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Hanno-Walter Kruft

ADRIAN VON BUTTLAR, *Der englische Landsitz 1715—1760. Symbol eines liberalen Weltentwurfs*. Mäander Verlag GmbH, München 1982. 264 Seiten und 51 Abb. auf 32 Taf.

Adrian von Buttlar has written an important book. The subject has been so extensively explored by antiquarians and social historians as well as by architectural and gardening writers, that the English Country House between 1715 and 1760 or in the reigns of the first two Georges may be thought of as overcultivated into sterility. This book demonstrates that a shift in the historian's point of view may open quite new perspectives. In his particular case the shift has been to consider house and garden as an ideological and therefore a semantic unity. Previous studies have been hamstrung by the apparent contradiction: as the country house assumed a Palladian propriety, so the garden seemed to dissolve into an increasingly picturesque dissaray. Having reviewed, however briefly, the approaches of Hussey, Pevsner, Summerson, Hallbaum, Allen, Downes, all of whom see a scission between the crystalline house and the increasingly unkempt garden, von Buttlar takes up a position nearer that of Wittkower, who had already objected to the notion of the classical house in a romantic garden, suggesting that the builders and designers of these houses 'had split personalities ... that they revolted against their own solemn classical convictions ...' and in fact he takes his stand on Wittkower's paradox. The houses and gardens formed a *Gesamtkunstwerk*, and can only be understood in that close relationship; the systematic adjustment of building, garden, painting depends, in the Georgian country house, on the dissolution of the baroque unity, and the dethroning of the queen of the arts, therefore, partaking of that individualization of pure *genres* which marked the pre-romantic period.

I must confess an unease at von Buttlar's rather free and Sedlmayr'ian use of *Gesamtkunstwerk*. Say it not in Munich, but I have never been quite happy at the master's use of it: the term had after all been coined for the experience of seeing the Ring at Bayreuth, and could by extension, be applied to attending the performance of Fuchs' *Zeichen* on the Mathildenhöhe in Darmstadt, à la rigueur the D'Annunzio-Debussy Saint Sebastien at the Châtelet. It already seems quite inappropriate to *Parade* which was first done five years after the Saint Sebastien, as it would have been applied to the Revolutionary celebrations of the Champs de Mars, or Napoléon's Distribution of the Eagles. The first does not have the quasi-

ritual uniqueness, the second lacks the consciousness of art as the supreme human activity.

Nor does the term sit easily on the Georgian country house and its garden or park. My objection is terminological, since von Buttlar uses the term to bring home a real point: that, as it was constituted after the Hanoverian instauration, the Country house becomes the "Modell ... (eines) neuen Ordo, Symbol eines liberalen Weltentwurfs ...". The proto-enlightenment liberals, both Whig and Tory, who built those country houses saw "die Welt als ein System ineinandergreifender, aber selbständiger und heterogener Elemente, das die 'Architektur des Universums' im Sinne einer prästabilierten Harmonie konstruiert hatte, und in dem alles einzelne sich im Rahmen der ihm eigenen Natur frei entfalten konnte". This both acknowledges the Wittkowerian paradox and goes beyond it. Still within the paradox, von Buttlar discusses the typology of the house: he finds five basic types, all derived from Palladian precedents: the isolated frontispiced block, as in William Benson's (whom he dignifies with the appellation 'architect') Wilbury; the composite block, as in Campbell's Wanstead; the Villa Trissino/Meledo scheme, with two quadrants making a forecourt; the Villa Mocenigo on the Brenta scheme with one principal and four subsidiary pavilions; and finally the Rotonda variations as Campbell's Mereworth or Isaac Ware's Foots Cray. In order to fit all this into his account of the dissolution of an organic architecture, von Buttlar has to appeal to that side of Vanbrugh which the Adam brothers admired so much two generations later, and on which they based their 'castle style': his use of stark and abrupt massing and the unarticulated wall surfaces (which suggest the 'autonomous' architecture in Sedlmayr's sense, but which is in English terms, an aspect of local baroque: at any rate, it fits neatly into the baroque time-scale). It was moreover part of what Kent had called "that damned gusto" which his Palladian correctness was to replace. The focus is not quite sharp enough here.

In this context there is another minor problem. Wittkower spoke of the staccato quality of Burlingtonian building, and there is some resemblance between that and the 'movement' which the Adam Brothers admired in Vanbrugh. This continuity has little to do with national character, a form of explanation which von Buttlar (to my mind quite rightly) rejects. But the cutting of the thematic interest in questions of 'staccato' and 'movement' into stylistic snippets also prevents their fruitful interpretation. This discussion touches on another matter which von Buttlar has raised: the interest in geometry and in proportion. Again the issue is bedevilled by the problem of abstraction in architecture; since the use of proportion, particularly of simple geometries is often confused with fidelity to the conception of the classical orders. They are distinct issues. And in eighteenth-century England, while the dethronement of the orders from their transcendent position was accomplished (perhaps most acutely through Perrault's *abrégé de Vitruve*), the restoration of the prestige of proportions through Newtonian recognition of the 'natural' validity of the musical and dimensional analogy was almost a complimentary movement.

But so far I have stayed within the paradox. Von Buttlar's merit is to have gone well beyond it in his consideration of the relation between house and landscape. Again, too much seems to me sacrificed to the narrative line, to the dry supporting of a thesis, and the result is a loss of definition. The placing of these Palladian staccato buildings in the Claudian landscape which is then moved into Britain from the Roman Campagna is a real matter for wonder. Modishly, von Buttlar may take a little too seriously the influence of the theatre and stage setting as against easel painting at this point: the English were, after all, the principal clients for Claude in the early eighteenth century, and a number of painters (notably Richard Wilson) made their careers not so much as Country-house *vedutisti*, but as the painters who saw Britain through the most Claude-like eyes.

It might be worth observing that a certain note of disapproval of the formal garden in British writers of the time is sometimes misunderstood: what reads as a protest against a French-style formal landscape, is quite often a protest against the local addiction to topiary, which was in fact unpopular in France but much loved in liberal and protestant Holland: Shenstone was still complaining about 'trees cut to statues' at the end of von Buttlar's chosen period. And even Shenstone acknowledges the need for kitchen-gardeners, parterre gardeners as well as landskip gardeners, only the last of whom really interested him. These are quibbles again about focus, not about outline. English architecture, in spite of anti-French protests, depended most directly on French example in the seventeenth century, and this goes for gardens as well: which influence was carried well into the eighteenth. The landscape gardeners who went beyond this taste were exceptional. And yet the line of development is explicit. The free landscape, hills whose

"hairie side

With thicket overgrown, grotesque and Wilde"

(as in Milton's *Paradise*) were taken as a token or stimulus or even symbol of liberty. Lord Shaftesbury himself, who fathered the identification, may have preferred a formal garden for his own use, yet his lesson, if not his example was taken generally enough by the end of Buttlar's period. One of the implications of this approach was that the view of the garden from the house had none of the importance which it had in France. Steps and stairs, which the French avoided and the Italians used as linking elements, were divided into turning flights in England, to act as barriers between interior and exterior. At Stourhead, in the most elaborate garden of the time, there was no view from the house over the landscape, and the two well-known paintings of the garden by Turner and Constable do not include the house. It had in fact become by 1760 something of an incident in the park, as might be the grotto or the pantheon or the gothic ruin. View from the house and view of the house are a duality which von Buttlar might have considered more closely. On the other hand he has detailed most carefully the other aspect of this development: the *Splitterräume* (his term) into which the landscape garden decays become little stages for the garden buildings: and the house is only more important than the other buildings in size occasionally: this may be taken as justifying

obliquely all that preoccupation with scene painting, though I still think it a matter of incidental development not of origins, while the whole business of painted perspectives so popular in public gardens (and earlier in France) might have thrown a somewhat different light on this matter.

The parterred view from the house may be seen as a symbol "des cartesianischen orthogonalen Achsenraumes" so that "Raum, Ausdehnung und kontinuierliche Materialität" become „drei Aspekte desselben Seins ..." which is denied in the post-Newtonian landscape; the new garden may well be considered as the ideal space or place for meditating on cosmic-astronomic verities. This was certainly the view of most of the advocates of the new landscape and of Palladian architecture. Von Buttlar rightly points to the neglected Robert Morris as an explicit indicator of this tendency. Nor is it surprising that Morris, for all that he presents himself as a defender of the ancient values, reduces the orders to tokens of mood, dependent on the situation of the house in the landscape, on the analogy of musical modes.

Von Buttlar is right, too in showing such gardens as an extreme demonstration of kinaesthesia. This of course implies (the reader must forgive a long jump) not only a change in the constitution of the object but a transformation of the observers' perception of them. The change in the system therefore suggests a contradictory function: "Entdinglichung des Existenzraumes und der realen Gegenstände in ihm durch ihre Verwandlung in Bildzeichen ..."

There is no doubt that Newtonian Deism had an important role in this transformation, and that in many masonic lodges that quasi-religion became a dominant ideology. Certainly, many of the country-house builders as well as their architects were masons, as was Frederick Prince of Wales on whom the new Tory 'patriots' had fixed their hopes. But some of the old Tories, some of the representatives of 'that damn'd old gusto': Thornhill and Hogarth and the ambivalent Gibbs, who play no part in this process were masons also. Again the outline might be clear, but the speed of the account leaves certain matters unresolved. There are others. Batty Langley's Gothic orders, of which he devised five as a direct complement to the classical ones appear twice in this text, but are barely glimpsed. McSwinnny commissioned the cenotaphs of Whig worthies from many other painters beside the Riccis, and they could hardly be described as Palladian; Kent's temple at Stowe was not the first imitation of Roman round temple in Britain, and so on.

A more serious defect may be the somewhat busy sketching of the economic background. It is of course true that the time of the two Georges corresponded with the growth of Empire: but the elimination of kine and agriculture from the landscape is later than this period, and belongs really to the first age of industrialisation. In Wilson's Twickenham as well as in his Snowdonia there are cows and labourers. Von Buttlar would have benefited from the recent work of John Barrell on that very matter.

Still, all these are minor blemishes: the solid merit of the book is to have established without fear of contradiction that the parallel development of the Palladian mansion and the landscape garden form a necessary complement; all talk of classic house and romantic garden, or even of form and context become inactual. The reduction of building to a pictorial effect in England was to alter the way in which architects understood their role, and in what their public expected of them.

Joseph Rykwert

AUSSTELLUNGSKALENDER

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- Amsterdam** Rijksmuseum. Bis 25. 2. 1984: *Trees of Ireland*. Historisch Museum. Bis 8. 1. 1984: *Jahrmarkt des Kaufhandels — Die Amsterdamer Weltausstellung 1883*.
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- Bad Godesberg** Wissenschaftszentrum. Bis 7. 1. 1984: *Kunststudenten stellen aus — Bundeswettbewerb 1983 des Bundesministers f. Bildung u. Wissenschaft*.
- Basel** Sammlung Karikaturen & Cartoons. 5. 11. 1983: *Wiedereröffnung mit der Ausstellung „Skandinavien“*.
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- Cleveland** Museum of Art. Bis 8. 1. 1984: *The Figure — De Kooning to Warhol*. — Bis 31. 12.: *Fairfield Porter (1907—1975) — Realist Painter in an Age of Abstraction*. — Bis 22. 1. 1984: *Portraiture — East and West*.
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