

CHAPTER 1

THE RENAISSANCE AND ROMAN ANTIQUITY

1. HUMANISM, RENAISSANCE
AND HADRIAN'S VILLA

ONE of the most fascinating aspects of the study of Hadrian's Villa is that its ruins were visited and studied by the greatest artists, architects and antiquarians of history from the Renaissance to the Baroque, through Neoclassicism to the modern age.

After the so-called 'dark centuries' of the Middle Ages,¹ Humanism spread rapidly from Florence and Rome throughout Italy and Europe, rediscovering the treasures of Greek and Roman antiquity with great passion. Ancient manuscripts copied in monasteries proved to be an endless source of information on a world that was long lost, but still full of life. The wisdom of this vanished world inspired every field of study, from architecture to military, from State administration to justice and family law. The great Greek and Latin writers served again as models for education: children studied Greek, Latin and the seven liberal arts of the *trivium* (grammar, dialectic and rhetoric) and the *quadrivium* (geometry, arithmetic, astronomy and music).

The Church and the Italian nobility regarded themselves as the ideal successors of the splendors of the Roman Empire and of classical antiquity. Their legitimacy as heirs of a glorious past used the symbolic language of the Hellenistic and Roman world. First, the Popes perpetuated the ancient symbols of power, choosing the same purple color once used by the Senators of Rome for the robes of the Cardinals. They also assumed the most ancient religious titles, such as that of *Pontifex Maximus*, once belonging to the Roman emperors, now held by the pope himself.

In the fifteenth century, Biondo Flavio wrote that cardinals and Popes were the successors of St. Peter and of the Apostles, but also, and more importantly, that they were the heirs of the Roman Emperors and Senators.² Continuity with the past consisted in one of the most ancient symbols of power: luxury, which meant scenic and monumental architecture, humanistic culture and patronage of the arts.

Roman Emperors – especially Augustus and Hadrian – embellished Rome and the Empire with exceptional buildings and monuments, to show their power and wealth. They constructed palaces and public buildings such as baths, theatres and circuses, aqueducts and sewers, bridges and roads, all of equal strength and majestic size.

Following their example, Cardinals and Popes promoted ambitious plans to restore the splendors of Rome. Their example was followed by the noble families in the States and Kingdoms of Italy, soon imitated by other European



FIG. 1. Hadrian's Villa, Great Baths, the *Frigidarium*.

monarchies. After centuries of decay and neglect, Rome rose from its ruins, embellished with new churches, squares, streets and palaces, and reached a population of one hundred thousand inhabitants;³ the same happened in the most important Italian cities, which were themselves also enriched by splendid monuments and works of art.

Art and culture were the keystones of that revolution: artists studied the classical texts and were able to express their creativity freely in architecture, sculpture and painting. During the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries Italy saw an extraordinary and unique concentration of geniuses, of multi-faceted talents, such as Biondo Flavio, Leon Battista Alberti, Donato Bramante, Francesco di Giorgio Martini, Andrea Palladio, Pirro Ligorio, Raphael, Michelangelo, Leonardo, Baldassarre Peruzzi, Antonio and Giuliano da Sangallo, Giovanni da Udine, and many, many others.

It had all started in Florence, but the secular patronage of the Florentines was very quickly replaced by the reli-

¹ Biondo Flavio (1392-1463), who rediscovered Hadrian's Villa in 1450, was the first to use the term «Middle Ages» to indicate the period of time between the splendor of the late Roman Empire and its rebirth in the fifteenth century in his *Historiarum ab inclinatione Romanorum imperii Decades* (*Decades of History from the Deterioration of the Roman Empire*), published in 1483.

² HOLLINGSWORTH, RICHARDSON 2010, p. 1.

³ In imperial times Rome reached the number of one million inhabitants, HOLLINGSWORTH, RICHARDSON 2010: «In 1400, the city was shabby and dilapidated, with a population of 17,000 [...]. By 1650 it had become a thriving metropolis with a population over 100,000, a city of grand roads and piazzas, magnificent churches and superb palaces and villas, a visual statement of a triumphant Catholic Church».

CHAPTER 2

HADRIAN'S VILLA IN THE FIFTEENTH CENTURY:
REDISCOVERY AFTER OBLIVION1. THE DESCRIPTIONS OF THE *HISTORIA AUGUSTA*
AND OF SEXTUS AURELIUS VICTOR,
ABANDONMENT AND THE REDISCOVERY

Statura fuit procerus, forma comptus, flexo ad pectinem capillo, promissa barba, ut vulnera, quae in facie naturalia erant, tegeret, habitudine robusta. Equitavit ambulavitque plurimum armisque et pilo se semper exercuit. Venatus frequentissime leonem manu sua occidit. Venando autem iugulum et costam fregit. Venationem semper cum amicis participavit. In convivio tragœdias comœdias Atellanas sambucas lectores poetas pro re semper exhibuit.

Tiburтинam Villam mire exaedicavit, ita ut in ea et provinciarum et locorum celeberrima nomina inscriberet, velut Lyceum, Academicum, Prytaneum, Canopum, Poicilen, Tempe vocaret. Et, ut nihil praetermitteret, etiam inferos finxit.

(*Scriptores Historiae Augustae*, Aelii Spartiani
De Vita Hadriani, xxvi.1-5)

He was tall of stature and elegant in appearance; his hair was curled on a comb, and he wore a full beard to cover up the natural blemishes on his face; and he was very strongly built. He rode and walked a great deal and always kept himself in training by the use of arms and the javelin. He also hunted, and he used often to kill a lion with his own hand, but once in a hunt he broke his collar-bone and a rib; these hunts of his he always shared with his friends. At his banquets he always furnished, according to the occasion, tragedies, comedies, Atellan farces, players on the sambuca, readers, or poets. His villa at Tibur was marvelously constructed, and he actually gave to parts of it the names of provinces and places of the greatest renown, calling them, for instance, Lyceum, Academia, Prytaneum, Canopus, Poecile and Tempe. And in order not to omit anything, he even made a Hades.¹

AFTER outlining the personality of Emperor Hadrian (FIG. 1), Portrait of Hadrian] his controversial character, his passion for hunting and convivial banquets with friends, the *Historia Augusta* says that he «gave to parts of it the names of provinces and places of the greatest renown calling them *Lyceum*, *Academia*, *Prytaneum*, *Canopus*, *Poecile* and *Tempe*. And not to omit anything, he even made a Hades». This somewhat cryptic sentence was the starting point for all studies and research; from the Renaissance on, architects, archaeologists and antiquarians tried to identify the buildings, the valley of Tempe, the Hades, and so were born the names of the buildings that we still use today. Since there is no evidence to justify a change, it is better to keep the traditional names without inventing new ones, as was recently done, causing great confusion.

In the fourth century AD historian Sextus Aurelius Victor briefly mentioned Hadrian's Villa in his *De Caesaribus*:²



FIG. 1. Portrait of Hadrian, from Baiae.
Naples, National Archaeological Museum.

Deinde, uti solet tranquillis rebus, remissior rus proprium Tibur secessit permissa urbe Lucio Aelio Caesari. Ipse, uti beatis locupletibus mos, palatia exstruere, curare epulas signa tabulas pictas; postremo omnia satis anxie prospicere, quae luxur lasciviaeque essent.

Then, when all was quiet, after entrusting Rome to Lucius Aelius Caesar, he retired into his countryside at Tivoli. And, as the happy and rich usually do, he spent his time building palaces, offering banquets, arranging statues and paintings, and finally longed for everything that was luxurious or lascivious.

During his reign, Hadrian travelled all over the Empire, and rarely stayed in his Villa; he spent the last years of his life in Baiae, where he died after a prolonged illness. We know very little about the final period of life of the Villa: in the absence of stratigraphic excavations there is no reliable data on its final abandonment and destruction. According to modern historians such as Volpi, Petit-Radel, Nibby, Moroni and Lanciani,³ Emperors Caracalla (209-217 AD) and Constantine (306-337 AD) had already

¹ English translation in the very useful website *Lacus Curtius*: http://penelope.uchicago.edu/Thayer/L/Roman/Texts/Historia_Augusta/Hadrian/z*.html.

² Also online: <https://ia902606.us.archive.org/21/items/decaesariabusliboopichgoog/decaesariabusliboopichgoog.pdf>

³ VOLPI 1745, pp. 402-403; PETIT-RADEL 1815, p. 435; NIBBY 1827, p. 7; MORONI 1855, pp. 98-99; LANCIANI 1906, p. 6.

CHAPTER 3

FRANCESCO DI GIORGIO MARTINI.
THE MOST ANCIENT DRAWINGS OF THE ACCADEMIA

1. BIOGRAPHICAL NOTES

FRANCESCO DI GIORGIO MARTINI (1439-1501-FIG. 1) was born in Siena on September 23rd, 1439, and died either on November 29th, 1501, or in January 1502 according to other sources.¹ He was one of the most extraordinary Italian artists of the second half of the fifteenth century: draftsman, painter, sculptor, architect, engineer and diplomat. Between 1460 and 1470 he travelled for study to Florence and Rome,² where it seems that he studied with the painter Vecchietta and through him met Pope Pius II Piccolomini and Biondo Flavio. Following the advice of the latter, Francesco visited the most important archaeological monuments of Lazio and Campania, proof of which is seen in his drawings of the ruins of *Baiae*, *Avernus* and other ancient sites.³

From 1463 to 1478 he worked as a military architect and engineer in the Italian region of Marche, designing and building a series of innovative castles, such as those of Cagli, San Leo and Montecerignone, and the fortresses of Sassocorvaro, Frontone and Fossombrone.⁴ He also designed machines of war, such as catapults, and ornaments of various types, from capitals to iron gates: a multifaceted talent.

In 1477 he was called by Federico da Montefeltro, Duke of Urbino, to his court where he designed part of the Palazzo Ducale; he is also the designer of the *trompe l'œil* wooden inlays for the Studiolo in Urbino and in Gubbio, this last today is in the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York.⁵

In those same years, Francesco translated Vitruvius' *De Architectura* into Italian, and in 1480 he wrote his *Trattato di architettura civile e militare* (*Treatise on civilian and military architecture*), theorizing that the proportions of the buildings should be modelled on those of the human body, which to him was the center of the world, and a symbol of perfection and harmony. The manuscript of the *Trattato* belonged for some time to Leonardo da Vinci, who added handwritten annotations in 1506; it is now in the Biblioteca Laurenziana of Florence.⁶

2. FRANCESCO DI GIORGIO MARTINI
AND HADRIAN'S VILLA

He was one of the first architects to visit the Villa in 1465,⁷ fifteen years after its rediscovery by Biondo Flavio in



FIG. 1. Portrait of Francesco di Giorgio Martini (from Internet).

1450,⁸ and a few years after the publication of the *Commentarii* of Pope Pius II Piccolomini (1461), with a brief description of the ruins.⁹

Francesco left two series of drawings representing buildings of Hadrian's Villa, as confirmed by the annotation «Tibolj vecchio» («Old Tivoli»); together with the drawings of Fra' Giocondo these are the oldest graphic documentation of the Tiburtine Villa that have come down to us.

The first set of drawings is dated 1465, and we know that Francesco was living in Rome at that period: it consists of sketches, now in the Museo degli Uffizi of Florence.¹⁰ The plans were drawn on the spot, and have meas-

¹ MALTESE 1967; ERICSSON 1980, pp. 59-61; VASORI 1980, p. 22; BURNS 1993, pp. 331-333; MACDONALD, PINTO 1997, p. 239; RANALDI 2001, pp. 29, 31, 33.

² BURNS 1993, p. 412.

³ VASORI 1980, p. 22; RANALDI 2001, p. 29.

⁴ See the website of the Italian Region of Marche: <http://www.cultura.marche.it>.

⁵ It is the so called Studiolo of Guidobaldo, which originally was in the Palazzo Ducale of Gubbio; in 1879 was bought by prince Massimo Lancellotti and finally in 1939 was acquired by the Metropolitan Museum in New York. The Studiolo of Federico da Montefeltro is still in Urbino, and Francesco was one of the designers.

⁶ Inv. no. 282, *Codice Ashburnham* 361. Leonardo met Francesco di Giorgio Martini in Milan between 1485 and 1490.

⁷ MACDONALD, PINTO 1997, p. 239.

⁸ In his book *Italia illustrata* BIONDO FLAVIO understood that the ruins of *Tiboli vecchio* (old Tivoli) belonged to the Villa of Emperor Hadrian described in the *Historia Augusta*. Written between 1448 and 1453 (and dedicated to Pope Nicholas V), *Italia illustrata* was published after the death of its author in 1474. The Italian translation, ed. by Lucio Fauno, was printed in 1522: *Roma instaurata et Italia illustrata*, transl. by Lucio Fauno, Venezia, 1558, pp. 104-105.

⁹ TOTARO 1984.

¹⁰ In the Gabinetto dei Disegni e delle Stampe: BURNS 1993.

CHAPTER 7

PIRRO LIGORIO.
GREAT ANTIQUARIAN AND FIRST SCHOLAR

1. BIOGRAPHICAL NOTES

PIRRO LIGORIO (FIG. 1) was born in Naples in 1512 and died in Ferrara in 1583; he was «a typical universal man of the Renaissance, scholar in all fields, painter, architect and antiquarian».¹ Although he was Michelangelo's successor as architect of the Basilica of Saint Peter's, an appointment that shows how much his work was appreciated by his contemporaries,² his name is generally less well-known. He is mainly known as the person who carried out the first excavations in Hadrian's Villa and for giving to its buildings some of the names that we use today.

Ligorio lived and worked in Rome, where he moved in 1534 *c.*, and at first decorated the façades of palaces and buildings. His works were influenced by great artists of his times: Raphael for painting, Donato Bramante and Baldassarre Peruzzi for architecture.

In 1549 he entered the service of Ippolito II d'Este, Cardinal of Ferrara, as antiquarian.³ From 1550 to 1555, and in the years after 1560, he was responsible for the design and decoration of the Villa d'Este in Tivoli, and excavated Hadrian's Villa in search of ancient marbles for its decoration (see below).

He soon established himself as one of the most distinguished scholars of Roman antiquity, and acted as a 'tour guide' for Daniele Barbaro (Patriarch of Aquileia), and his companion Andrea Palladio, during their visit in Rome in 1554.⁴ In those years, he witnessed the inexorable destruction of Roman antiquities to provide building materials for the new Basilica of Saint Peter's: for example, the demolition of the Arch of Augustus, which had just been found in the Roman Forum.⁵

The sixteenth-century scholar Pighius⁶ called him «architectus ingeniosissimus et antiquitatum studiosissimus» (most ingenious architect and greatest scholar of antiquities).⁷ As Winner⁸ explains, he was a great master of drawing, unsurpassed in

inventing, according to the ancient way. Hair and hairstyles for women, details of costumes, shepherds' crooks, musical instruments – sistrum, harp, flute of Pan, cymbals – urns for water, cups, goatskins for wine, altars, vases with handles, cornucopias. When his Arcadian characters move within a landscape, the background is mainly composed of a cave, a row of Herms, a statue, a fence or a tree, which are described in detail (FIG. 2).



FIG. 1. Pirro Ligorio, hypothetical portrait (from Internet).

From 1558 his name appears in the accounting books of the Vatican as Papal architect.⁹ He rearranged the Cortile del Belvedere,¹⁰ built the magnificent Casina of Pius IV in the Vatican Gardens,¹¹ and designed many buildings in Rome, including part of the large colonnaded courtyard of Sant'Ivo alla Sapienza. He also was a landscape architect, inventor of the magnificent gardens of the Villa

¹ COFFIN 2004, p. 140.

² WINNER 1994, p. 21; DALY DAVIS 2008, p. 16.

³ DE FRANCESCHINI 1991, p. 6; WINNER 1994, p. 20; BYATT 1993; VAGENHEIM 2003, p. 63; LIGORIO 2005, p. 110, DALY DAVIS 2008, pp. 15-16.

⁴ ZORZI 1959, p. 22; MACDONALD, PINTO 1997, p. 237; COFFIN 2004, p. 18. See chapter 6 on Palladio

⁵ COFFIN 2004, p. 11; LIGORIO 2005, p. 110.

⁶ Stephanus Winandus Pighius (1520-1604), humanist, philologist and antiquarian, arrived in Rome in 1547 and became secretary of Cardinal Marcello Cervini (the future Pope Marcellus II).

⁷ MASSABÒ RICCI 1994, p. 48.

⁸ WINNER 1994, p. 27.

⁹ WINNER 1994, p. 20; BORGHESE 2010.

¹⁰ WINNER 1994, p. 20; VAGENHEIM 2003, p. 63.

¹¹ WINNER 1994, p. 21; LIGORIO 2005, p. 111. See also VAGENHEIM 2003, p. 63: «He also works at the Lateran, builds palaces in Rome (Piazza Navona, Palazzo Lancellotti) and magnificent gardens outside of Rome, especially Bomarzo, Bagnaia and Papacqua[...]. He was also responsible for the design of the magnificent tomb of Paul IV, which is located in the church of Santa Maria sopra Minerva, in Rome».

CHAPTER 13

FRANCESCO CONTINI. THE FIRST COMPLETE PLAN
AND RATIONAL DESCRIPTION OF THE VILLA

1. BIOGRAPHICAL NOTES

FRANCESCO CONTINI (1599-1669) was born in Rome on July 27th, 1599, and died there on 20th July 1660.¹ A professional architect, he mainly designed and built churches and palaces in Rome. From the beginning of his career he worked for the Barberini family, who were his most important patrons and entrusted him with several projects, including the first Barberini Palace in via dei Giubbonari, part of the monastery of Santa Susanna in Rome, the church of Santa Rosalia in Palestrina and also the Casino Barberini near Palestrina, which is considered his masterpiece.²

There is almost no information about Contini's private life, and he is known solely for his architectural work. In 1657 his name was included in a list of Roman architects, with a positive evaluation:³ «he measures well, he is faithful and diligent, is supported by the Barberini family, has wife and children».

2. FRANCESCO CONTINI AND HADRIAN'S VILLA

Francesco Contini has a very important role in the history of Hadrian's Villa, since it was he who was commissioned by Cardinal Francesco Barberini to draw the most ancient general plan of the Villa that has come down to us. Contini investigated the Villa from 1634 to 1637.⁴ Payments for his trips to Tivoli between 1634 and 1636 are recorded in the Barberini archives: together with the engraver, Domenico Parasacchi, he spent 52 days in the Villa between June 1635 and March 1636.⁵ The general plan was published in 1668: some rooms are marked with numbers and the captions give information of different kind (see below).

Before his general plan, Contini had already had experience of Hadrian's Villa, having drawn a 'clean copy' of the plan of the Accademia by Pirro Ligorio,⁶ in around 1634. In the general plan of 1668 he published a newly edited plan of the Accademia.

3. THE PLAN OF THE ACCADEMIA IN THE
'CLEAN COPY' OF LIGORIO'S SKETCH (1634 APPROX.)
(plan FIG. 1)

Annotations—The Ligorio sketch (see chapter 7) and the 'clean copy' of Contini belonged to the *Museo Cartaceo* (*Paper Museum*) of Cassiano dal Pozzo,⁷ and are today in the Royal Library at Windsor in England. The drawing attributed to Contini dates back to 1634,⁸ thanks to the annotation (FIG. 2) in his own hand, on the verso of the sheet:⁹ «Plan of a part of the Villa of Hadrian in Tivoli, drawn and measured by Pirro Ligorio, distinguished Antiquary, who wrote a discourse on it preserved in manuscript / and which has been worked up from a sketches of the said Ligorio in the form in which you see it, by Francesco Contini of Rome. The drawings of the said Villa were taken to France by M. d'Autreville, who had bought them from a Ferrarese dealer. And this part is believed to be either that, or near to that, where Monsignor Bulgarini, Secretary of the Congregazione dell'Acque, currently owns the vineyard».

The annotation gives important information on the history of the preparatory sketches which Ligorio drew for his general plan of Hadrian's Villa;¹⁰ he left several blank sheets in the Codice di Torino (Codex of Turin), and in his Codices in various occasions he mentioned a general plan,¹¹ which probably was never completed. Contini explained that the drawings were taken to France by Monsù d'Autreville.¹²

According to Eugenia Salza Prina Ricotti,¹³ the 'clean copy' was not made by Contini, who never had an opportunity to see the sketch of Ligorio; furthermore, the Belvedere Ac1 has a wrong oval shape, and Contini would never make such a mistake. Opposing her theory, Ian Campbell proved that the drawing is an auto-

¹ HAGER 1983.

² *Ibidem*.

³ «Misura bene, è in ben concetto di fedele e diligente, è provvisoriato dai SS.ri Barberini, ha moglie e figli» (Heimbürger Ravalli, quoted *ibidem*, p. 513).

⁴ CAMPBELL 2004, p. 186, quoting MAC DONALD, PINTO 1995, p. 222.

⁵ MACDONALD, PINTO 1997, p. 250: «Fra il 1634 ed il 1636 si sono registrati numerosi pagamenti in suo favore relativi all'indagine. [...] Fra il giugno 1635 ed il marzo 1636 Contini e l'incisore Domenico Parasacchi trascorsero 52 giorni nella Villa». They quote a Codex in the Vatican Library: Archivio Barberini, *Registro de' Mandati*, 1630-1636, Card. Francesco Barberini Sr., Computisteria 80: fol. 156r, no. 3789; fol. 180v, no. 4050; fol. 189v, no. 4164; and also fol. 156r, no. 3789.

⁶ See chapter 7 on Pirro Ligorio.

⁷ See chapter 14 on Cassiano dal Pozzo.

⁸ Windsor RL 10389, *Architettura Civile*, fol. 36. See CAMPBELL 2004, catalogue n. 53 pp. 184 and 186, fig. at p. 185.

⁹ CAMPBELL 2004, p. 185, with English translation; see also MACDONALD, PINTO 1997, fig. at p. 247: «Pianta d'una parte della Villa d'Hadriano à Tivoli vista & levata da Pirro Ligorio Antiquario insigne, che di essa fece Discorso, che si vede Manoscritto / Laquale estata da uno Schizzo del Sudetto tirata nella forma che si vede da

Francesco Contini Romano. I Disegni di detta Villa furon portati in Francia da / Monsù d'Autreville, che gl'aveva compri da un Rigattiere Ferrarese. & / Questa Parte si crede sia o quella, ò vicino à quella dove di presente hà la Vigna / Messer Bulgarini Segretario della Congregazione dell'Acque».

¹⁰ See chapter 7 on Pirro Ligorio.

¹¹ TEN 2005, p. XIV.

¹² Cassiano Dal Pozzo tried in vain to get the drawings: see chapters 7 and 14.

¹³ SALZA PRINA RICOTTI 1973b, pp. 21-22 wrote: «la copia fu eseguita a tavolino e chi la fece non era mai stato sul posto; questo disegnatore quindi non poteva essere il Contini che aveva così bene esaminato la zona e non sarebbe mai incorso in un simile errore [...]. La stessa pianta di Contini prova in modo inconfutabile che egli non possedette mai alcuna documentazione grafica che illustrasse o chiarisse il testo di Ligorio» («The copy was drawn in a studio, and the author was never on the site; the draftsman could not be Contini, who had examined the area so well and would never have made such a mistake [...]. The plan of Contini proves that he never possessed any graphic documentation which illustrated or explained the text of Ligorio»).