From Leon Battista Alberti to Jane Austen via Giacomo Leoni and BBC Drama

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Despite the exalted presence in the title of the names of Leon Battista Alberti and Jane Austen, the present paper is fundamentally a plea for greater recognition of the talents and achievements of Giacomo Leoni (1686-1746), as editor of the great Italian humanist, Leon Battista Alberti, as an architect in his own right and as a proselytiser of Anglo-Palladian architecture. Leoni's English edition of Alberti's great Renaissance treatise *On Architecture* (1726-29) endured for two and a half centuries, and even now has a strong presence in the only other translation done since that date, Joseph Rykwert's edition of 1988.[1] Leoni helped create and consolidate a taste for Palladian or Anglo-Palladian architecture in England through that edition of Alberti, and through his earlier publication of Andrea Palladio's *The Four Books of Architecture* (1715-20).[2] It was an achievement aided by his own practical designs for mansions built for important patrons domiciled throughout England, from Essex to Cheshire, from Surrey to Yorkshire. Yet, with one brilliant exception, an all-too-brief but splendid article by Richard Hewlings,[3]

[1] *The Architecture of Leon Battista Alberti* in ten books, *Of Painting* in three books and *Of Statuary* in one book. Translated into Italian by Cosimo Bartoli. And now first into English, and divided into three volumes by James Leoni. (London, Edlin, 1726). Leoni seems to wish to avoid claiming responsibility for the translation into English which is probably in large part due to the famous professional translator John Ozell, and the final volume must have been issued in 1729, or early 1730, given a reference in a letter of Leoni's to his patron, Sir Peter Legh, dated 30 May 1730, in which he refers only then to sending him the third volume. *Cfr On the Art of Building in Ten Books*, translated by Joseph Rykwert, Neil Leach, and Robert Tavernor, (Cambridge, Mass. MIT Press, 1988); quotations from the text of Alberti will be from this edition, except when quoting from Leoni's letter *To the Reader*, when the 1726 edition will perforce be used.

[2] *The Architecture of Andrea Palladio, Design'd and Publish'd by Giacomo Leoni* (London. Watts, 1715) (the trilingual edition); the second edition, 1721, in English alone, revised by G. Leoni and translated by Nicholas Du Bois, was the more important.

[3] Richard Hewlings, 'James Leoni, an Anglicised Venetian,' in *Architectural Outsiders*, Roderick Brown (ed.), introduced by Kerry Downes, (London. Waterstone, 1985), 21-44; H.M.Colvin, *Biographical Dictionary of British Architects*, 3rd ed. (1995), T.P.Connor, 'Leoni, Giacomo (c.1686-1746),' *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (OUP, 2004).

Leoni has so far merited only summary critical mentions, notably in H. M. Colvin's *Biographical Dictionary of British Architects*, and more recently in T. P. Connor's item in Oxford's *Dictionary of National Biography*. In his native Italy he appears to be completely unknown.

Work on Leoni necessarily includes many other related cultural interests. It involves serious consideration of the Renaissance of classical ideas as promoted particularly by Leon Battista Alberti, details of which had an influence in Leoni's own style of building. It directly concerns fashionable architecture in the form of certain fine Georgian houses in England, a score of which Leoni himself designed or constructed. And as a background to all of this there is the literary and historical Georgian countryside eulogized by Alexander Pope, and depicted in Jane Austen's novels, above all in *Pride and Prejudice*.[4] This is the landscape architecture which Leoni also helped to perpetuate through his study and translation of Alberti and which we now associate with Launcelot (Capability) Brown (1715-1783), and with his successor, Humphrey Repton (1752-1818).[5]

Indeed it is not difficult to see the serenity of Capability Brown landscaping and the calm of Palladian architecture as placid backdrops to the contrasting scenes of emotional crises and nervous breakdowns exhibited by Jane Austen's protagonists. In spite of a recent attempt to insert a new realism into a filmed version of her *Pride and Prejudice*, there are no slums or tenements in her world – at worst a less than prosperous vicarage or a carelessly tended manor house.[6] For centuries before and after Jane Austen had posed the problem, the awful dilemma in which women of Austen's own class and status found themselves was best resolved by a safe marriage to a husband, who, if he could not provide wealth and luxury, might at least guarantee comfort and security. Not to all was granted the privilege of a love-match with a wealthy landowner

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[4] For the curious a *Literary Tour Guide: Jane Austen's England*, currently published by Footstep Maps in Western Australia, and including the locations, fictional and otherwise for her novels, is proving deservedly popular with tourists.

[5] In particular the material of Alberti's, *On the Art of Building*, Book 5, Chapters 17-18, pp. 145-51, though the topic is discussed *passim* by Alberti, not only there, but also in his *Della famiglia*, and in the *Villa*.

[6] I refer to the film (coincidentally released today, 16 September 2005) under the direction of Joe Wright, who admitted that when he accepted the commission he had never read the novel. See Joanna Briscoe, 'A costume drama with muddy hems,' in *The Sunday Times*, 31 July 2005.

such as Fitzwilliam Darcy; the ghastly Mr Collins might suffice for Elizabeth Bennet's less ambitious friend Charlotte Lucas 'who accepted him solely for the pure and disinterested desire of an establishment, cared not how soon that establishment were gained.'[7] The materialism of Jane Austen's heroines is not only understandable but was absolutely indispensable for the continuation of civilized society as it was then recognized. It also spurred their menfolk to build more glamorous domiciles to pacify them, a factor of which Alberti himself and his predecessors had been conscious.[8]

Long before Jane Austen dwelt upon such things, it was to the fashionable ambitions of noble (or *nouveaux riches*) females that James I attributed the expansion of palatial building in London, forced ruinously upon husbands, and particularly on fathers, by ladies eager to escape the boredom of the provinces, to do the London season, and seriously to look for a husband. London, said the King, was becoming too large for the body of a healthy commonwealth, like an overgrown liver, which causes the human body to waste away. James was no doubt also concerned with a superfluity of influential men in the nation's Capital, who had little to do there for six months of the year but think about entertaining their women-folk, and who were consequently, during their dreary leisure hours, open to the temptations of intrigue and politicking.[9] In 1615 James attempted to oblige noblemen to return to their provincial seats by proposing legal measures to prevent new building in London, even going so far as to imprison builders and to destroy certain edifices already in course of construction.[10] One effect of the King's attempted reform was to stimulate instead the building of great mansions in the English countryside; houses which in turn became provincial imitations

[7] And this despite the thought that 'The stupidity with which he was favoured by nature must guard his courtship from any charm that could make a woman wish for its continuance,' Jane Austen, *Pride and Prejudice* (London, Harmsworth. Penguin Illustrated Classics, 1938), 106-7.

[8] See below, p.10, *note 25*.

[9] And no doubt there were always female precedents for the powerful Georgiana Spencer (1757-1806), who was famously to foster such intrigues at the highest level. See Amanda Foreman, *Georgiana, Duchess of Devonshire* (London. Harper Collins, 1999).

[10] *The Political Works of James I*, edited by C. H. McIlwaine (Cambridge, Mass., Harvard UP, 1918), 326. *Cfr* James's *Elegie written by the King concerning his counsell for Ladies and Gentlemen to depart the Citie of London according to his Majesty's proclamation*, in *Poems of James I*, edited by J. Craigie (Edinburgh. Blackwood, 1958), vol.2, p.179.

of the London court, houses no longer suited to the old domestic gatherings of forty years previously (when master and man had been on much more sociable terms), but now pretentious centres of fashionable rivalry, that on occasions bankrupted their noble owners. Those great houses were to become part of Jane Austen's literary legacy, and we may nowadays be thankful that some at least of the destitute nobility left gorgeous palaces for a less privileged posterity to appreciate.

King James's reign coincided with the first waves of Grand Tourism and with the new admiration for Renaissance Italy's classical splendour. His reforming legislation to restrict building speculation was no match for new fashions, and eventually the Capital continued its inevitable growth. Inigo Jones and Christopher Wren were the brilliant vanguard of a whole squadron of admirers and imitators of classical art and architecture, filtered through the genius of Andrea Palladio. And Inigo Jones, the first of those two Anglo-Palladian pioneers was Giacomo Leoni's particular hero:

> The English need no foreign examples of perfection in the way of Architecture. Inigo Jones, their illustrious countryman, who flourished in the Reign of Charles I, made in Italy so great progress in this art, that he attained to the first rank in it. Many noble monuments executed and many designs invented by this great man are still preserved entire. He carefully studied and closely followed the great masters that had gone before him.[11]

Building development, particularly in the Stuart Capital, was mildly hampered by the prolonged and bloody Civil War, the great Plague of 1660, and the Fire of London which followed. But the Great Fire led perforce to an increase in London's stock of elegant housing, an increase which brought with it an influx of immigrant builders, artists, and interior decorators from Italy. By 1708 John Vanburgh was writing to Lord Manchester suggesting that all England's noble families were going mad for constructing new dwellings.[12] And by this time Giacomo Leoni had begun his journey to London, pausing in Düsseldorf, where he assisted in some way the Venetian architect Matteo d'Alberti, at that time engaged in constructing the *Schloss Bensberg* for the Elector Palatine of that

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[11] *Leon Battista Alberti*, ed. Leoni, cit., here the appendix *To the Reader*; there are no page numbers.

[12] See John Summerson, 'The Classical Country House in 18th-century England,' *Journal of the Royal Society of Arts* (July, 1959), 539-86, here p.541.

province. A manuscript of Leoni's, dated 1708 shows him attempting a treatise on *The Five Orders of Architecture*, based on Palladio's masterpiece and evidently aimed at catching the popular mood and fashion for Palladio's version of classical architecture.[13] Although that particular treatise was never published, by 1714 Leoni was in London, and one year later began to commission and work on the trilingual translation of Palladio's *Architecture*, in Italian, French and English. By 1720 publication of this edition was completed, and in the following year the section translated solely into English was issued separately with great success.[14]

Despite all this talk about Palladian architecture and despite the inroads made by great architects such as Wren, Jones, Vanburgh and their contemporaries, it is worth noting that England boasted some unusual architectural contradictions. Some of the wealthiest and most noble English families still lived in magnificent medieval dwellings built of wattle and daub. And there is a sharp contrast between such buildings and the brilliant new palaces constructed in the neo-Palladian style by successive architects, among them Giacomo Leoni. The renovation of the Hesketh family house, *Rufford Old Hall*, was done in 1662. Now the Hesketh, who lived at Rufford permanently until 1724, were (and are) one of the richest and most venerable families in the North West of England. Contrasting with their house are two mansions constructed or reconstructed almost contemporaneously by Giacomo Leoni, *Moor Park*, built (in conjunction with Sir JamesThornhill) after 1720, and *Lyme Park*, extensively redesigned and rebuilt by him in the late 1720s.[15] Some of the attitudes to such great houses and to their restyling is expressed by

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[13] See Peter Collins, 'The McGill Leoni' in *The Journal of the Royal Architectural Institute of Canada*, XXXIV, (1957).

[14] Richard Hewlings, art. cit., supports the notion that this edition was the most influential, being preferred over Lord Burlington's rival edition commissioned from Isaac Ware; Joseph Rykwert, suggests that Isaac Ware's edition of 1738 "replaced Leoni's version of Palladio definitively." In a further coup, for the edition published in 1742, Leoni added the manuscript notes of Inigo Jones.

[15] At this point I would like to express my gratitude to Jon Moore, Chief Executive of Moor Park Golf Club, for his kindness and courtesy in allowing access to that magnificent park and mansion. To those thanks I must add deepest gratitude to the National Trust and to the Trust's Curator of Antiquities at *Lyme Park*, Clair Bissel, without whose courtesy and helpful assistance this and other papers on Leoni's great house would not have been written.

Jane Austen, writing some seventy years after the rebuilding of *Lyme Park*. It may be recalled that, in her *Pride and Prejudice*, the rich Bingley family under its new head, Charles Bingley, had taken the tenancy of *Netherfield Park*, not far from the Bennet house. Bingley, with an income of £5,000 per annum, had inherited from his father a fortune of some £100,000 (made in trade), and the Bingley sisters 'were very anxious for his having an estate of his own.'[16] His influential sister, Caroline Bingley, aspires to something more than a mere tenancy, and evidently expects her brother to acquire a property and rebuild or build *ex novo*, a new palatial residence. She even suggests imitating the Darcy family house, *Pemberley*. It is almost as though the Bingleys were merely proposing to redecorate the parlour rather than building the eighteenth-century equivalent of a fifty-million-pound mansion.[17]

Into the non-fictional world of untold wealth and luxury, stepped an impoverished, Italian *immigré*, perhaps in 1713. Giacomo Leoni described himself, notably on the title pages of his editions of architectural classics, as 'Giacomo Leoni, Architetto Veneziano.' We know little about him: he married and had two sons, and he died aged 60 in 1746. Most of the rest of his life is a mystery, but he did leave a legacy of over a score of Anglo-Palladian houses and monuments (now sadly reduced in number by the effects of time, fire, commercial demolition and development, including speculative building), and with them a small but important dossier of fine architectural drawings. His life in England suggests a biography more suited to the conflicts of Charles Dickens than to the serenity of Jane Austen. Leoni arrived in London full of hope and ambition, and found himself surrounded by immensely prosperous new entrepreneurs and venerably wealthy nobility. He had expectations of a friendly reception from certain rich patrons, but his hope was constantly deferred and he died in poverty, intestate, his great gifts unrecognized, except by patrons who had taken advantage of his services in return for small handouts. No doubt Leoni was hoping all the time for the one big commission which would make his name and fortune. He had followed all the good practices for aspiring *arrivistes*, cultivating what Machiavelli or Castiglione would have considered his particular *virtù*, his personal

[16] Jane Austen, *Pride and Prejudice*, 21.

[17] This arbitrary figure may seem to have been plucked from the air, but coincidentally in 2004 the Hesketh family house in Lancashire, to which the family moved after Rufford Old Hall, was on the market for that sum.

qualities, in order to catch the nearest way and ingratiate himself with rich patrons, but he was unlucky. Good fortune was regarded by both Machiavelli and Castiglione as an essential addition to those personal qualities.

Yet, by the early 1720s Leoni seemed to have fallen on his feet. He was engaged on the building of a palatial mansion for William, Lord Scawen at Carshalton. Having drawn up the plans and, possibly for the first time in his career, having within his reach control of the lucrative construction process, he learns of Lord William's death in 1722.[18] Nevertheless the project continued for a while under the control of Lord Scawen's nephew and heir, Thomas Scawen, to whom his uncle had left £10,000 specifically to complete the building.[19] This was when Leoni's luck changed: the work had to be suspended (Thomas had a reputation as a spendthrift), the great new project for *Carshalton House* was never completed, and Thomas Scawen spent the rest of his life at *Stone House*, the smaller family mansion nearby.

Those apparently wasted years, and that blow to his ambition might have been an important factor in Leoni's publication during the years 1726-1729 of the magnificent bilingual edition of Leon Battista Alberti. The volume provided a home for Leoni's designs for *Carshalton House*, and a compensatory outlet for the architect's frustrated energies A massive book in three tomes, Leoni's edition (in Italian and English) also included Alberti's *De pictura* and his *De statua*. With one or two honourable critical exceptions, that edition, rather like Leoni himself, though by no means forgotten, has been treated very casually in both architectural and literary circles. Leoni's comments in his *To the Reader* showed his enthusiasm for certain Albertian principles, above all for a love of classical simplicity and for a certain spirit of practicality, qualities in Alberti's work which, deliberately or subconsciously, Leoni employed in the buildings which he himself designed or had constructed.

Despite the hope deferred by the death of William Scawen, it is true that by 1726 a confident new Leoni no longer felt the need for self-

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[18] For the list of workmen employed by Leoni (indicating a possible financial hold), see A. C. Edwards, *The Account Books of Benjamin Mildmay, Earl Fitzwalter*, (London. Regency Press, 1977), noted by Richard Hewlings, *James Leoni* cit., 194-5.

[19] Some hint of this is visible in one of Leoni's letters to Sir Peter Legh of 1725, regretting that he had not yet sent a plan for *Lyme Park*, because of his commitment to the building process at Carshalton.

publicity in the same way as had been evident in his edition of Palladio. His edition of Alberti's *Architecture*, by definition, gave him a new public image, not only as a prime exponent of the new Anglo-Palladian movement, but also as the only contemporary expert on Alberti's work. The appendix to Leoni's edition of the treatise contains various plans for the great house which he had so recently been designing at Carshalton, drawings evidently rendered redundant for that particular project, but useful now for showing his prowess to a wider audience in a publication of this kind. He also published accompanying prints of other projects and designs of a technical architectural nature, not necessarily (according to Leoni) aimed in this case at attracting other patrons. That had been his stated aim in the plans and designs published in his earlier *Palladio*, which had also included technical drawings to attract artisanal subscribers.

In fact the majority of the new designs in his *Alberti* were more technical than aesthetic, and could have risked boring non-experts at the time, more inclined to accept the merely fashionable elegance of traditional Palladian illustrations. The drawings certainly illustrated the architectural flair which marked out Leoni's work, but, more importantly now, in addition to the glamorous palaces which might attract the aesthete, he introduced, in his appendix to volume three, examples of practical and accurate designs, not unlike those he had found in the text of the *De re aedificatoria*. In this way he continued the practice begun in his *Palladio* of offering other architectural aspects of his profession more appropriate to the artisans and master-masons who would be likely to peruse those particular pages.[20] As far as the text of Alberti was concerned, it indicated a revolutionary change in direction and in audience. Leoni had the foresight and courage, if that is not too strong a word, to highlight for *artisans* the scholarly treatise based on Vitruvius's *De architectura*, which Alberti had intended as an academic text directed rather at the intellectual élite of fifteenth-century Italy.

At the time that his *Alberti* was in preparation, Leoni was fully committed to two important projects, the building of Carshalton for Lord

[20] Coincidentally, less elegantly disguised than Leoni's advice, a more specifically technical aid for artisans was the volume by Richard Neve, *The City and County Purchaser, and Builder's Dictionary* (London. Browne, 1726), published the same year that the first section of Leoni's translation was issued. But, unusually, this, the second edition of Neve's volume, had been corrected by the urbane John Ozell, deliberately to create an edition more appropriate for gentlemen, since the first edition had been aimed at artisans.

Scawen, and the re-building of Lyme Park for Sir Peter Legh. In the appendix *To the Reader* in his *Alberti*, Leoni's relationships with noblemen such as Peter Legh show that he was to all intents and purposes a courtier, and like courtiers of any epoch, he had to exploit his own talents as best he could.[21] He needed to make use of his position in the small country entourages where he might well consider that he had certain advantages which might glamorize his *curriculum vitae*, and so enhance his position in the eyes of potential patrons in the high society of the time. One of his *fortes* was his familiarity with Italian and his knowledge of Alberti's text in the Bartoli translation, superior to any potential English rival. If Leoni's purpose had been to captivate the imagination of a rich public of Grand Tourists enchanted by the beauty of Italian architecture, the launch of his new version of Alberti's major treatise, a new star to shine in the galaxy of Anglo-Palladian architecture, was an instance of a clever adaptability worthy of his sixteenth-century predecessors.

And that new audience is borne out in the list of subscribers to Leoni's *Alberti*. They include some of the most illustrious names in the English nobility, beginning with the new king, George II, who succeeded to the throne in 1727. But among the three hundred subscribers, there were also names of independent builders: fifteen masons, including John Churchill 'mason to His Majesty,' eleven carpenters, seven engravers, two plumbers, and other names of similar entrepreneurs. And in his letter to his readers, in words which recall his letter to Sir Peter Legh (who subscribed to two copies of the volume), Leoni underlined that practical aspect which he shared with Alberti, 'Be warned, also, Reader, not to suffer yourself to be imposed upon by any that pretend mighty things in the theory, but are not able to draw, from which they excuse themselves by saying they have others that draw for them [...]. Do not, I say, be imposed upon by them, for these theorists are entirely deficient in the practice.' The words seem directed at Lord Burlington, who had a reputation for asking others to do his drawings for him.[22]

[21] And in the letter to Sir Peter Legh accompanying the final volumes of his *Alberti*, this dependency becomes subtly clear, when he passes on to Legh the good wishes of Thomas Scawen, perhaps in a subtle way to imply familiarity.

[22] As for the acolyte required to do the practical work: "And even though such copist should have the most excellent judgement himself, it is easy to conceive that either subjection or modesty, or the respect paid by and inferior to a superior, would be unavoidable impediments to his serving as he ought the person who is sure to pay well for his service." These and other notes at that point in Leoni's letter *To the Reader* were thinly disguised criticisms of Lord Burlington.

The links between courtier-architects and noble patrons are clear. Lord Burlington, the most influential and one of the richest patrons of the age, dictated fashion and, through his control of Wren's old Office of Public Works, handled most important commissions. In the earlier introduction to his *Palladio*, Leoni had praised Burlington for having promoted the Palladian style in England. Perhaps in that first stage of his English career Leoni had hoped for some advantage from his mild flattery, but he never dedicated any of his designs to the noble lord, except for a single print in the appendix of his *Alberti*, and one which Burlington later appropriated for his own design of the *Egyptian Hall* in York. For his part, Burlington, who may have enjoyed an initial burst of enthusiasm at the arrival of the young Italian, showed only irritation at the fact that Leoni, in his edition of *Palladio*, had had the temerity to add his own detail to one of Palladio's famous façades.[23] Burlington's reaction was to marginalise the young man, at the same time commissioning Isaac Ware to complete a rival edition of the Palladio volume.[24] Yet in his appendix to the *Alberti* Leoni seems at first glance to repeat his eulogy of Burlington, 'And here infinite praises are due to the Right Honourable Richard, Earl of Burlington. It is he that has revived and set in its true light, the Glory of that illustrious architect [Inigo Jones] the follower of our Andrea Palladio.' On the other hand, such praise might be viewed as exalting Palladio and Jones, while implying Burlington's having a mere popularizing role.

In Leoni's translation one very accessible feature which could have had an immediate impact upon architectural planning was Alberti's novel attitude to the house in its landscape. Alberti's villa was meant to be a working estate, but he nevertheless had firm ideas about the location of his dwellings, and the aesthetic quality of their setting, if for no other reason because he realized (and states) the need to keep the womenfolk happy with their house and surroundings: 'Yet the villa should be pretty enough to ensure that the mother of the family will enjoy living there and will give careful devotion to its domestic upkeep.'[25] Leoni's translation naturally includes lengthy passages concerning the siting of the house,

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[23] See Rudolf Wittkower, 'Giacomo Leoni's edition of Palladio's *Quattro libri dell'architettura*,' in *Arte Veneta*, 8, (1954), 310-16, here p.314.

[24] This eventually came out in 1738, by which time the strictly Palladian phase was *passé*.

[25] Leon Battista Alberti, *On the Art of Building*, 152.

its landscaping, the views it enjoys, particularly down to and over water, its ornamentation with statues, and other features.[26]

Alberti's instructions had also contained practical details concerning the direction of prevailing winds and the siting of important rooms at points of the compass which might best ensure all-year comfort for its inhabitants. 'Every consideration must be given to region, weather, use, and comfort – to keeping out biting Boreas and chill from air and ground in cold climates, or the troublesome sun in hot ones; and to letting in the refreshing breath of the heavens and a reasonable amount of pleasant light from all directions.'[27] This was the era of Capability Brown, who had, coincidentally, associations with several of the great houses that Leoni had earlier built, including two with remarkable importance from the point of view of landscaping: *Moor Park*, which had boasted one of the finest formal gardens of the seventeenth century, before its new owner allowed Capability Brown to turn it into a more 'natural' environment, and *Stowe House*, which the same celebrated landscape artist was to convert into a model for classical garden design for the next two centuries.[28]

Editions of Leoni's *Alberti*, containing long sections in the fifth Book concerning siting and landscape, must have been popular with men of the calling of Launcelot Brown, who would have been in his prime when the definitive 1755 edition was published. Alberti's classical ideas, already culled by him before 1450 from Vitruvius and Pliny the Elder, chimed felicitously with the eighteenth-century fashion for manipulating nature in a way not visibly artificial. And humanity was seen inside the landscape structure, at harmony with its own creative manipulation. Alexander Pope, in his somewhat sycophantic *Epistle to Richard Boyle, Earl of Burlington*, congratulates the noble lord on his good taste in gardening, and notes there Viscount Cobham's estate at *Stowe*, where Leoni had constructed Palladian arches and possibly designed the northern

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[26] *Ibid.*, 145. The descriptions and situations described by Jane Austen in Chapter 10 of *Pride and Prejudice*, ed. cit., are remarkably similar to these judgements on landscape, even including the delights of fishing in a conversation there between Messrs Darcy and Gardiner; *cfr.* below, p.13, *note 33*.

[27] *Ibid.*, 146. Those concerns recur in Leoni's own recommendations in his *To the Reader*.

[28] Sir William Temple remarked on magnificence of the formal garden at *Moor Park* in a letter of 1685; see Martyn Pedrick, *The Grosvenor Legacy* (Rickmansworth. Riverside Books, 1989), 85-88.

entrance porticos.[29] The harmony expressed there by Pope is in its way a kind of apotheosis of Alberti's landscaping. It might also go some way to explain the apparently materialistic opinions manifested by Elizabeth Bennet when speaking of *Pemberley House* in *Pride and Prejudice*, since Mr Darcy's character, in conformity with contemporary socio-philosophical thought, might be seen as the personification of the good taste and beauty of his surroundings, both in the woodland of the park and in the elegance of the great house itself.

Elizabeth Bennet's journey to Derbyshire, and to *Pemberley* reminds the reader that for the English middle classes the practice of visiting such country mansions, like Grand Tourists stranded in the English shires, was evidently very fashionable in itself. Elizabeth is said to be 'tired of great houses, after going over so many, she really had no pleasure in fine carpets or satin curtains.' In the case of Mr Darcy's *Pemberley*, it must be said that it is Elizabeth Bennet's curiosity about its owner which spurs her on to inspect the estate. Indeed Jane Austen's narrative reduces Elizabeth's visits to Derbyshire's architectural delights to merely 'robbing it [the county] of a few petrified spas.'[30] Questioned by her sister Jane, Elizabeth jokingly attributes her falling in love with Mr Darcy to her first sight of the magnificent estate, and confesses, 'I believe I must date it from my first seeing his beautiful grounds at Pemberley.'[31] Elizabeth's response is understandably not taken seriously by her sister, but the underlying reality of her statement is soon appreciated openly by her more materialistically minded mother, content that her daughter will soon be in the £10,000 per annum bracket. And Elizabeth's first impression of *Pemberley* chimes with a more materialistic viewpoint:

> It was a large, handsome stone building, standing well on rising ground and backed by a ridge of high woody hills, – and in front, a stream of such natural importance was swelled into greater but without any artificial appearance. Its banks were neither formal, nor falsely adorned. Elizabeth was delighted. She had never seen a place for which nature had done more, or where natural beauty had been so little counteracted by an awkward taste. They

[29] For more positive speculation concerning the traditionally uncertain nature of Leoni's work at Stowe, see the *Stoic*, XXIII, 4, (Dec. 1968), 160-1.

[30] *Pride and Prejudice*, 193-94. Tradition has it that Jane Austen's model for *Pemberley* was *Chatsworth House*, a notion to be followed in Joe Wright's newly filmed version of the novel, while *Basildon Park* becomes another *Netherfield*.

[31] *Ibid.*, 297.

> were all of them warm in their admiration, and at that moment she felt, that to be mistress of Pemberley might be something.[32]

Elizabeth's inspection of the estate from the panoramic site of *Pemberley House*, produces descriptions not unlike the views counselled in Leoni's translation of Alberti: 'I would prefer to locate the house of a gentleman somewhere dignified, rather than in a particularly fertile stretch of land, where it could enjoy all the benefit and delight of breeze, sun and view [...]; it should be in view, and have itself a view of some city, town, stretch of coast, or plain, or it should have within sight the peaks of some notable hills or mountains, delightful gardens and attractive haunts for fishing and hunting.'[33] And Elizabeth Bennet's inspection and admiration of the house and its surroundings continues:

> Elizabeth, after slightly surveying it, went to a window to enjoy its prospect. The hill, crowned with wood, from which they had descended, receiving increased abruptness from the distance, was a beautiful object. Every disposition of the ground was good; and she looked on the whole scene, the river, the trees scattered on its banks, and the winding of the valley, as far as she could trace it, with delight. As they passed into other rooms, these objects were taking different positions; but from every window there were beauties to be seen. The rooms were lofty and handsome, and their furniture suitable to the fortune of their proprietor; but Elizabeth saw, with admiration of his taste, that it was neither gaudy nor uselessly fine; with less of splendour, and more real elegance than the furniture of Rosings.
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> "And of this place," thought she, "I might have been mistress!"[34]

Elizabeth and the others leave the house, enter the woods, and reach higher ground which gave many charming views of the valley, hills in the distance, and woods occasionally revealing the winding stream, again comparable to Alberti's suggestions elsewhere.[35]

The delight in a rural walk with its upland paths and gentle gradients that overlook gorgeous vistas is present in Alberti's other work, notably his volumes *On the Family* and his *Villa*, which contain other eulogies of

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[32] *Ibid.*, 195.

[33] Leon Battista Alberti, *On the Art of Building*, 145.

[34] *Pride and Prejudice*, 196.

[35] *Ibid.*, 200.

rural charm. It is another aspect which justifies for Georgina Masson and Patrick Goode singling out Alberti as the forerunner of European garden architecture.[36] When the Italian Romantics wrote in praise of English gardens, and English cemeteries (which to Ugo Foscolo and Ippolito Pindemonte and others seemed like gardens), they were unconsciously reflecting the Georgians' admiration for and imitation of the Renaissance ideals propounded first by Alberti and popularized by Leoni's luxurious volumes of 1726.

The landscaping of gardens and parks to achieve certain effects was of course a very popular eighteenth-century pastime, and in discussing it writers would often find themselves encountering a basic neo-classic problem – to what extent does man with his art *correct* nature's faults and improve her, and to what extent does his art follow nature, helping her to realize her own most felicitous intentions and display her qualities to best effect? One of the most forward-looking aspects of Alberti's thought, both in the *De re aedificatoria*, and elsewhere was his concept, humanistic in the most modern sense, that man should have faith in his own creative discernment. Nature, indifferent (in a Leopardian sense) to her own creations, throws up spontaneously beauty and mediocrity, whereas the discerning man has a permanent and innate sense of beauty, which allows him to judge how creatively to bring out a consistent ideal of beauty. That ideal, while evidently visible in the buildings which he constructed, is subtly expressed too in man's control of nature, present in his expression of landscape architecture. *Pemberley* is conceived of by Jane Austen as being just such a work to wonder at, and Darcy is regarded as its creator. In responding to aesthetic qualities as being symptomatic of and related to humanity's ordering of its own behaviour, Elizabeth is following a main line of eighteenth-century thought. It is worth reflecting that these incidental eighteenth-century philosophical reflections on the implications of Nature controlled by human hand, had already been physically put into practice by such as Capability Brown, and that Leoni's translation was instrumental in setting forth the similar views expressed by Leon Battista Alberti three centuries earlier. In the *Penguin Illustrated Classics* edition of 1938, Helen Binyon's wood-engravings of the fictional locations of Jane Austen's narrative include her impression of the visit to

[36] Georgina Masson, *Italian Gardens* (London. Thames and Hudson, 1961); Patrick Goode, *The Oxford Book of Gardens* (Oxford. OUP, 2001).

Pemberley. The mansion clearly visible in the background is evidently Anglo-Palladian in style, as is an earlier, less palatial version for *Netherfield*. And when in 1995 under Simon Langton's direction, the BBC drama department created its lavish film of *Pride and Prejudice*, the producers made use of Giacomo Leoni's *Lyme Park* as a splendid surrogate for *Pemberley House*. Critics were not slow to see how this prime example of Italianate Palladian beauty had come to represent in the most English of novels, something which was quintessentially English. James Leoni, as he often styled himself in England, would have been justifiably pleased at that judgment.

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