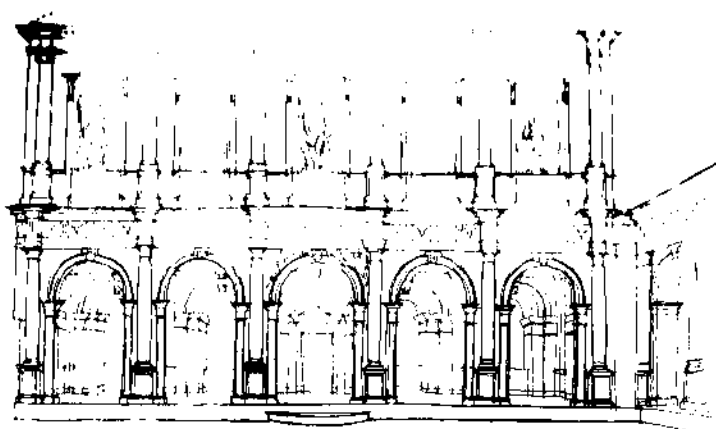
Ca' Brusà at Lovolo

We have already noted that, during the 15th century, the Terraferma of Venice offered a notably fertile soil for villa-building. The villa-castello type, externally resembling the Roman portico villa with risalti, was established in the Veneto, probably long before genuine villas with similar attributes began to appear elsewhere in Italy. We shall mention only one example: Villa Ricci-Manfredini, also known as Ca' Brusà, at Lovolo near Vicenza²². This has heavily accentuated corner risalti and a loggia between, with three arches on the ground floor and six above. It is comparable to, say, Perruzzi's Villa Le Volte near Siena but is a purer and more beautiful exponent of the type, although the latter is probably older – around 1490.

From here the step was not a long one to a more developed High Renaissance villa, but due to political circumstances Venice and the Terraferma became isolated from the rest of Italy, so that the stage which in Rome is referred to as High Renaissance never really existed in the art of Venice. In 1508 the mainland was overrun by enemies of Venice and until the Peace of 1517 the position of Venice as European power and the favourable conditions of the Terraferma were totally nullified. True, Venice won back her possessions on the mainland – certain of them, such as Padua, were in the enemy's hands for only a brief period – but the war had sapped the strength and vigour of the Republic and it was only slowly and by a complete reorientation that some degree of stability was restored. Through her 'bilancia' policy, the Serenissima succeeded thereafter in avoiding involvement in the continuing battles in Italy, the most notable catastrophe of which – the sack of Rome in 1527 – did not directly affect Venice.

As the overseas trade of Venice declined, so the Terraferma became the object of the special attention of the State. During the period 1530–1560 the Venetian signori invested the capital that was no longer employed in ventures to distant lands in farming on the Terraferma, being encouraged in this by the official agricultural and taxation policy. Large areas of the land had been neglected and had become marsh. A fresh start must be made if any profit was to result and if output was to suffice for the needs of the growing population. One of the pioneers of new agricultural methods was Alvise Cornaro, more of whom in an architectural context.

The Venetian signori and their equals in other cities in the Veneto succeeded very well in their task. There was an extensive move to the country, where it was now necessary to arrange a second home in addition to that one had beside the Grand Canal. This is the reason for the unprecedented boom in villa-building in the middle years of the 16th century. In both quantity and quality, Venice soon overshadowed all other parts of Italy. It was not the villa suburbana, nor the great palace-like villa, that came to flower in the Veneto, but the villa rustica. And here it acquired a special character. The new agriculturalists were nobles of the city with humanist

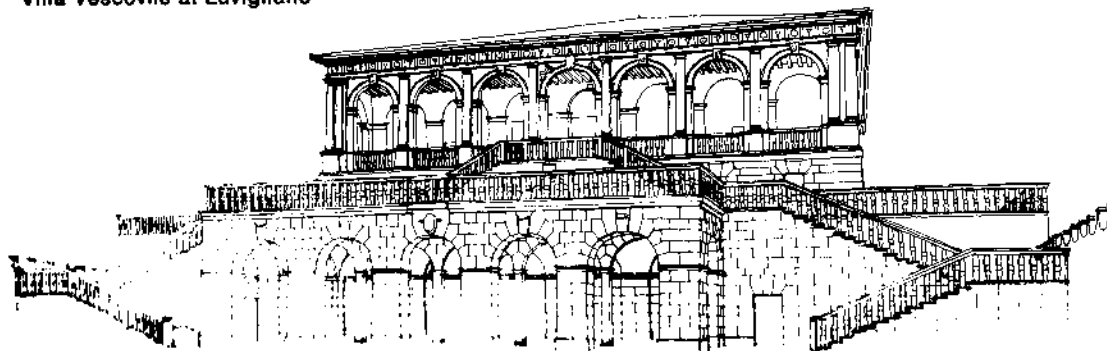


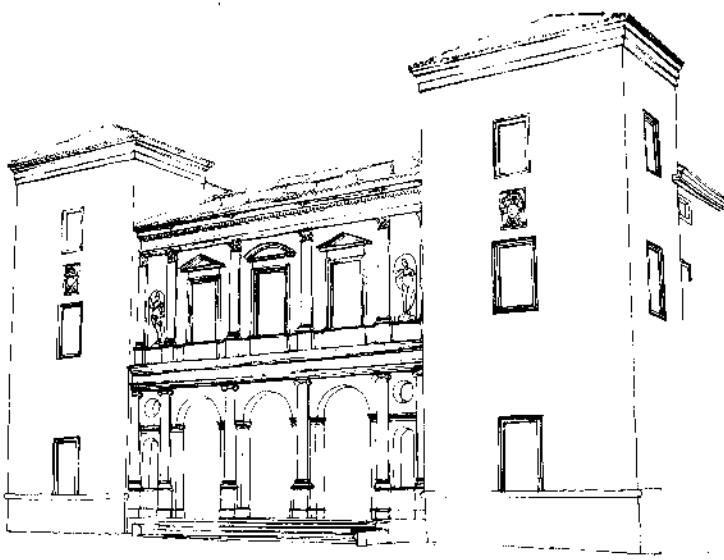
Loggia Cornaro in Padua

leanings or style of life - farming had, so to speak, been onnoble. Alvise Cornaro speaks of 'la santa agricultura', which was to be the salvation of state and citizens and would be raised to the status of a profession worthy of the humanists²³. There was therefore no question of the new residences in the country being simple farmhouses, but nor could they be palaces or castles. They must be adapted to their practical purpose, while demonstrating its new dignity. Such houses had existed earlier - the Villa Poggio a Caiano was an example - but now, after the High Renaissance had passed Venice by almost without trace, the practical and prestige aspects both required a more sophisticated language of form than that of the 15th century. It was Palladio who finally found the form for the Veneto villa, but his work exhibits many preliminary stages on its way to the final solution.

At the start of the development of the new architecture of the Veneto we find Alvise Cornaro and his architect, Giovanni Maria Falconetto. Up to 1535, the year of Falconetto's death, they built two villas: a small one at Codevigo and a larger at Campagnalupia, both places in the province of Padua. These houses are now lost without trace. Until 1918 there remained of the latter a barchessa, with an extended portico comprising a 17-arched colonnade²⁴. Cornaro also commissioned a villa suburbana in the neighbourhood of the Santo in Padua, though this has also disappeared. Its extensive components included the famous Loggia of 1524 and the Odeo, still testifying that Falconetto introduced - at a late date, true, but nonetheless prior to the arrival of Sansovino in Venice in 1527 - the Bramantesque style to the Terraferma. Finally, in 1535, Falconetto started the remarkable Villa Vescovile at Luvigliano (near Padua) for Cardinal Francesco Pisani. This house consists of a roughly square building on a high base and its features include a loggia with a view of the Euganean Hills. Wide steps lead up to a terrace surrounding the building - not unlike that at Poggio a Caiano. Mainly, however, the Villa Vescovile strikes similarities with Villa Madama, which Falconetto had seen during construction in Rome in the 1520s.

Villa Vescovile at Luvigliano





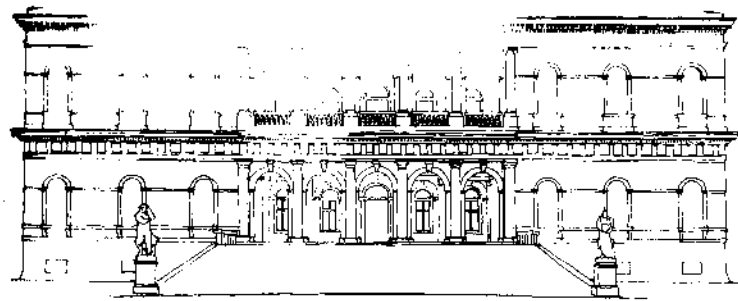
Villa Trissino at Cricoli

The work of Falconetto – and particularly its influence on Palladio, who left his birthplace, Padua, in 1524, the year in which the Loggia Cornaro was completed – should not be underestimated²⁵. Many details in the early works of Palladio betray an origin in Falconetto's Bramantism. However, Falconetto did not discover any pioneering solution to the problems of the new villa architecture, even allowing for the fact that we do not know anything about the appearance of his two Cornaro villas.

More important for Palladio's future was the villa at Cricoli, Vicenza, which his patron Giangiorgio Trissino had built during the 1530s. The old villa must have been of the castello type, with twin corner towers. Its earlier appearance and its actual age are unknown. Trissino, who probably acted as his own architect, joined the two towers by a two-storey loggia, articulated with Ionic and Corinthian pilasters. The details show close relationship to those of Cornaro's loggia at Padua, while the composition as a whole echoes Perruzzi's Farnesina, as well as Raphael's Villa Madama. The plan of the Villa Trissino, almost certainly the result of the reconstruction, features a central loggia and thereafter a hall, with three rooms arranged symmetrically on each side of this axis.

From 1527 to 1540 Sebastiano Serlio lived mainly in Venice. He appears not to have built any villa on the mainland but many of the villa designs in the posthumously published *Settimo Libro* and the unpublished *Sesto Libro* were in all probability prepared during his years in Venice and it is likely that they were known to Palladio and perhaps also to other architects²⁶. The layouts of almost all of Serlio's villas are developments of his *Poggio Reale* variant, i. e. they comprise a rectangular or square block with a central hall and other rooms grouped about it in a radial pattern. A vestibule, in the form of a loggia, is often featured in the main front and the house then assumes a symmetrical disposition along an axis. Corners are frequently accentuated as towers, appearing distinctly in both plan and elevation.

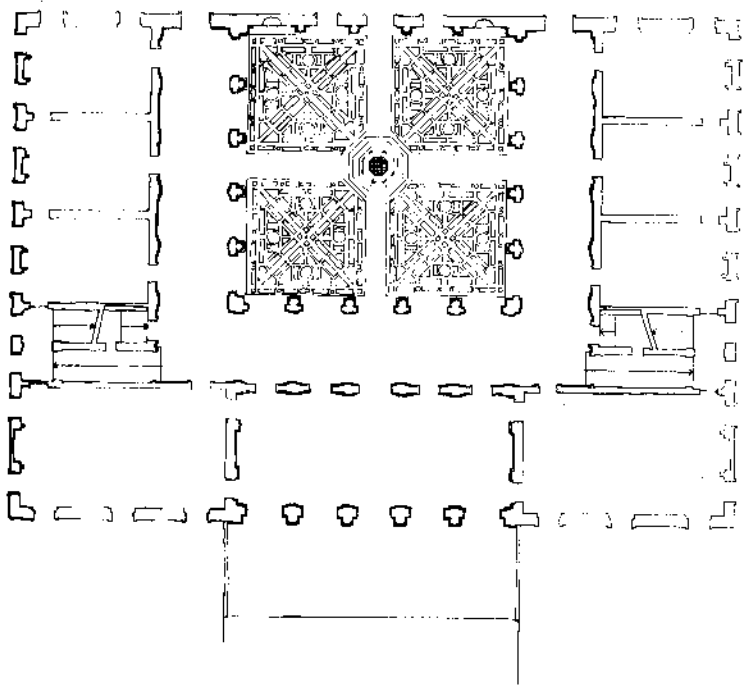
Serlio probably drew this type of villa with the demands of the Venetian signori in mind, in the hope of commissions which would give him a footing in the expanding building market. His sketches were adapted to the specific requirements, the dimensions being reduced to suit the Venetian noble-cum-farmer. Moreover, he retained the tower motif and thus a link with the Venetian castello tradition, which out in the country was something of a status symbol. Finally, his houses were designed without reference to any setting. Almost like prefabs, they could be put up as the 'casa del padrone' in any garden or farm environment; the same design could be used in several places; and additions, such as the traditional barchesse, could be made without any real design work being required. Thus Serlio's villas were useful models for homebuilders who looked for moderate comfort and modernity with respect for tradition. Serlio probably gained his intimate knowledge of conditions on the Terraferma through Alvise Cornaro, with whose Odeo he was familiar and in fact reproduced in his *Settimo Libro*. Around 1540, i. e. the time when Serlio departed for France and Palladio made his debut as architect, a certain amount of villa building was thus



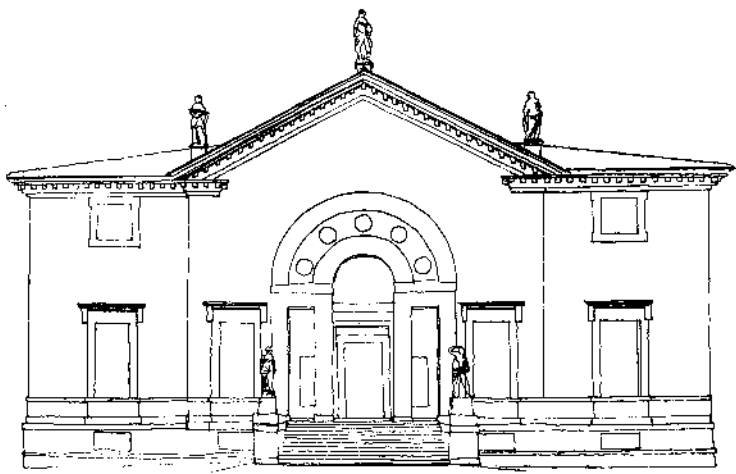
already under way on the mainland. Local features and the novelties imported from Roman, Neapolitan and Florentine villas by Falconetto and Serlio were found in interesting synthesis. The ancient Roman portico villa, with or without corner towers, began to appear under the overlying Venetian tradition, though it had not yet come forth in its classical form. The peristylar villa also appeared afresh in isolated, but therefore more noteworthy, cases, such as Sansovino's Villa Garzoni at Pontecasale, probably built during the 1540s²⁷. A courtyard is surrounded on three sides by elongated blocks, while a wall closes the fourth. The main front of the building is pierced by a portico, leading to the courtyard. The latter is arcaded on three sides and on the fourth – the wall – pilasters and niches complete, optically, the full peristyle. A terrace above the arcades provides access to the rooms of the upper storey, which are arranged symmetrically around the central axis and divided by the piercing of the main front into two distinct groups – not very practical.

No other villa drawings by Sansovino are known. Villa Garzoni shows a clear relationship with Poggio Reale as reproduced by Serlio. It is interesting to note that Serlio was the only source to suggest large villas with an internal terrace surrounding a peristylar courtyard – his unpublished Sesto Libro shows six big houses with such terraces incorporated in various basic plans; at the same time, Sansovino was the only architect to put the idea into practice. These two immigrants were contemporaries in Venice and acquainted, though we cannot know whose the original inspiration may have been in this instance. The greater eminence of Sansovino as architect is not decisive. Extremely unusual as it was, the idea of the inside balcony might well have been a product of the theoretician's mind. However that may be, this magnificent creation formed part of the fund of architectural experience available to Palladio.

In the ever-swelling flood of literature about Palladio one finds various attempts at a classification of the score or so of villas that the architect has left us. A morphological division – villas with portico, villas without, and so forth – seems unsatisfactory since the essence of his creations is not the details, but the concept of the villa as a type. During the 30 years in which he designed villas this concept naturally underwent a number of modifications. In the 1540s the primary aim seems to have been the renewal of the local tradition, without a direct break. A decade later the new villa suddenly appeared in all its proliferation and perfection, while by the 1560s the type was being varied in a few cases in a more sophisticated way. But such a division by periods is not fully relevant, either, if for no other reason than that the dating of Palladio's villas is still uncertain²⁸. Fatal misinterpretation can be the result. The Villa Pojana, for example, was always assumed by researchers to be a late work, a fulfilment of the architect's striving towards a bare, simplified, almost anti-decorative style – until the discovery quite recently of documents which reveal that this villa was, in fact, under construction in 1555 and must therefore have been designed before that date – perhaps during the preceding decade. Thus the Pojana



Villa Garzoni at Pontecasale



Villa Pojana at Pojana Maggiore

is a relatively early work and its plain walls are not evidence of any attainment of simplicity by the ageing master.

Chronological sequence is not particularly significant as regards Palladio's villas. After a certain date – around 1550, one may say with some exactitude – they are all manifestations of a single type, notwithstanding external differences. They are not merely houses with or without certain standardized decorations; they are concrete expressions of a way of living, of behaviour, of recreation and of enjoyment sought by educated people in the country. This basis of all his villa building has been formulated by the architect himself in words which remind one of Petrarch and Alberti:

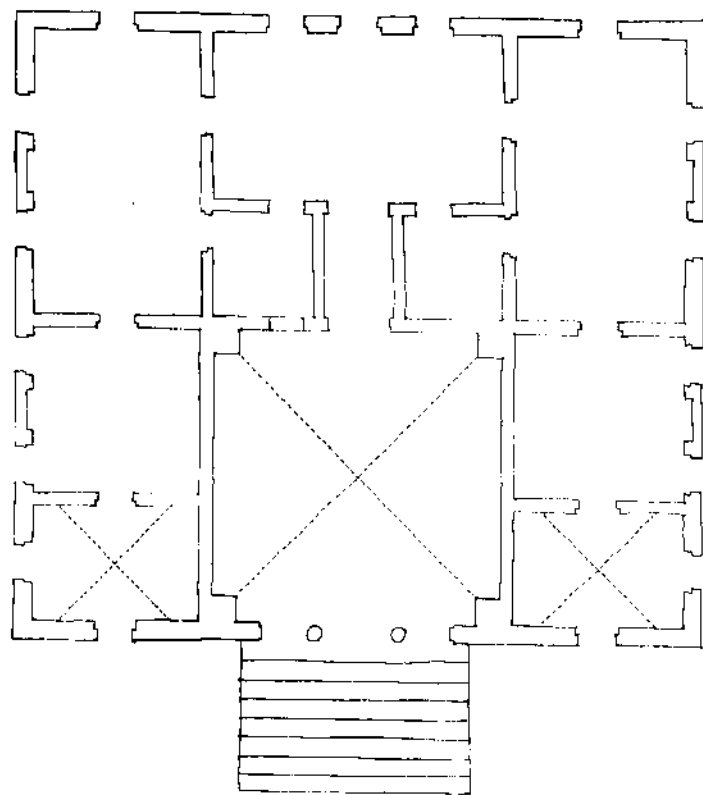
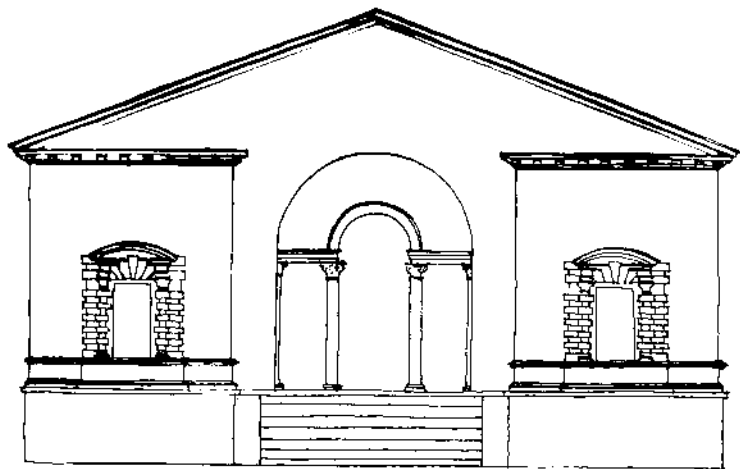
It is true that it is both in keeping with the dignity of and convenient for a well-situated gentleman to own a house in the city, where he may reside during those times when he must look to his public duties and his own affairs. But it may be that he can find as much use and enjoyment of a house in the country, where he spends the remaining time in the supervision and improvement of his lands and the increasing of their yield by way of industry and skill.

Furthermore, through the walks and rides on horseback which are usual in the country he will more readily preserve his health and vigour while his spirits, tired by the stresses of town life, can be refreshed and strengthened. Since in the country he can calmly devote himself to literary studies and contemplation, just as the wise men of antiquity were wont to retire to such places where, in possession of house, gardens, fountains and suchlike, and above all of their virtue, they received visits by esteemed friends and relatives and could easily pursue a life as happy as it is possible to live on this earth . . .

First and foremost, then, one should choose a place which is as conveniently situated as possible and preferably amidst the owner's lands, so that he may supervise and improve this his property without excessive trouble, while the farmer may readily bring the fruits of the soil to his master's house. If one can build by a river, this must be considered as convenient and fortunate, since by boat one may cheaply carry the products of the estate to the town at any time and both the people and the animals of the place have benefit of the river, which also brings coolness in summer; furthermore, such a location offers a particularly beautiful view and the opportunity of irrigating and thus beautifying the fields, the gardens and the orchards, which give refreshment and can truly be called the soul of a country estate.

These maxims were written at a late date, it is true, being published first in the second of his Quattro Libri, in 1570. But they reflect an old, even antique, conviction which coincided remarkably with the contemporary needs of the Veneto and which must have guided Palladio from the very beginning.

In his earliest villa, the Villa Porto-Godi at Lonedo, begun c. 1535, Palladio naturally adopted the villa-castello type. The main block consists of two towers united externally by an arcade of almost archaic simplicity. A similar exterior, featuring heavily accentuated corner towers, was given to the now-lost Villa Muzani alla Pisa, which has been convincingly attributed to Palladio and dated about 1540. The Villa Pisani at Bagnolo also has two such marked corner towers flanking the facade overlooking the water and it is now assumed – on good grounds – that this part was commenced shortly after 1540. The basic type, corresponding to the Roman portico villa with risalti at the corners, does not disappear entirely in Palladio's later



One of Palladio's villini

work, but is combined with other elements, e. g. in the Villa Valmarana at Lisiera, where the towers are dominated by a two-storey loggia at both front and rear.

Repeated trips to Rome and the competition for the Basilica at Vicenza cannot have allowed Palladio very much time for villa building during the latter years of the 1540s. But the collection of his drawings at the Royal Institute of British Architects in London contains seventeen designs for villas of moderate size, so-called 'villini', dating from the decade. They resemble Serlio's villa designs: a simple, rectangular block without courtyard, raised on a base of five feet or so, is given a modern exterior by the addition of a loggia, a tympanum, and a few classically framed windows.

The villini, like Serlio's houses, are isolated entities unrelated to environment: standardized houses that could be put up anywhere. Perhaps Palladio assembled them with a view to their publication as a catalogue for prospective villa builders. Some were actually used in practice: the Villa Marcello-Curti at Bertesina, near Vicenza, was built around 1540 to villini designs, and the Villa Pisani at Bagnolo provides another example²⁹. Palladio's plans for the publication of these early villini were abandoned however. When the *Quattro Libri dell' Architettura*, after decades of preparation, finally were ready for publication, Palladio preferred to illustrate his later, more elaborate villas. Where the early ones appear, in the *Secondo Libro*, e.g. the Pisani at Bagnolo or the Porto-Godi at Lonedo, they are adapted to the later standards.

The exteriors of the villini were rather simple. Only in a few drawings do columns figure in the external appearance. It may be that at that time Palladio was influenced by Alvise Cornaro who, in his brief tract on architecture, called for simplicity in domestic architecture and stated the opinion that

a building may very well be beautiful and convenient without Doric or any other order of columns³⁰.

Around 1540, it is likely that Palladio associated with Cornaro, whom he must have met through Trissino. Cornaro's disapproval of columns applied only to domestic buildings, incidentally, since he had already designed his Loggia and the Odeo with both Doric and Ionic orders. Palladio may have shared this view, since simultaneously with his simple villas he designed the Basilica at Vicenza with Doric and Ionic orders. He also employed the Corinthian order in his design for his first palace facade, the Palazzo Civena at Vicenza, begun in 1540.

There is also reason to recall that, even much later, Palladio was capable of undertaking small villini, such as the Villa Zeno at Cesalto in the late 1550s and the Villa Saraceno at Finale in 1560 or thereabouts. They have no colonnaded portico and few classical details. It must be strongly doubted that their simplicity was an expression of a revived purism towards the close of

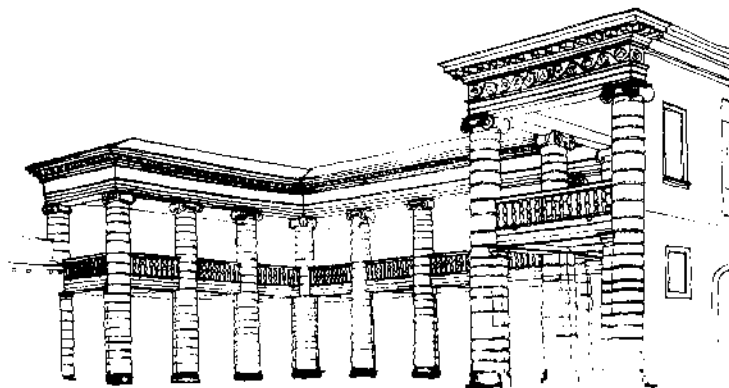
Palladio's career, in view of his simultaneous activities in Vicenza and Venice. It is more likely that these simple houses were revised editions of the villini, the choice being dictated perhaps by practical and cost considerations.

In the layout of these early villas Palladio followed that of the villa at Cricoli by his friend Trissino, a square space of given length of side providing the basis. This length recurs as the longest side of a smaller rectangular space and the short side of a larger. All three rooms in a suite thus have a side of common length and are tangibly integrated. Moreover, two such suites are generally arranged on either side of a vestibule and a hall. The latter form the axis of the house and their dimensions are also related to the basic dimension. This very simple arithmetical system of proportions has the advantage of easy visual recognition, since a single basic dimension recurs throughout the house. If the rooms in each suite have the proportions 3:3, 3:4, 2:3 then simple harmonics are brought in. The dimensions of the rectangular rooms have the same relationship to the square room as the fifth and fourth to the key tone. Here, then, there is already visible evidence of the system of harmonic proportions that was later to become more elaborated.

Towards the close of the 1540s Palladio designed an ambitious peristylar villa to be built at Quinto, near Vicenza, for the same Marcantonio Thiene for whom he had already commenced the Palazzo Thiene in Vicenza. Only a minor part was built but the intended project can be studied in the *Secondo Libro*. By this time Palladio had begun to read Vitruvius and the Villa Thiene was his first attempt to identify a villa plan with the Roman peristylar villa. Palladio followed the previously quoted passage in Vitruvius VI:5, i. e. his villa resembles a Roman palace transferred to the country. As instructed by Vitruvius, Palladio arranged an 'atrio di quattro colonne', not on the entrance front, but at the rear, between an inner court and a peristylar garden. If Villa Thiene had been completed it would have been the revival of a type of Roman villa which we know did in fact exist, since Vitruvius describes it, but which is not easily exemplified by the archeological material. The type, however, could hardly be the right course towards a suitable residence for contemporary people with their particular needs and desires. Palladio did not abandon entirely the vision of a Vitruvian peristylar, or palatial, villa. A later version is found in the design at the close of his *Secondo Libro* for a villa for Leonardo Mocenigo. Palladio prepared several proposals for this project, which was never built, and the influence of Serlio's Poggio Reale concept is also detectable³¹. He returned finally to the Vitruvian prototype in his drawings after 1560 for the Villa Sarego at Santa Sofia near Verona. This curious house was only half completed. If finished, it would have become a palatial peristylar villa of noteworthy dimensions. The fragment which now remains resembles a relic of the most mannered period of Rome's Imperial days — a counterpart to the Porta Nigra.

About 1550 Palladio had reached a critical point in his villa work. The

Villa Sarego at Santa Sofia



attractions of Serlio had paled, the castello tradition had at last lost fashion. For practical reasons, the peristylar villa offered no general solution. Hitherto, he had relied more or less upon quotation and variation – a typical mannerist attitude to creation. The Romans, Serlio, Falconetto had all supplied inspiration to the villas, Sanmicheli and Giulio Romano to the mansions. There is no doubt that he had successfully assimilated their teachings and achieved highly independent results.

Now came a turning. In 1550 Daniele Barbaro returned to Venice from an embassy to England. This most learned humanist was engaged on a fresh translation of Vitruvius and, probably soon after his homecoming, he sought contact with an architect who might give advice on practical matters and prepare illustrations for the new work. He found such a co-operator in Palladio and during the following ten years the two clearly exchanged thoughts almost constantly – the more so since Barbaro planned to build a villa for himself and his brother Marcantonio³².

The Vitruvius translation, illustrated mainly by Palladio and with a penetrating commentary by Barbaro, was published in 1556. At about the same time work started on the Villa Barbaro at Masér, which must have been completed not later than 1560.

Not only did Palladio now study Vitruvius in a more intensive and scientific manner than previously, he also acquired a different attitude to the architect's work of creation in general. Barbaro adhered to the philosophical school of Padua which endeavoured to reconcile certain Platonic features with a basically Aristotelian attitude. To Barbaro – and hence subsequently to Palladio – architecture was a noble science that could be mastered only by study and practical experience. Beauty in architecture was not due to details that could be imitated from prototypes, but to eternal laws, i. e. proportions. The architect should imitate nothing but nature:

Since architecture, as all the other arts, imitates nature, it cannot tolerate anything which is removed from and foreign to the demands of nature³³.

This was not meant to imply any sort of naturalism, e. g. that the architect should design columns like tree-trunks or halls like grottoes; quite the contrary, nature is simple in all her manifestations and so should be the creations of the architect. They will thus come to liken the creations of nature. The proportions, whose rules are present in the well-proportioned body of man, require that a building shall resemble a healthy, well-formed body.

This precept allows no room for imitations, at least in theory. The eternal laws are always applicable and always require fresh application. In practice, however, the study of the architecture of Antiquity was inevitable since both Greeks and Romans had, of course, been aware of the proportions and had employed them in their architecture. Thus Vitruvius could be a valuable source for modern architecture. In his texts, the eternal proportions and the obedience of architecture to nature were clearly expressed. At the same time, the relics of classical architecture acquired a new significance: the

mere imitation of their forms had become meaningless; instead, one must unearth the rules and principles which they embodied and apply these to completely fresh architectural tasks. The Roman *thermae*, for example, could not be recreated in modern times, but by studying the disposition of their rooms and their symmetry one might detect laws which could be applied to completely different types of architecture. History had much to teach, then. The architect must be at one and the same time something of an architectural historian and a theoretician. On the other hand, however, Aristotelian philosophy considered that the trend of history was towards ever-greater perfection, and this belief was opposed to a purely retrospective, classical attitude.

Before the material finds a form and thereby becomes real there must exist a clear concept of the aim in the mind of the executive, i. e. the architect. According to Aristotle and Daniele Barbaro it is the aim, that which is not yet realized, that guides creation – not any model that is already in existence.

In the beginning, the aim always precedes the execution, since it is the aim that is the reason for the work,

says Barbaro; and elsewhere:

If one is to build, it is necessary to be aware of the aim . . . but knowledge of the aim requires study and reflection.

All this may sound rather abstract, but there is no doubting that the architectural attitudes held by Barbaro gave Palladio new insights and contributed to the change of character which his architecture underwent after 1550 – indeed, it was not until then that it truly acquired the characteristics that for centuries to come would make it seem immutably significant, above all passing changes of style. Only superficially did his villas and mansions become more classical in appearance. In truth, it is not the porticoes or the other classical features that are decisive. One must “read between the columns,” so to speak, and appreciate the proportions and harmonies that found expression in his buildings. But one must also realize that these new villas embodied highly concrete requirements, those of the Venetian nobility. Therefore they were not imitations of classical villas but represented the accumulation, in the fully Aristotelian sense, of experience since the days of Antiquity towards the aim: the humanistic villa, a new and hitherto unachieved form.

During but a few years after 1550 Palladio designed his most characteristic portico villas, all of which are variants of a single type: Villa Badoer at Fratta-Polesine, Foscari at Malcontenta, Pisani at Montagnana, Valmarana at Lisiera, Emo at Fanzolo and Barbaro at Masér. To say that these houses are all of one type does not imply that they were identical in external appearance, still less that Palladio repeated himself. Quite the contrary, he has conceived each commission as an individual, fresh task and has allowed his work to be inspired in each case by the specific requirements

and location of the projected house. He has now overcome the isolation of the house that typified his villini, and sought to give a firm place to the principal building in a system of ancillary buildings, gardens and landscape. He did not, however, conform to the style of garden planning that was contemporary throughout central Italy, and which involved the exclusion of nature in favour of an architectural garden behind walls, where porticoes, canals, fountains and statuary dominated the natural growth. Palladio's clients were also farmers and did not wish to place their lands at a distance, but preferred to have a view over widely extended fields. For this reason, Palladio's groupings never form enclosed courts. Le barchesse, now combined most effectively with the villa proper, extend their arms towards a garden in which sculptural accents are relatively sparing and towards great views of a cultivated landscape.

Even where outbuildings are lacking, we must assume that they were planned or once existed, since all of Palladio's villas were of the villa rustica type, with the exception of La Rotonda, which he expressly dealt with among town palaces in his Secondo Libro, ("... because of its proximity to the town, wherefore one might say that it virtually lies in town ..."); and of Pisani at Montagnana, which lies immediately beyond the old walls of the town and lacks all trace of farm buildings, so that it must be classified as a villa suburbana.

To examine any one Palladio villa is to seek the key to them all: The Villa Foscari at Malcontenta is particularly suitable as a subject of research since it is in such a well-preserved condition and since the thoughts of the architect have found such complete and happy expression in this work³⁴.

Villa Foscari at Malcontenta: the architecture of Palladio

Anyone approaching the Villa Foscari nowadays on the road from Venice or from Padua will find that the building is largely hidden behind great willows. The Brenta Canal flows sluggishly past, making the house seem inaccessible. A detour through the little village of Malcontenta and over a bridge is necessary before one can reach the house from the garden side. It is difficult to obtain a proper view of the main front, with its great portico. The villa seems withdrawn, private and rather melancholy in its isolation, whilst the new industrial development west of Mestre creeps ever nearer, with its noise and ugliness.

p. 49

The situation was quite different in the 16th century. The Brenta was then a busy waterway along which the Venetian signori travelled by boat to and from their country estates and villas. The Villa Foscari was not hidden by trees, but appeared in all its impressive dignity before the admiring gaze of travellers. Palladio had drawn a wall which would extend the line of the facade and thus form a backdrop to the small area between the house and the canal bank. The wall was to have a scalloped crown with bosses — a motif that occurs frequently in the Veneto, on the walls at the Villa Badoer, for example. Sansovino used it at Villa Garzoni, too. At Malcontenta, the portico and steps would project before the wall and thus their magnificence would be heightened.

p. 52—53

A print from the 18th century suggests that this wall was in fact built. To the left of the house one can discern a stretch of wall with a small gate, roughly in accordance with Palladio's drawings. Further to the left there are farm buildings or workers' cottages, and these, like the little chapel to the right of the house, must be of later date. However, all these additions are now totally gone. Gone too, are the retaining wall and landing place (reminiscent of that of Venetian palaces) at the water's edge. Of one thing we may be sure: originally the villa gave a much more inviting and urban impression. The near-environment alongside the canal was arranged architecturally in palazzo fashion and the rural environment began only on the other side of the house, the garden side.

From the drawing in Palladio's Secondo Libro we can also see that the dormer was linked with the attic storey by volutes, that three figures in classical poses topped the pediment, and that the tympanum was decorated with the Foscari arms.

All this must have helped to brighten up the appearance of the villa, compared with its present aspect, and it is necessary for us to use our imagination to supplement what we now see, if we are to appreciate the true character of the building.

If we make this effort, we realize all the more strongly the kinship of this

villa with Venetian palace architecture. The Brenta was, one might say, an extension of the Grand Canal and the majority of the villas on the Brenta had a major front towards the water. This is why the principal front of the Villa Foscari, with its dominating portico, is turned towards the canal — to the north, instead of to the south as prescribed by Alberti. This is why the villa lies so close to the water and not in select isolation at the far end of a garden.

p. 54—55

Palladio has raised the house on a high base of 11 feet, more than twice the height of 5 ft which he himself, following Serlio, had decreed as the rule. This may be due to subsurface conditions: it may not have been practical to extend the utility areas too deeply below ground. But it might also be that a palatial exterior was intended. The latest palazzi beside the Grand Canal, such as Sansovino's Palazzo Corner, had a high base storey to accommodate utility spaces. Whatever the reason, the arrangement confers magnificence on the house, at the same time as the angled steps extending towards the guest seem to invite him to ascend to the piano nobile.

p. 64

From the spacious portico, whose intercolumniation seems just right to avoid oppression while giving the sensation of an enclosed space, one looks back towards the river bank. Then one steps through the stately portal, directly into the main hall. It is well lighted: at the far end, three tall windows at normal height and a triple-lighted thermal window above let in a flood of light. It is easy to study the paintings on walls and ceiling, once brilliant with colour. Unlike most of Palladio's villas, the principal hall at Malcontenta has no direct access to the garden. It stands too high above the ground: a direct exit would have necessitated another freestanding stairway and would surely have seemed monotonous, both as a pattern of movement through the house and in the external elevation. As it is, one has to pause and then pass on, either to the suites flanking the hall, or down one of the relatively narrow staircases at the south side and thus to the garden.

p. 56

The first view of the garden elevation gives a completely different impression to that gained on the canal side. They hardly seem to belong to the same house. This is intentional to some extent. The house does have two faces: one palatial, turned towards the traffic artery, and another of more rustic character, turned towards the countryside. But time has over-accentuated the differences. To the north, on the canal side, the stucco is severely eroded. The rustication is no longer distinct, the tone is greyer. On the south front the stucco patterning is better defined and the light colour persists. One soon notices, moreover, that the decorative elements of the canal elevation are exactly repeated in the garden elevation: base, piano nobile and attic storey are expressed with equal clarity.

The cornice runs round the whole house and makes a pediment over the loggia as well as over the opposite front,

notes the architect himself in his brief description of the villa in his *Secondo Libro*. The Ionic order of the principal elevation is matched on the garden

side by the monumental window, the form of which has been loaned from the Roman *thermae*. It invades the *tympa-num* – a liberty that could hardly be imagined in a city setting but, as Alberti had already stated, “the gayest and most licentious embellishments are allowable” in the country.

It is most probable that this impression of freedom and ease was originally even more tangible. An observation that only recently has been introduced to the debate on Palladio seems to prove that the columns and the cornice, and possibly also a moulding at the base, were originally not stuccoed but fairface brick³⁵. The portico columns have the usual stone bases and capitals, while the shafts are of red brick. In such cases the shaft is usually made with no great care and slightly more slender than the base and the capital. The result then is that the stucco finds a better key on the rough surface, and the final thickness is correct for base, shaft and capital. But at the Villa Foscari the column shafts were made with great care and their thickness is exactly the same as the bases'. No allowance was made for the thickness of the present stucco and this extends over the base like a jacket. To provide a key for the stucco it was necessary to roughen the brickwork. It is of course hard to say when this was done, but it seems plausible that the original intention was to leave the columns in natural colour, i. e. red. Similar intentions seem likely as regards the base of the house. It is topped by four courses of exactly profiled and carefully laid bricks, whereas above and below the moulding the wall is roughly made – since, after all, it was to be concealed by stucco.

If it is true that portions of the exterior were to be in plain brick, i. e. the actual structural material of the house, then this was surely not an expression of feeling for “genuine” materials or any such idea, but aimed at accenting the elevations with colour. After all, colourful architecture was traditional in Venice; and it throws entirely new light on Palladio's intentions. To accept that this villa should appear in two-tone guise runs counter to all our preconceived notions about Palladio's architecture, but perhaps we must allow that, as a Venetian, he was capable of using richer differentiation of colour than we consider compatible with a classic spirit.

Nowadays it is impossible for us to form an accurate picture of the original garden. The present arrangements were made in the 'twenties by the last owner of the villa, Mr A C Landsberg (d. 1965), whose dedicated restoration work saved the house for posterity. Villa Foscari may have functioned primarily as a villa suburbana, but it was presumably self-supporting at least and must have had a garden and annex. A still-existing Tuscan portal of brick with wooden architrave, possibly 16th century, may mark the south-east limit of the original grounds. The present utility buildings to the west were given their form later and further study would be necessary to determine what portions from the 16th century they may include.

The exact years in which the Villa Foscari was designed and its construction commenced have not been determined so far. The frescoes were in hand in 1561. This was the year in which Battista Franco died after having started – according to Palladio's own testimony in the *Secondo Libro* – the paint-

ings in one of the side rooms. Thus it is agreed that the house must have been commenced some time during the latter part of the 1550s. The layout is related to that of other villas of that period: two suites of three rooms each and two staircases, arranged on opposing sides of a main hall. The basic module is, again, a square of 16-foot side. The same 16-foot square constitutes the key for the roughly contemporary villas Badoer, Emo and Pisani at Montagnana. Two rooms in each suite have a dimension in common with the basic square. The shorter side of the largest rooms, to the north, is 16 ft, the longer side measuring 24 ft, i. e. the proportions are 2:3. The smaller rooms to the south have the dimensions 16 ft × 12 ft, i. e. the proportions are 3:4.

The next step was to adapt the dimensions of the hall to those of the suites. If the entrance side of the hall was given the basic dimension, 16 ft, then its other dimensions resulted from simple arithmetical calculations. The total width of the house must be $24 + 16 + 24$ ft. The square rooms in the centre of each suite measured $16 + 16 = 32$ ft. The hall transept must therefore measure $64 - 32 = 32$ ft. The length of the hall from front to rear cannot be an exact element in these calculations. Strictly speaking it should measure $16 + 16 + 12 = 44$ ft but due to the thickness of the walls between the rooms of the suites and the slight projection of the garden facade it is, according to the *Secondo Libro*, $46\frac{1}{2}$ ft.

So far we have established that all interior spaces (except for the stairs and the length of the main hall) are integrated according to the proportions 1 : 2 : 3 : 4 or, expressed in musical terms, they are harmonized as key tone, fourth, fifth and octave. This proportional integration is detectable – as Wittkower³⁶ has demonstrated – in the plan of the portico as well. The column interspaces are $4 \times 4\frac{1}{2} + 6$ ft = 24 ft. If we add to this the diameters of the six columns, $6 \times 2 = 12$ ft, then the full width of the portico becomes $24 + 12 = 36$ ft. According to the *Secondo Libro*, its depth is 12 ft – i. e. the ratio of depth to width is 1:3. Moreover the ratio between the ordinary intercolumniation ($4\frac{1}{2}$ ft) and the central intercolumniation (6 ft) is 3:4. The ratio 1:2 also appears in the plan of the portico, expressing the relationship between the central intercolumniation (6 ft) and the depth of the portico (12 ft). Thus from the moment he enters the portico the visitor encounters the progression 1 : 2 : 3 : 4, which will also be met inside the house.

The application of proportions does not stop at the two-dimensional layout. It also determines three-dimensional space. The major rooms have vaulted ceilings, the height of which is determined in accordance with the “1st Rule” in Palladio’s *Primo Libro*, Chapter 23. Here Palladio postulates three rules for determining the height of rooms. The height must bear an arithmetic, geometric or harmonic relationship to the length and breadth of the room. The first, the arithmetic proportion, is the simplest. The height is found by adding length and breadth and dividing the total by 2. The largest, rectangular room at the north end would thus have had a height of $(16 + 24) : 2 = 20$ ft. According to Palladio’s own description, the hall has

a semi-circular vaulted ceiling and walls of a height equal to the width of the room, i. e. 16 ft. Accordingly the total height from floor to crown would be $16 + 8 = 24$ ft.

The above dimensions have been extracted from the woodcut of the villa in the *Secondo Libro*. Palladio's original drawing, which he presumably had at hand when he prepared the sketch for the wood engraver, no longer exists. The dimensions in the *Secondo Libro* correspond with Palladio's intentions, but we cannot be sure that they correspond with reality. On the contrary, measurements of Palladio's buildings taken hitherto, while only sporadic as yet, reveal that there are quite considerable differences between the figures in the *Secondo Libro* and the actual proportions. However, Bertotti-Scamozzi has already noted that the true dimensions of the Villa Foscari agree more closely with the figures in the *Secondo Libro* than is usually the case. It is therefore very interesting to be able to compare Palladio's dimensions with Bertotti's and with the true dimensions. This was made possible through measurements taken by students at the Department of Architecture at the Royal Academy of Fine Arts in Stockholm in 1962. The results are shown in the following table, prepared by the architects Ove Hidemark and Göran Månsson.

	Palladio's dimensions 1570	Bertotti's dimensions 1776	1962 measurements		
	Palladio's feet (1 ft = 0.347 m)	18th cent. feet (1 ft = 0.357 m)	conv. to Palladio's feet	Metric (cm)	conv. to Palladio's feet
Side of square rooms	16'0"	15'8"	16'1"	560	16'1"
Length of north rooms	24'0"	23'2"	23'10"	827	23'10"
Width of north rooms	(16'0")	15'8"	16'1"	560	16'1"
Length of south rooms	16'0"	15'8"	16'1"	560	16'1"
Width of south rooms	12'0"	9'9"	10'0"	344	9'11"
Length of hall	46'6"	45'0"	46'4"	1 609	46'4"
Width of hall	32'0"	30'8"	31'7"	1 096	31'7"
Depth of portico	12'0"	11'9"	12'1"	420	12'1"
Width of portico	32'0"	31'3"	32'2"	1 110	32'0"
Diam. of columns	2'0"	2'0"	2'1"	69	2'0"
Intercolumniation, centre	6'0"	5'8 ³ / ₄ "	5'11"	209	6'0"
Intercolumniation, sides	4'6"	4'4 ¹ / ₂ "	4'6"	157	4'6"
Height of hall	(24'0")	23'4"	24'0"	833	24'0"
Height of north rooms	(20'0")			730	21'0"
Height of south rooms	(13'0")			442	12'9"
Height of ground storey	11'0"	11'8 ³ / ₄ "	12'1"	418	12'1"
Height of attic storey	8'9"	8'3 ¹ / ₂ "	8'6"	302	8'8"
Height of columns	18'6"	17'11"	18'5"	638	18'5"
Height of entablature	3'8"	3'9"	3'10"	131	3'9"

p. 49 Column 1 shows the dimensions as **comprised in the woodcut in the** Secondo Libro or (bracketed) dimensions **easily deduced from these.**

p. 71 Column 2 contains the dimensions according to 'Le fabbriche e i disegni di Andrea Palladio raccolti da Ottavia Bertotti-Scamozzi', Vicenza, 1776–83. The 18th-century foot was somewhat longer than Palladio's unit and therefore Bertotti's measurements have been converted (in column 3) to permit comparison with Palladio's as given in the Secondo Libro. In column 4 we see the 1962 measurements in metric units and in column 5 their conversion to Palladio's feet. Hence columns 1, 3 and 5 are directly comparable. Of greatest interest to us are the first and last columns, which permit us to state that Villa Foscari was built with astonishing exactitude. Most of the dimensions agree to within a few inches. In a few cases where the deviation is greater – a foot or more – it is not a question of inexactitude but of intentional modification. The table also increases our faith in Bertotti-Scamozzi, whose dependability has not hitherto been subjected to any real test. His measurements agree almost exactly with the modern series. On the other hand, it must be admitted that minor deviations from the intelligible harmonies do occur and that certain figures simply do not fit with any harmonic proportion. An example is the length of the hall, 46 $\frac{1}{2}$ ft. Were the harmonies spoiled thereby? That is to say, did not the least deviation imply a disharmony which an experienced observer would notice and be pained by, just as would a listener to music by a discord? One might expect so, if one recalled Palladio's own words:

The proportions of the voices are harmonies for the ears, likewise those of the measurements are harmonies for our eyes. Such harmonies usually please very much without anyone knowing why, excepting those who penetrate the reason of this matter³⁷.

The question of whether the eye reacts to proportions in the same way as the ear to harmonies has long been answered in the negative. Doubt was expressed as early as the 17th century and the matter greatly exercised the French Academy of Architecture. Modern perception studies confirm that areas and spaces with proportions according to the harmonic series are not in the least preferred to areas and spaces with proportions corresponding to irrational numbers. All that matters is that the proportions should be significant – i. e., indicate clearly whether a room is circular or oval, square or rectangular, etc.

Palladio and his contemporaries were surely not so naive as to believe that the least little impurity in the proportions could cause the eye to react. Notwithstanding this, however, the figures marked by Palladio in his reproductions of buildings in the Secondo Libro were far from being idle play with numbers. Like all Renaissance architects, he believed in the absolute truth and divine origin of the proportions and thought that they guaranteed the participation of his buildings in the harmony of creation, that they were a part of nature. But they were an **element** of design rather than of the finished house. His concept of the future

building was embodied in the drawing he presented and thus, as a creative artist, he had fulfilled his responsibilities towards God and his client. Since he was also a conscientious builder he also endeavoured to ensure that the proportions were observed as far as possible. But it is clear that he was not particularly irritated by the occasional lack of exactitude. The idea was there: if in practice the harmonies were not quite pure, this could not be detected with the naked eye.

The Villa Foscari gives an impression of harmony, even to the modern observer, for whom the word "harmony" in the architectural context is merely a vague analogy, a feeling produced more or less through intuition and experienced with corresponding vagueness. Consider the beautiful portico, for example, where one senses that the columns are just the right thickness, that the spacing between them is just what one would wish. To alter either the one or the other would probably disturb the restful balance that now prevails. Perhaps Palladio simply had an inborn instinct for good proportions? Surely, but he did not trust to that as might a modern architect. The Ionic portico is actually drawn according to all the rules of the art. Palladio has used eternal laws of beauty which coincide in a remarkable way with our intuitive concept of beauty.

He chose the Ionic order for his portico firstly because it is the intermediate of the three classical orders, as far from Doric sparseness as from Corinthian pomp³⁸. Although his public buildings may sometimes be Doric, and his palaces and churches most often Corinthian, it seemed to him that the intermediate, moderate order was best suited to a house in the country. Furthermore, following Vitruvius, he distinguished five main intercolumniation ratios. Vitruvius had already linked the diameter of columns with the spacing between them: slender columns must be spaced more closely, thicker columns more widely, thereby achieving that impression of stability that is so pleasurable to eye and mind. Palladio systematized these theories in his Primo Libro and discovered that there must be an identity between the middle of the five intercolumniations – $2\frac{1}{4}$ diameters – and the intermediate order, the Ionic. An intercolumniation of $2\frac{1}{4}$ diameters is

the most beautiful and pleasing type of intercolumniation and was termed eustylos by Vitruvius.

If the diameter of the columns – and similarly the basic module for the whole building – is 2 ft then the intercolumniation must be $4\frac{1}{2}$ ft. Since the Ionic column must have a height of 9 modules including base and capital, then its height will be 18 ft. All these dimensions are reproduced exactly in the portico of the Villa Foscari which is therefore an example of the Ionic 'eustylos'. The same is true of the porticoes of other Palladian villas (Badoera, Rotonda) and it is therefore not a matter of chance or of sentiment. Palladio did actually observe classical laws; or, more correctly, he identified his own sense of proportion with that of Antiquity and consequently was able to express "objective beauty".

In the Villa Foscari the antique portico villa was resurrected, but only as a

type. The external resemblance to the classical villa, as Palladio might have seen it in Roman landscape painting, is fairly slight. The pediment on Palladio's villa is an innovation which cannot be explained by influences from the days of Antiquity or previous Renaissance villas. It is true that an open colonnade with a tympanum was already featured on the Villa Poggio a Caiano, but there the loggia was simply an opening in part of the building. It lacked any intrinsic monumentality. The tympanum is placed like a decorative feature above the colonnade. The column spacing is very wide, lacking the delightful harmony which distinguishes Palladio's eustylos. The garden elevation of Giulio Romano's Palazzo del Té has been cited as another forerunner of the pedimented colonnade. But since the publication of Jacopo Strada's drawings of the elevations of the Palazzo del Té, made in 1567, we know that the garden elevation at Mantua originally featured a triumphal arch motif with attic storey, but no tympanum whatsoever³⁹. This has been added during an extensive restoration in the 18th century and is, therefore, a Palladian reinterpretation of Giulio's architecture!

Palladio sought sanctions in history for his concept of the pediment as the symbol of dignity in a patrician dwelling. In his *Secondo Libro* he says:

To all my houses in the country and even a few in the town I have given a frontispiece on the side where the main entrance is located since these frontispieces indicate where the entrance to the house may be found and make the building appear larger and more magnificent. In that the front elevation is higher than the others. Furthermore they are particularly suitable as a place for the coat of arms of the owner, which it is customary to show on the facade. During Antiquity it was also common to have a frontispiece to buildings, as one sees from the remains of temples and other public buildings, to which — as I have stated in the foreword to my First Book — ideas and proportions were probably derived from private architecture, i. e. dwelling houses. In the last chapter of his Third Book, Vitruvius teaches us how they should be made.

Palladio probably discussed this problem with his friend Barbaro. In the Vitruvius translation, VI:1, there is a reproduction of an elevation of a house with a solid wall fronted by a portico comprising Corinthian columns and a pediment. Vitruvius left no detailed information as to the proper appearance of the elevations of palaces or villas, the Barbaro/Palladio reproduction being a hypothetical reconstruction. Primarily it is a product of the architect's creative imagination, since some of the villini sketches of about 1540 already show facade porticoes, before Palladio attempted the Vitruvius reconstruction. In other words: he wished to have a monumental portico as a front to his villas and therefore he invented a classical precedent. This is typical of all his "classicism", which is not imitative but creative. Villa Foscari looks like a Roman villa might have looked, but it has no precedent in Antiquity. The existence of a portico in the facade at the Brenta may, at the same time, be taken as a new, adapted edition of the arcades of the Venetian palaces on the Grand Canal. Thus are tradition and innovation united in his work.

Somewhat similar comments are occasioned by the main hall. It forms the central axis of the layout in the same way as the long-established portego of the Venetian house. But it may also be related to the atrium of the classical house, from which all the surrounding rooms were accessible. This vaulted hall owes its monumental form, however, to the studies of Palladio in the Roman thermae. Similar halls occur in the innumerable attempts to reconstruct Roman baths that appear in his drawings; together with, of course, the characteristic semicircular, three-lighted window which has derived its name, thermal window, from this source.

Here, then, there exists an identification of domestic tradition with classical theory and practice which is deserving of a better term than "classicism". Palladio is a "classicist", in the general meaning of the word, only in his detailing. The Ionic capitals in the portico at the Villa Foscari agree with remarkable accuracy with the capitals which Palladio later published, as worthy of emulation, in his *Primo Libro*. The manuscript of this first part⁴⁰, which deals mainly with the orders and their ornamentation, must have been finished not later than 1556. The masons who sculptured the capitals for the Villa Foscari most likely had Palladio's drawings to hand and followed them fairly faithfully. This seems to indicate that Palladio personally supervised the building of the villa and ensured that, even in the details, his intentions were followed. However, he has not told us where among the ruins of Antiquity he found inspiration to the characteristic Ionic capitals, with their bay leaf motif.

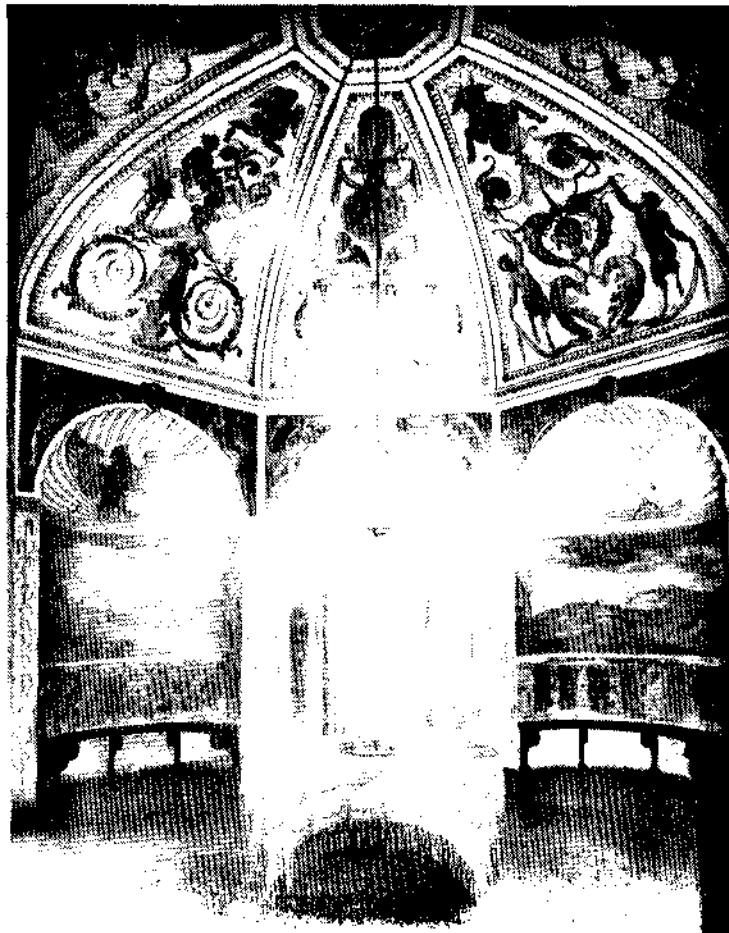
In its broad concept, as well as in its details, the form of this villa is symbolic of the intentions and ambitions of the architect and his clients, and indeed of the intellectual climate of the period in general. The clients, Niccolò and Luigi Foscari, were of an old and honoured noble family. Their attitudes, however, were not identical with those of the Roman patricians. The style of life of the Venetians was never princely or extravagant. It was closer to the ideal of the Roman Republic — in all things moderation — and did not make an excessive show of riches. Compared with Roman palaces, the Venetian palazzi were small and simple. They never occupied as much as a full block, but stood in closely-spaced rows. The aim was not so much to stand out from, or excel at the expense of, one's neighbours; but rather to demonstrate identity with a particular class in society. In Venice, traditionalism betrayed not a lack of imagination but a dynamic social and political factor. This was undermined to some extent by the Renaissance — when the more individually designed palaces arose by the Grand Canal, the work of non-Venetian architects — but the principle of equality was never quite abandoned by the Venetian signori. Perhaps this explains why there was such a preference for established custom, in ceremony as in living. Palladian villas were built in the Veneto during two hundred years: clearly Palladio had invented a new type of rural dwelling that was in sympathy with a way of living and corresponded to a required standard. The humanistic aspirations within the Serenissima were also moderate. The Venetians hardly contributed to the advancement of humanism in the

same way as the Florentines or the Romans; and they were less affected by Mannerism than their contemporaries on the mainland. For Venice, the inspirational spring of Antiquity did not signify a rediscovery of her own inheritance, since Venice was the one great city of Italy that had not been founded by the Ancient Romans and whose townscape incorporated no classical ruins whatsoever. Politically and culturally, the Venetians were "self-made men". When, at a somewhat late date, they adopted certain classical attitudes it was on a relatively theoretical basis. It is certainly no coincidence that most books of architectural theory, from the first printed edition of Vitruvius in Latin and Italian to Palladio's Quattro Libri, were published in Venice. When the rest of Italy had already turned the classical inheritance upside down, people in the Veneto began to adapt it in a quite special way for residential architecture. The "classicism" of Palladio, contemporary as it is with the architecture of Michelangelo and Vasari, may seem to be a curious anachronism and has confounded historians of style. Within its limitations, however, the architectural concept of Palladio was as modern as that of his contemporaries elsewhere. The intellectual flavour of his work and theory has certainly something in common with Mannerism in other parts of Italy. His architectural-iconographic mode of thought – which we have seen evidenced in the Villa Foscari – agrees with the architectural approach of the Mannerists, such as Serlio and Vignola. Through the parallels he drew between Venetian national and classical principles, Palladio overcame the oppressive weight of Antiquity, just as Michelangelo did, though by different means. Thus Palladio attained a new architecture, in which objective beauty and subjective expression were united in a new style, that which Vasari had termed 'la terza maniera' and which possessed greater 'grazia' than Antiquity itself had been able to achieve. The function that Villa Foscari served during the late 16th century and the following centuries remains to be ascertained. In the beginning, at any rate, agricultural considerations would not seem to have dominated. The noble Canal front on its high socle and the size of the hall indicate that the villa was used by the Foscari family as a resort for humanistic recreation and receptions. In 1573 the French King Henry III was received here on his homeward journey from Venice to Paris.

Villa Foscari: the decorative features

The dignity and beauty of Villa Foscari was accentuated – as with all the Veneto villas – by the mural decorations in all the representative rooms on the principal storey, just as in the houses of the Ancients. The preference for painted walls, instead of tapestries or panelling, might be regarded as a Venetian peculiarity, and as an expression of general delight in colour it is indeed Venetian. But fresco painting in the Veneto⁴¹ has virtually no relationship whatsoever to the art of Titian or Tintoretto, which flowered simultaneously in the city on the water. The great frescoes of the villas were inspired from the West. First one should mention Giulio Romano's murals in the Palazzo del Té and the Ducal Palace at Mantua, and also Romanino's work in Castel Buonconsiglio at Trento. Added to this was a Roman influence, from the Farnesina frescoes by Raphael and Peruzzi, and the decoration of the Villa Madama.

Alvise Cornaro's Odeo in Padua. Photo: Allnari, Florence



It would seem that Falconetto was the first to introduce a new and distinctive school of fresco painting in the Veneto. The octagonal hall in Alvise Cornaro's Odeo is decorated by four landscapes in niches framed by trompe-l'oeil pilasters and caryatids, with a balustrade. The eight segments of the cupola contain grotesques in the style of Agostino Veneziano. This decoration was carried out in the early 1530s by Falconetto and assistants. The epochmaking significance of this work for future villa decoration has not been sufficiently recognized hitherto. Here we have for the first time, albeit on a moderate scale and in relatively simple form, the three motifs which, a couple of decades later, were to dominate in all the villas of the Veneto – and which we find accordingly in the Villa Foscari. These motifs were: architecture, landscape and grotesques. Falconetto had derived his composition direct from Rome.

Few villa interiors were decorated in the Veneto during the 1540s. The next important work of confirmed date is in Sanmicheli's Villa Soranza at Castelfranco, from 1551. The villa was pulled down in the 19th century and only fragments of the decorations have been preserved in various collections. This was the first case of co-operation between the two masters who were to bring this form of art to its consummation: Paolo Veronese and Giovanni Battista Zelotti⁴². Both were very young, having been born in 1528 and 1526, respectively, but under the guidance of Sanmicheli (who Vasari says "loved them as his own sons") the two painters acquired an attitude to architecture which their colleagues in metropolitan Venice lacked. The motifs at the Villa Soranza were those we have already noted in Cornaro's Odeo, with the addition of allegorical figures and mythological scenes on a monumental scale. We may imagine that the well-preserved frescoes by Veronese in the Villa Barbaro at Masér, c. 1560, repeat the decorative system conceived a decade earlier at the Villa Soranza.

The figural element, which was absent at the Odeo Cornaro, had probably been introduced by Veronese and Zelotti from Mantua and Trento, perhaps also from Parma, where Correggio had used a similar scheme in the dome paintings of the cathedral, in 1526, and elsewhere. In the cathedral, the foreshortened figures float around Maria's ascension 'di sotto in sù', in much the same way as Veronese's and Zelotti's heathen gods on the villa ceilings. The two artists worked together on the Venetian mainland on further occasions during the first years of the 1550s. Their next important commission was the frescoes in the Villa Porto-Colleoni at Thiene, of which only Zelotti's work has survived. Subsequently their ways divided: Veronese moved finally to Venice in 1553 and worked only once again on villa decorations, in the Villa Barbaro at Masér. Zelotti remained on the Terraferma for the most part and was the most popular of fresco painters right up to his death in 1578. Villa decoration followed the prosperity of the building trade and a vast number of frescoes, by a variety of painters and of varying quality, were executed during the years 1550–1580.

According to Palladio's own testimony, the murals in the Villa Foscari were largely the work of Giambattista Zelotti, who achieved there some of the best results of which his talent was capable. For he was no genius. His figure painting adopts selected ingredients of Veronese's art and also reveals the influence of Michelangelo and Giulio Romano, with an occasional touch of Parmeggianino. His strength lies not in the artistic refinement of his painting, but in the decorative whole. In fact, Zelotti spans a broader decorative register – including putti, garlands, cartouches and other devices – than Veronese.

The mythological motifs at the Villa Foscari, which once attracted the greatest attention but now can be assessed only from pale fragments, have been described elsewhere. What is of interest in this context is the decorative system on walls and ceilings, which is an important ingredient in the total effect of the interiors and which must be considered part of the architecture of the villa.

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The walls in the main hall feature an Ionic order executed in yellowish-brown grisaille. The fluted half-columns have no pedestal, standing directly on a low base and extending right up to the moulding which separates wall and vault. This moulding – the only contribution of the architect's design to the articulation of the room – acts both as a frieze for the order and as a base for the figure paintings of the vault. The doors have painted surrounds in accordance with Palladio's rules:

The ornaments one uses for doors and windows are the architrave, the frieze and the cornice. The architrave surrounds the door opening⁴³.

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In the great Vitruvian door below the portico the architect had given an example of such an Ionic door, with tripartite architrave surround, frieze and cornice in plastic execution. In the interior of the house, Zelotti has endeavoured to follow the same classical rules when painting his door surrounds.

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Obviously, the great hall, with its painted Ionic order, was intended to be in harmony with the exterior of the house and the Ionic portico. Palladio cannot possibly have envisaged the walls of the hall as bare, with doors simply cut in the masonry without any form of moulding. He must have counted from the beginning on some form of architectural painting. He has himself drawn such architectural decorations in his reconstructions of the Roman Sala Corinthia and Sala Egittia, in his *Secondo Libro*, Chapters 9 and 10. There one may also find arched niches containing large figures. His original drawings for the two types of Roman halls were almost certainly made prior to 1556, i. e. contemporarily with his designs for the Villa Foscari. One could very well believe that, in view of Palladio's interest in the interiors of classical buildings, he would have given instructions or perhaps even drawings to Zelotti for the architectural decorations in the new villa.

In reality the decorations should have been moulded and the frescoes are therefore a substitute, but Palladio referred to them as "the most excellent paintings by Master Battista". So he must have been satisfied with them. A great deal of Zelotti's motifs are intentional imitations of three-dimensional ornament — not only on the walls but, above all, on the ceilings. A few years before, the Palazzo Thiene in Vicenza had been decorated⁴⁴.

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Alessandro Vittoria worked there from 1551 to 1553 as a plasterer. In the octagonal Sala dei Principi he had placed eight busts of emperors on brackets along the cornice, in front of shell niches. Similarly, Zelotti painted eight busts on the cornice in the main hall of the Villa Foscari. The entire ceiling decoration is an imitation of Vittoria's stuccowork, comprising oval and polygonal medallions and scroll cartouches.

Thus the decoration of the walls was inspired by Palladio's architecture and that of the vault by Alessandro Vittoria's stucco. It was not in Venice, but in Vicenza about 1550, in the circle of Palladio and Vittoria, that the decorative system arose which was to set the standard for interior work in most of the Veneto villas between 1550 and 1580. The work in the Palazzo Thiene, in particular, must have set the style.

The frescoes in the two suites at the Villa Foscari are in part better preserved than those in the main hall. The two large rooms to the north repeat the architectural decoration of the walls in the hall, but now transposed to the more elegant Corinthian order. An arch crowned by a tympanum has been introduced at the centre of each wall. The arch, which lacks impostes, enters into the tympanum, hollowing it out, as it were. This Mannerist feature can be traced to a drawing by Serlio and was very popular in the Veneto. Serlio maintained in his *Terzo Libro*, that he had discovered this archway form "between Foligno and Rome, off the main road", and it was, of course, antique. Veronese used it frequently, e. g. in the Villa Barbaro, and Zelotti used it in the somewhat earlier Villa Porto-Godi at Lonedo and in the Villa Emo at Fanzolo, which was contemporary with the Villa Foscari. The introduction of the non-classical arch interrupts

the balanced rhythm of the colonnade and the restful continuity of the architrave.

Furthermore, in each of the north rooms the artist has painted a door standing ajar, a trompe-l'oeil effect which appears in several of Palladio's villas, viz. Villa Porto-Godi (by Zelotti), Villa Barbaro (by Veronese) and Villa Caldogno (by Fasolo). In the doorway there is a figure of natural size apparently about to enter the room. In the north-east room at the Villa Foscari it is a servant with a tray, in the north-west a woman, presumably a lady-in-waiting. It is she who has been named 'La Malcontenta'.

She is said to represent a faithless wife who spent her life unhappily as a prisoner in the villa — a legend for which no basis has been found in reality.

The village near which the Villa Foscari lies was named Malcontenta long before the villa was built. The fact is that these painted doors and figures are stock motifs which were common to all the villa decorators and it is hardly likely that the figures were ever meant as portraits. In any case, people of rank would not have themselves portrayed in such a casual context. The open door motif has its origin in Roman mural decoration, but the route by which it reached the Veneto is not clear.

The decoration of the square rooms at the centre of each suite deviates from the system. The work in the west room is badly damaged, but it is possible to identify the traces of a painted pergola, and a landscape with figures. A group indulging in music has been removed from this room and is now in the Museo del Castelvecchio at Verona.

In the east room, the Fall of the Titans is represented on the walls. On the ceiling the Gods are grouped about Zeus. The ruins of buildings — collapsed columns and other rubble — are painted on the lower parts of the walls around the doors. The Fall of the Titans, which in both its motif and its technique differs clearly from the other decorations at the Villa Foscari, recalls at once the Palazzo del Té, where a couple of decades earlier Giulio Romano had used the same theme in a square room. As painting, the work at the Villa Foscari is considerably better than that at Mantua. The Titans have been ascribed to Battista Franco, of whom Palladio himself says, in his description of the villa, that he was

one of the great draughtsmen of our time, but after he had commenced one of the large rooms he suffered an untimely death and left his work unfinished.

Vasari devotes a whole 'vita' to Franco, noting that he had studied "drawings, paintings and sculpture" by Michelangelo. Franco had spent a long period in Rome and was there in 1541, when the Final Judgement was unveiled in the Sistine Chapel. Little research has been done on his work until now. The Fall of the Titans at the Villa Foscari indicates a clear link with the Final Judgement; it exhibits the same sense of tragedy and has none of the bizarre or grotesque features that characterize Giulio Romano's work at Mantua.

The decoration of the small rooms to the south is, again, quite different. In view of their lesser importance they do not feature an order; instead, the

walls are painted as marbled panels in the centre of which there are medallions bearing allegorical figures, painted in grisaille. The marbling may have been inspired by the Roman wall painting in the first Pompeiian style, or by Vitruvius, who in VII:5 says:

... the ancients who first used polished stucco began by imitating the variety and arrangement of marble inlay.

The doors are painted in conformity with the rules of Vitruvius and Palladio, cited earlier. The walls and ceiling are separated by a projecting moulding in the same way as in the main hall. The ceiling is of relatively complicated form, comprising six penetrating vaults and a sort of flattened dome, accentuated by an oval medallion. In one of the rooms the medallion contains Fama, in the other Chronos, executed in grisaille. Thus each ceiling comprises seven panels, each separated by a painted border, featuring a calligraphic woven pattern on a dark ground.

In both rooms the ceilings are filled with painted grotesques of good standard. Adjacent panels are arranged in mirrored symmetry, but apart from this there is a great diversity of motifs and wide variation. Taken individually, the motifs are not original, of course. They can be traced to Raphael's loggias in the Vatican, though Zelotti did not need to go there to copy them. By 1560 they were already common stock, not only in the Veneto and elsewhere in Italy, but even north of the Alps. Engravings by Agostino Veneziano, among others, contributed to the rapid spread of Raphael's grotesques. It is possible to date their appearance in the Veneto as not later than c. 1530, in the vaults of Falconetto's Odeo. By 1550, at least, we find them in the Palazzo Thiene at Vicenza, in Bernardino India's Sala dei Metamorfosi⁴⁵. The grotesques in Palladio's Villa Pojana also agree fairly closely with those in the Palazzo Thiene and are also the work of Bernardino India. Typical of the grotesques by this master is the relatively sparing distribution of the various motifs, leaving much of the pale, neutral background unoccupied. This is a consciously classical characteristic, compared with the great, densely filled grotesques of twenty years earlier, at the Odeo. Constantly recurring motifs include a tempietto, garlands, tenuous tendrils and ribbons, heavy volutes, trophies, shields, mascarons, scroll cartouches, cupids, satyrs, animals and caryatids.

It has been suggested that Zelotti might have had assistance in doing the grotesques at the Villa Foscari, although Palladio says nothing of this in his description. In the Villa Emo there are grotesques which have been assumed to be the work of Zelotti alone, though this is not quite certain either, and they are somewhat harder and lack imagination compared with those in the Villa Foscari. In view of the big areas which he had to fill, it would be quite reasonable for Zelotti to have called in a specialist to assist him with the grotesques in the small rooms, and in that case they ought to be attributed to Bernardino India.

Finally, these small rooms also contain landscapes, viz. in the semi-circular lunettes between the vault compartments. These landscapes are not indi-

vidual works of art, any more than the grotesques, and they do not represent identifiable scenes. Nor have they any relation to Giorgione's or Titian's lyrical or heroic landscapes, in either motif or execution. In fact, they are a revival of Roman landscape painting, with which the artists had become acquainted in the Roman grottoes. The motifs to be included in such landscapes al fresco were also described by Vitruvius, VII:5:

Harbours, headlands, shores, rivers, springs, straits, temples, groves, hills, cattle, shepherds.

Thus water and rocky scenery were to be included in one and the same view, with a pastoral foreground. These are actually the motifs which we find in the semi-circular landscapes at the Villa Foscari, and in many other Veneto villas of that date. There can be no doubt that all these landscapes trace their inspiration to Rome and Vitruvius' writings. It is not so easy to say how they came to the Veneto. The earliest examples of Vitruvian landscape painting are the four scenes in Falconetto's Odeo, c. 1530. In 1557 Zelotti painted similar landscapes on the walls of the Stanza delle Stagione in the Villa Porto-Godi. About 1560 Veronese executed his famous landscapes in the Villa Barbaro, probably after his trip to Rome, and there one can detect a more immediate influence from the semi-impressionist technique of Pompeiian landscape painting.

The two small rooms at the Villa Foscari are thus what were termed "Pompeiiian rooms" in the early 19th century — a complete reconstruction of the wall decoration of classical times, more precisely a combination of the first and third Pompeiian styles.

The architecture of the villa reveals similar reconstructive aims, as we have seen, and ultimately it becomes clear that this villa, its form and flavour, must be regarded as a manifestation to a high degree of the Roman villa concept. Reconstruction approaches imitation in the smallest rooms, the Pompeiian. But if we consider the large rooms and the villa as a whole, then there is no imitation, but original creation. Palladio and his assistants have not searched in the past, but looked ahead. They have aimed at creating a house which was suited to the way of living and social status of the contemporary aristocracy; and as long as there existed in the Western World any form of educated and well-situated aristocracy, with agricultural interest, whether in England, Holland, Scandinavia, Russia or America, then it built villas which have often been called Palladian. In one way or another, they resemble their forerunners in the Veneto, of which perhaps the most noble exponent is the Villa Foscari.

Notes

1. Cf. excavation reports and reconstructions in Karl Lehmann-Hartleben, *Baugeschichtliche Untersuchungen am Stadtrand von Pompeji*, Berlin and Leipzig, 1936.
2. Illustrations in M Rostowzew, *Die hellenistisch-römische Architekturlandschaft*, Rome, 1911.
3. Karl M Swoboda, *Römische und romanische Paläste*, 2nd ed., Vienna, 1924. Here Diocletianus' palace at Spalato is also shown, reconstructed as a portico villa with terminal risalti (Plate VI).
4. This and subsequent quotations from Vitruvius are ex Frank Granger, *Vitruvius on Architecture*, London, 1956.
5. Armin Tuulse, *Burgen des Abendlandes*, Vienna and Munich, 1958, p. 21.
6. Swoboda, *op.cit.* p. 199.
7. Regarding the villa ideal and its history from Antiquity to the Renaissance, cf. the basic work of Bernhard Rupprecht: *Villa. Zur Geschichte eines Ideals*, in *Probleme der Kunstwissenschaft II*, Berlin, 1966, p. 210 et seq.
8. Giuseppe Mazzotti, *Ville Venete*, Rome, 1958, p. 33 et seq. The loggia in front of Petrarca's house was not added until the 16th century, in order to render it more villalike.
9. Mazzotti, *op. cit.*
10. Torgil Magnusson, *Studies in Roman Quattrocento Architecture*, Rome, 1958 — special chapter on "Topographical aspects and urban development".
11. James S Ackerman, *Sources of the Renaissance Villa*, in *Studies in Western Art II*, Acts of the 20th International Congress of the History of Art, Princeton, 1963, p. 6 et seq.
12. Alberti is quoted from Leoni's English translation of 1726, reprinted in London, 1955.
13. Isa Belli Barsali, *La Villa a Lucca dal XV al XIX Secolo*, Rome, 1964, p. 28 et seq.
14. C L Frommel, *Die Farnesina und Perruzzis architektonisches Frühwerk*, Berlin, 1961, p. 86 et seq. and Bargellini — du Prey, *Sources for a reconstruction of the Villa Medici, Fiesole*, in *Burlington Magazine* 1969, p. 597 et seq.
15. James S Ackerman, *The Cortile del Belvedere*, Rome, 1964. Within the framework of Bramante's project, the author deals also with its preceding history and thus the Villa Belvedere.
16. Letter quoted in extenso by Ackerman, *op. cit.* p. 144 et seq.
17. Sven Sandström, *The programme for the decoration of the Belvedere of Innocent VIII*, in *Konsthistorisk Tidskrift* 1960, p. 35 et seq.
18. This connection has been pointed out by P G Hamberg, *The Villa of Lorenzo il Magnifico at Poggio a Caiano and the Origin of Palladianism*, in *Figura*, New Series I, Uppsala, 1959, p. 76 et seq.
19. *I Quattro Libri dell'Architettura di Andrea Palladio*, Venice, 1570, Secondo Libro, Chap. 2.
20. André Chastel, *Art et Humanisme à Florence au temps de Laurent le Magnifique*, Paris, 1961, p. 148 et seq.
21. Frommel, *op. cit.* p. 90 et seq.
22. Illustration in James Ackerman, *Palladio's Villas*, New York, 1967, fig. 17. The introduction to this book comprises important comments on the history of the villa, especially in the Veneto.
23. Giuseppe Fiocco, *Alvise Cornaro, il suo tempo e le sue opere*, Vicenza, 1965, p. 82 et seq. In Reinhard Bentmann/Michael Müller, *Die Villa als Herrschaftsarchitektur. Versuch einer kunst- und sozialgeschichtlichen Analyse*, Frankfurt, 1970, the philosophy and the achievements of Alvise Cornaro and other Venetian nobles are denounced as ideology typical of early capitalism, whilst Palladio's architecture is characterized as "means to ideological repression" and thus deeply "unhuman". See review by Erik Forssman in *Architectura*, vol. I, München, 1971.
24. Fiocco, *op.cit.* fig. 45.

25. Erik Forssman, Falconetto e Palladio, in *Bollettino del Centro internazionale di studi di architettura Andrea Palladio*, VIII 1966, p. 52 et seq.
26. See inter alia Marco Rosci, *Il Trattato di Architettura di Sebastiano Serlio*, Milan, 1966, p. 34 et seq, with generous illustrations. A facsimile of Serlio's Sesto Libro forms a supplement to Rosci.
27. Bernhard Rupprecht, Die Villa Garzoni des Jacopo Sansovino, in *Mitteilungen des kunsthistorischen Institutes in Florenz*, 11/1/63, p. 1 et seq.
28. The most recent datings are found in Ackerman, *Palladio's Villas*, 1967, and in Lionello Puppi, *Palladio*, Florence, 1966. The brief but highly interesting work by Puppi supplies particularly extensive references to the latest literature on Palladio.
29. For a new interpretation of the early villini see Franco Barbieri, *Palladio in Villa negli anni quaranta: Da Lonedo a Bagnolo*, in *Arte Veneta XXIV* 1970. For the Villa Porto-Godi specially Paul Hofer, *Palladios Erstling. Die Villa Godi Valmarana in Lonedo bei Vicenza*, Basle, 1969.
30. Quoted from Fiocco, *op.cit.*, where both versions of the document are reproduced.
31. One of the sketches is reproduced in Forssman, *Palladios Lehrgebäude*, Stockholm, 1965, fig. 26.
32. Forssman, *Palladio e Daniele Barbaro*, in *Bollettino Andrea Palladio VIII* 1966, p. 68 et seq.
33. *Palladio*, Primo Libro, Chap. 20.
34. Villa Foscari has not been the subject of any previous extensive monograph, but important analyses can be found in Roberto Pane, *Andrea Palladio*, Torino, 1961, p. 228 et seq., Ackerman, *Palladio's Villas* p. 53 et seq. and Puppi, *op.cit.* p. 27 et seq.
35. Renato Cevese, *Appunti palladiani*, in *Bollettino Andrea Palladio VII* 1965, p. 305 et seq.
36. Rudolf Wittkower, *Architectural Principles in the Age of Humanism*, London, 1952, p. 113.
37. Quoted from Wittkower, *op.cit.* p. 100. Original text in Magrini, *Memorie intorno la vita e le opere di Andrea Palladio*, Padua, 1845.
38. Palladio expressed himself regarding this central part of the Vitruvian decor in his Quarto Libro, Chap. 2, but large portions of the Primo Libro deal with the same matter.
39. Egon Verheyen, *Jacopo Strada's Mantuan Drawings of 1567—68*, in *Art Bulletin*, 1967, p. 62 et seq.
40. Giangiorgio Zorzi, *I Disegni delle Antichità di Andrea Palladio*, Venice, 1959, p. 147 et seq. With the aid of manuscripts and drawings, Zorzi has reconstructed the earliest version of Palladio's work, which must have been prepared concurrently with the work of Palladio and Barbaro on their edition of Vitruvius, i.e. c. 1550—56. This presumed original text with designs was subsequently embodied in the final form of the first and second books of the *Quattro Libri* in 1570.
41. A preliminary choice in topographical order is supplied by Luciana Crosato, *Gli Affreschi nelle Ville Venete del Cinquecento*, Treviso, 1962. See also Rodolfo Pallucchini, *Giambattista Zelliotti e Giovanni Antonio Fasolo* in *Bollettino Andrea Palladio*, vol. X 1968. For some principle points of view also Erik Forssman, *Palladio e la pittura affresco*, in *Arte Veneta* 1967.
42. Giampaolo Bordignon Favero, *La Villa Soranza, Treviso, 1958*, gives an exhaustive description of the villa and its painted decoration.
43. *Primo Libro*, Chap. 26.
44. Renato Cevese, *I Palazzi dei Thiene*, Vicenza, 1952. For the decoration see the richly illustrated volume by Licisco Magagnato, *Palazzo Thiene, sede della Banca Popolare di Vicenza*, Vicenza, 1966. The decoration in palazzo Thiene and Alessandro Vittoria as a decorator has been treated by Wolfgang Wolters, *Plastische Deckendekorationen des Cinquecento in Venedig und im Veneto*, Berlin, 1968.
45. Magagnato, *op.cit.* p. 105 et seq.

Drawing references

The drawings by Ove Hidemark and Göran Månsson are based on the following sources:

Page 8, top. A Boethius, *The Golden House of Nero*, Michigan, 1960, p. 144.

Page 8, bottom. From a reconstruction in F Noack and K Lehmann-Hartleben, *Baugeschichtliche Untersuchungen am Stadtrand von Pompeji*, Berlin, 1936, plate 25.

Page 9. From a Pompeiian fresco reproduced in Boethius, *op. cit.* p. 114.

Page 10. From a reconstruction in A Tuulse, *Burgen des Abendlandes*, Vienna and Munich, 1958, fig. 14.

Page 11, top. From Palladio. Ed. Rome 1960, No. 10, p. 151.

Page 11, bottom. From a photo by Alinari, Florence.

Page 16, top. From a fresco by D Ghirlandaio in C Bargellini—P du Prey, *Sources for a reconstruction of the Villa Medici, Fiesole*, Burlington Magazine 1969, p. 597.

Page 16, bottom. From a reconstruction in C L Frommel, *Die Farnesina*, Berlin, 1961, plate XVI.

Page 17, top. From a photo by Alinari, Florence.

Page 17, bottom. B Patzak, *Die Villa imperiale in Pesaro*, Leipzig, 1908, p. 134.

Page 20. J Ackerman, *Palladio's Villas*, New York, 1967, plate 17.

Page 21, top. From a photo by E Forssman.

Page 21, bottom. G Mazzotti, *Venetian Villas*, Roma, 1957, p. 93.

Page 22. G Mazzotti, *op. cit.* p. 103.

Page 23, top. C Frotier, *Terra Ferma*, L'Oeil 139—40 1966, p. 31.

Page 23, bottom. B Rupprecht, *Die Villa Garzoni*, *Mitteilungen des kunsthistorischen Institutes in Florenz* 1963, No. 11, p. 9.

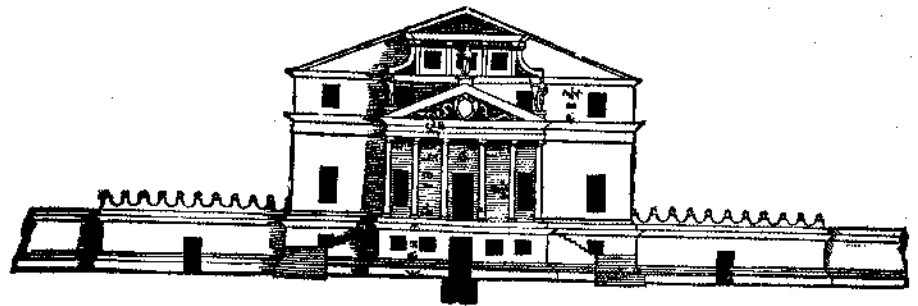
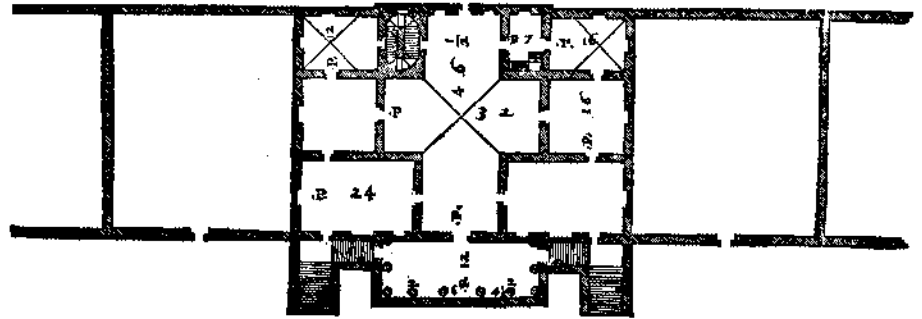
Page 24. R Pane, *Andrea Palladio*, Torino, 1961, p. 243.

Page 25. From a Palladio drawing in *The Royal Institute of British Architects*, London, Vol. XVII p. 2 recto.

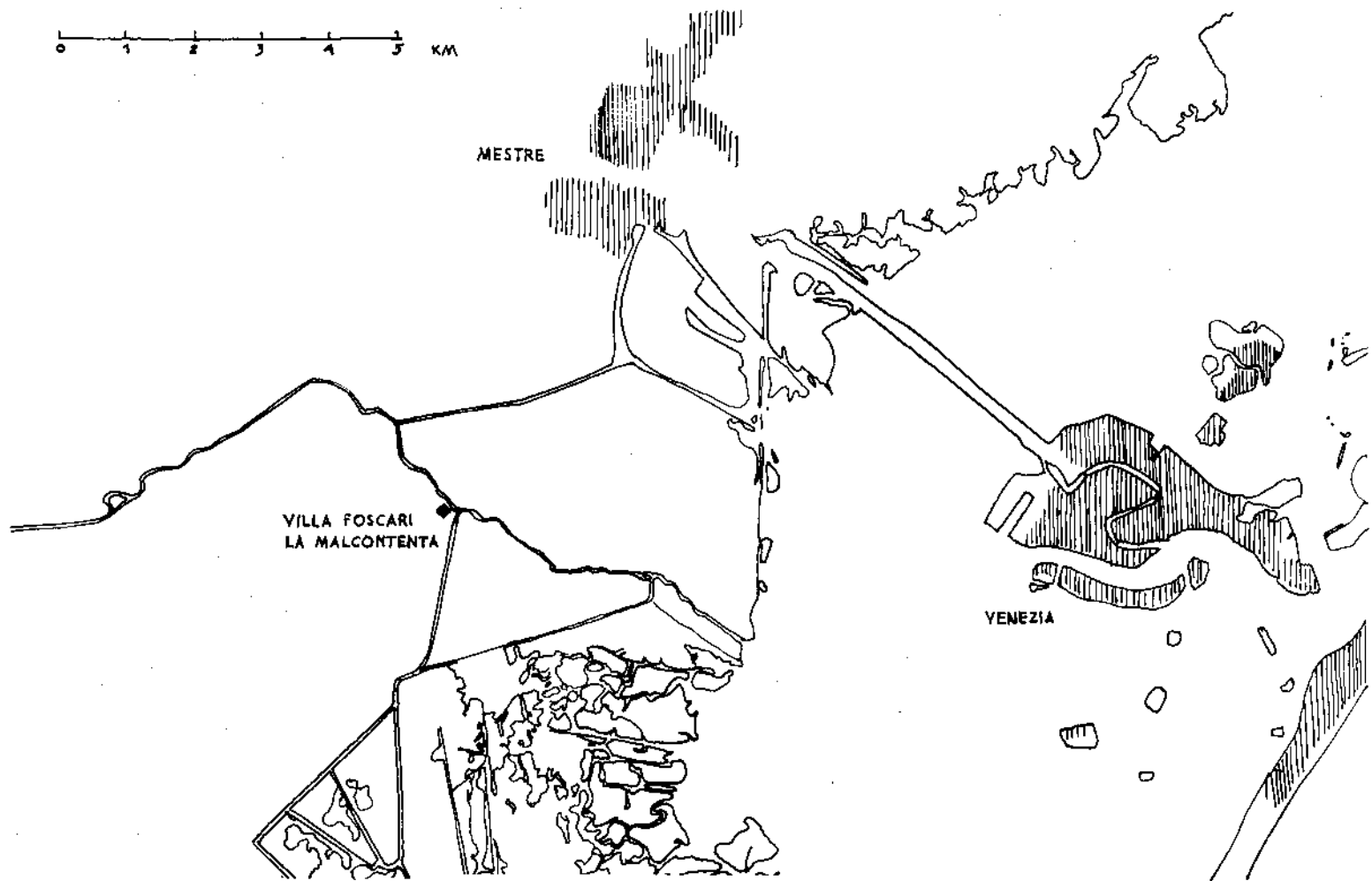
Page 26. From R Pane, *op. cit.* p. 231.

NON MOLTO lungi dalle Gambarare sopra la Brenta è la seguente fabrica delli Magnifici Signori Nicolò, e Luigi de' Foscarì. Questa fabrica èalzata da terra vndici piedi, e sotto vi sono cucine, tinelli, e simili luoghi, & è fatta in volto coli di sopra come di sotto. Le stanze maggiori hanno i volti alti secondo il primo modo delle altezze de' volti. Le quadre hanno i volti à copula: sopra i camerini vi sono mezzati: il volto della Sala è à Crociera di mezo cerchio: la sua imposta è tanto alta da piano, quanto è larga la sala: laquale è stata ornata di eccellentissime pitture da Messer Battista Venetiano.

Messer Battista franco grandissimo disegnatore à nostri tempi hauea ancor esso dato principio à dipingere vna delle stanze grandi, ma soprauenuto dalla morte ha lasciata l'opera imperfetta. La loggia è di ordine ionico: La Cornice gira intorno tutta la casa, e fa frontespicio sopra la loggia, e nella parte opposta. Sotto la Gronda vi è vn'altra Cornice, che camina sopra i frontespicii: Le camere di sopra sono come mezzati per la loro ballezza, perche sono alte solo otto piedi.

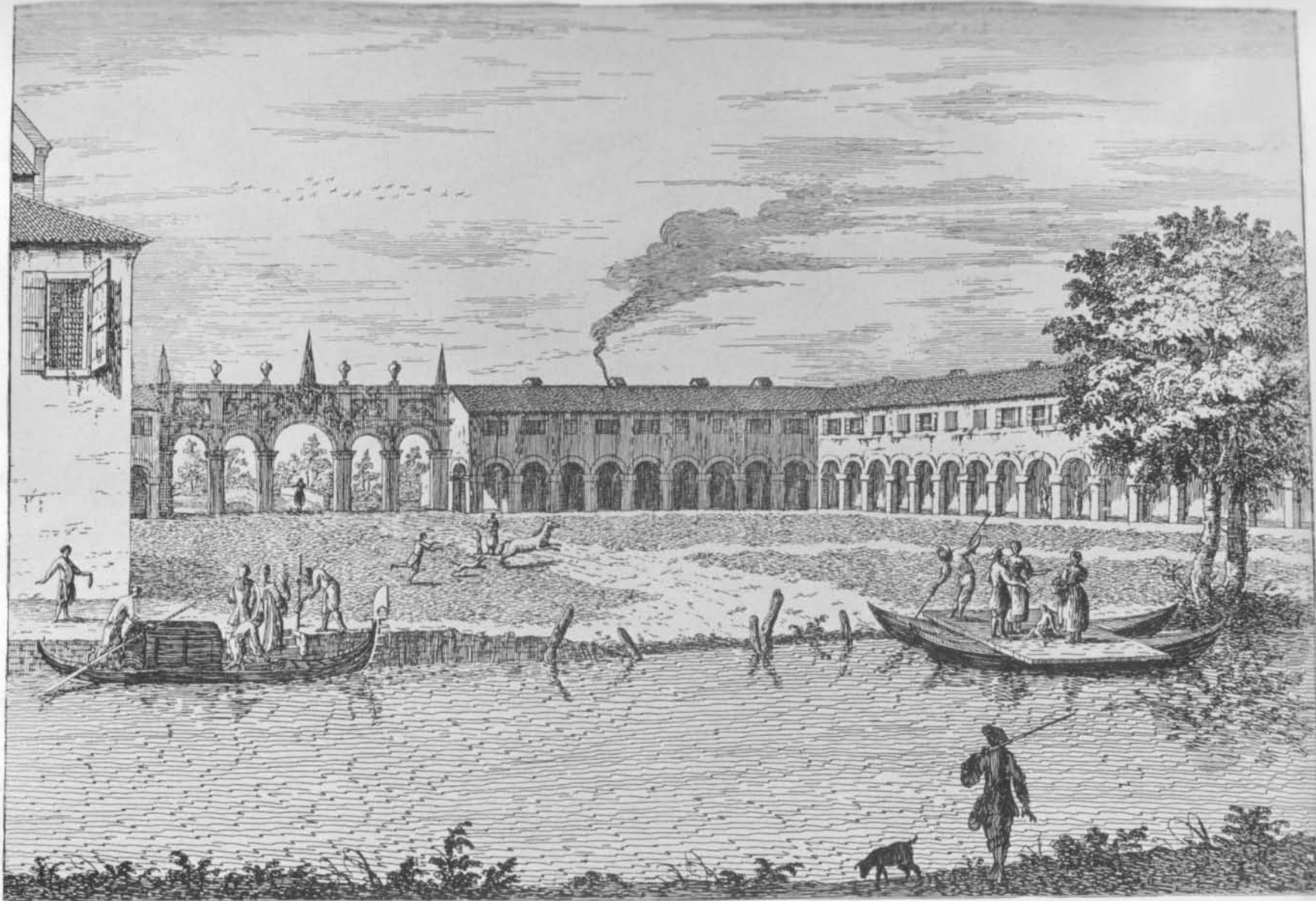


LA SOTTOPOSTA

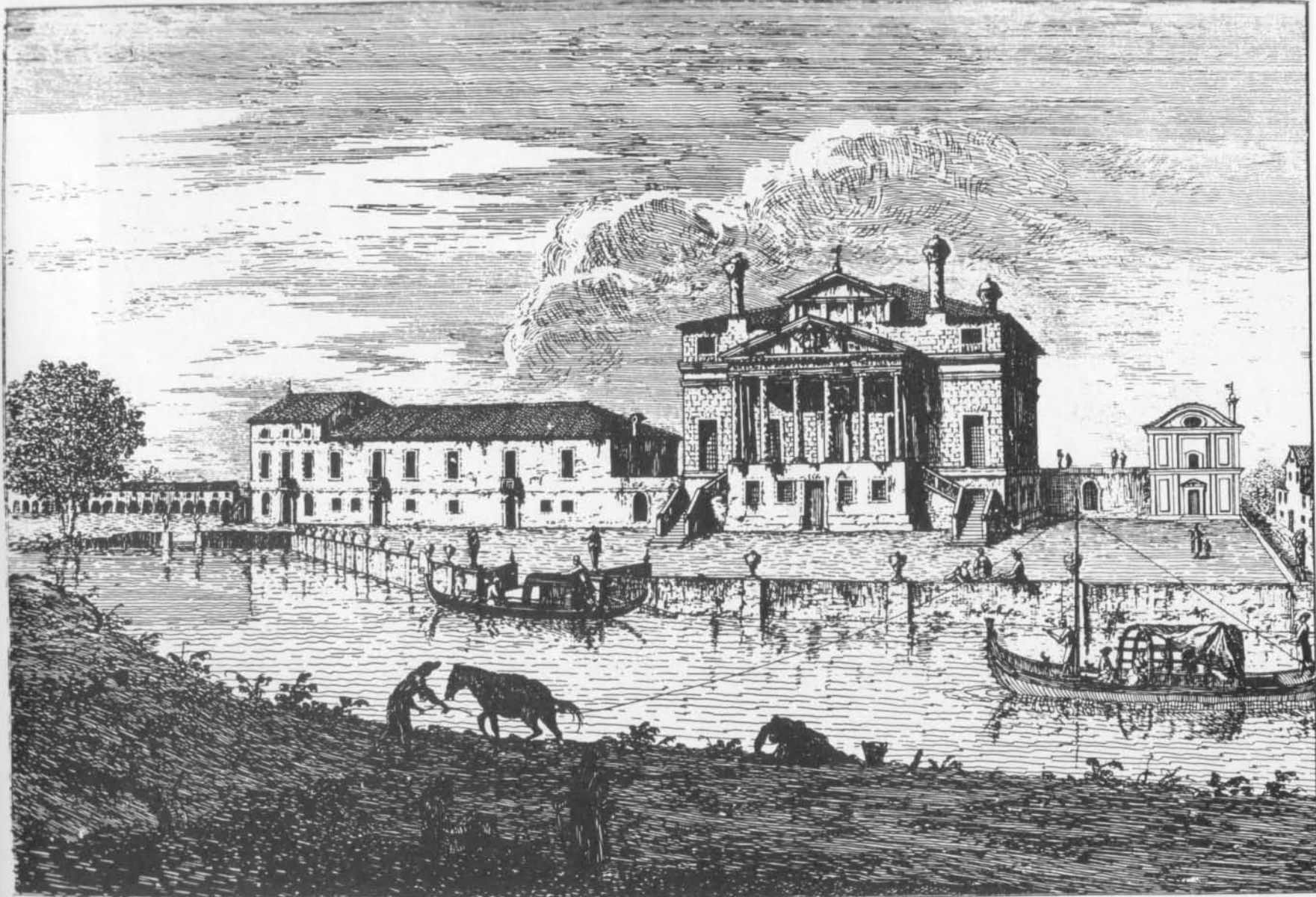




Aerial view of Villa Foscari. Photo: Centro Internazionale di Studi di Architettura Andrea Palladio, Vicenza



The piazza at Malcontenta, according to G F Costa; no longer traceable



Villa Foscari, according to G F Costa, *Le Delizie del Fiume Brenta*, 1750—62. The wall to the left was probably erected according to Palladio's drawings. Farm buildings further left and the chapel to the right are probably of later date