

## *Honestamente Bella,*

### **Alvise Cornaro's Temperate View of Lady Architecture and Her Maids, Phronesis and Sophrosine.**

By Marco Frascari

## *A Long and Happy Life*

Being one of the most intriguing and eccentrically significant figures of the Veneto Renaissance, Alvise (Luigi, Aloysius, Lewis) Cornaro (1484–1566) is deservedly famous for his *Trattato de la Vita Sobria (Treatise on Sober Life)*, a celebrated dissertation on how to accomplish a satisfying longevity. For several years the treatise was known in manuscript form and finally it was published in 1558. A quarter of century after Cornaro's death, Giacomo Alvise Cornaro, his favorite nephew, edited and published a complete edition of his writings on the sober life.<sup>i</sup> Measured in terms of significance, Cornaro's strong desire for reaching an old age—it has been verified that he had intentionally misrepresented his own real age to make the point—is essentially a multifaceted awareness and support for an increase of quality in life.<sup>ii</sup> The real goal of living a long life is not length only but duration of quality, i.e. a long lasting and living well.

For Cornaro, the attraction of longevity is based on the understanding that old age is, above all, a happy phase of life—a line of thought that represented a major departure from traditional Western advocacy for longevity. Most previous advocates for long life had seen the attainment of longevity as process rejuvenation or eternal youth, since for them old age harbored senescence, a depressing quality of life.

Cornaro's treatise has been reprinted and translated repeatedly and usually under conspicuous titles, such as *The Sober Life*, *Sure Methods of Attaining a Long and Healthful Life*, or *How to Live 100*. Many philosophers and physicians carefully read Cornaro's proposal for a happy, long life and have expressed strong opinions of it. Even though Girolamo Cardano, a renowned physician and famous mathematician, points out that Cornaro is talking more as a philosopher rather than a physician, in *Twilight of the Idols*, Friedrich Nietzsche voices his disdain for Cornaro's treatise and the proposed diet (VI:1).

Everybody knows Cornaro's famous book in which he recommends a meager diet for a long and happy life—a virtuous life, too. Few books have been read so widely; even now thousands of copies are sold in England every year. I do not doubt that scarcely any book (except the Bible) has done as much harm, has shortened as many lives, as this well-intentioned oddity. Why? Because Cornaro mistakes the effect for the cause. The worthy Italian thought his diet was the cause of his long life, whereas the precondition for a long life, the extraordinary slowness of his metabolism, was the cause of his slender diet. He was not free to eat little or much; his frugality was not a matter of “free will”—he made himself sick when he ate more. But whoever has a rapid metabolism not only does well to eat properly, but needs to. A scholar in our time, with his rapid consumption of nervous energy, would simply destroy himself on Cornaro's diet. *Crede experto*—believe me, I've tried.

However, physicians had a much more positive view of Cornaro's diet. For instance, the initiator of the macrobiotic diet, a physician of the Enlightenment, Wilhelm Hufeland, in the first lecture of his *Art of Human Life Prolongation*, praises Cornaro for his sober and *antilitteram* macrobiotic and physiological approach to dieting.<sup>iii</sup> Cornaro pointed out that longevity allows longer active contributions to the cultural and intellectual world-making and accordingly he was a very active writer. His other writings and letters were not published during his lifetime; he mostly wrote about himself, his family and friends, agriculture, land reclamation, and architecture.

Numerous references to Cornaro's architectural awareness and building sapience appear in the footnotes of several articles devoted to the architecture and the architects of Renaissance Veneto, but the significance of his actual contribution to architecture and architectural theory has never been carefully considered and placed within a larger context of architectural beliefs and principles. Beside a monograph on Cornaro's architecture by Luigi Fiocco, the scholar that discovered the two manuscript versions of Cornaro's treatise on architecture on the shelves of the Ambrosiana Library in Milan, there are a limited number of articles on his architectural achievements mostly by "local" architectural historians.<sup>iv</sup> A well-structured exhibition devoted to the totality of his cultural opus went little beyond the restricted boundary of the local intelligentsia and specialized field experts.<sup>v</sup> Among the major architectural historians, only Manfredo Tafuri had taken notice of Cornaro's unique architectural charisma within a larger framework of the world of architectural theory by dedicating a few studies to Cornaro's unique architectural proposals for Venice.<sup>vi</sup>

During the beginning of the 1980s, his main residence in Padua, a tangible expression of Cornaro's understanding of living a well-tempered life, has been properly restored.<sup>vii</sup> It is time then to try to understand Cornaro's carefully intended demonstrations of a gently edified life where needs produced by intellectual and material desires amalgamate into a powerful cosmopoiesis.

Properly educated in jurisprudence at the University of Padua and a well known and politically active Paduan landowner, Cornaro was also a significant patron of the arts and an effective theatrical sponsor. During his youth—as stated in his memoirs—he was an active member of a Venetian *Compagnia della Calza* (Gang of the Sock). These *Compagnie della Calza* youth gangs were very politically active and they used their planning and implementation of private and public leisure, pageantry, and entrainment as political tools to influence the Venetian Administration. The members of these

*compagnie* (gangs) to identify their appurtenance to a specific gang showed off a single identical heavily embroidered sock (*calza*), hence the name “Gangs of the Sock.” When Cornaro was 18 years old, he became a member of the *Compagnia degli Zardinieri* (Gang of the Gardeners). The *Zardinieri* were the first *compagnia* capable of organizing comedies and intermezzi, and Cornaro wrote a few pieces for them and also for the similar *Compagnia degli Ortolani* (Gang of the Produce Growers).<sup>viii</sup>

Being an extremely influential person, Alvise Cornaro’s presence on the architectural stage of the *500 Veneto* is not only important for working the connections among key characters of the play, but above all for revealing the hidden, but essentially ethic, interactions taking place between theory and practice during an authored world-making, i.e. a meaningful architectural cosmoipoiesis. Working together with the members of his troupe, Angelo Beolco, alias Ruzante, a play writer and actor (1502 to March 17, 1542), and Giovanni Maria Falconetto, a painter and architect (c. 1468–1535), Cornaro professed strong and novel architectural opinions.

In his architectural writings, building campaigns, theatre sponsoring, and multifaceted benefactions, Cornaro put forward a patent conviction that prudent and temperate architectural factures must be sources for a blessed sustainable architecture, which was capable of giving mental and physical sustenance to real human happiness. His view of the sustenance of happiness through an architectural cosmoipoiesis is based on his understanding that happiness quickly fades away without the presence of the assimilated consciousness that has produced it and that architecture can help to maintain it by fostering a *vita beata*: a good life.

Carefully thought and built architecture provides this particular absorbed status of happiness: a eudemonic status whose primary goal is happiness and well-being through personal enlightenment and experience. Eudemonic is philosophical jargon, which means

being possessed by a demon. It is like saying that a compulsive gambler, in entering a casino, is immediately possessed by the demon of gambling. In an architecture properly built for happiness, people in entering happy buildings will be possessed by the demon of happiness. To be happy is to perform the essential human functions well, and happy buildings physically and metaphorically embody the excellence or virtue that enables their blessed inhabitants to realize a “*vita beata*.” This quasi-doctrine of the *vita beata* is Cornaro’s fundamental and necessary building attitude to rediscover genial and substantial cosmologies and cosmographies ruling architectural cosmoipoiesis; an architectural world-making predicated on moral imagination rather than on social and behavioral predictions.

### ***Architects’ Vita Beata***

To further develop an understanding of Cornaro’s creation of a *vita beata* and its eudemonic nature, it is crucial to carry on a concise recognition of the nature of architectural happiness. In many contemporary buildings the conceiving and nurturing of architectural happiness has been prevented by a regrettably anti-conceptual amalgamation, i.e. the merger of fashionable elations with financial gratifications. This amalgamation has changed the thought process of many architects: they do not think anymore within architecture, but merely think about architecture.

The responsibility of thinking “within architecture” has become a depressing activity lately. It seems that the majority of architects have forgotten that on the one hand, the function of any theory is to make humanity happy, and on the other hand architecture plays a major role in setting the necessary “high spirits environment” for developing cognitive and sensual activities that are capable of leading the inhabitants of such environments to the delightful facture of life. Even books, such as *The Architecture of Happiness* written by Alain de Botton, which recognizes the role of architecture as an

important milieu to inform the delight of what we are and what we do, cannot answer the question of how to make happy buildings.<sup>ix</sup> De Botton, undertakes a search of a felicitous architecture by describing many buildings that have an eudemonic status, but never gets close to revealing the subtle architectural virtue or *arête* that make them blissfully cosmopoietic events. In other words, he does not reveal why edifices become happy tales of humanity, acquiring new meanings completely dissociated from any original physical significance. Following Aristotle, *arête* is an intellectual excellence/virtue and eudemonia is an activity of soul in accordance with the best and most complete *arête*. Thus the play of architectural virtues as a world-making event provides an excellent intellectual identification with the complex tectonic motifs connecting individuals to a historically, economically, philosophically, and morally determined pleasurable environment.

In dealing with architectural and human happiness it is necessary on the one hand, to identify what is intrinsically valuable and is extrinsically valuable in a building, and on the other hand, to make a distinction between constructing useful desires of shared happiness or construing desire-fulfillments of personal hedonism. The built environment within which we live sets an important backdrop to what we are and what we do. It is the thinking and living within architecture that reflects and casts a light on the values existing in society. However, architectural happiness is not the result of emotional states translated into the built world; it is more about having a building that can be all that it can, i.e. fulfilling human and architectural potentials all together.

Happiness is an ambiguous word. Happiness is hypothetical—a longing, not a categorical imperative, but it is essential for human life. A natural aspiring to joy, happiness is principally satiation of the intellect. Happiness is a sensation that arises from a certain conscious state, namely when elating and enjoying experiences are captivated and assimilated by both the mind and body. By living in an edifice that fosters happiness,

its inhabitants can reach their full potential by blooming or flourishing and being able to display the best characteristics of what they can be.

Sustainable happiness can be viewed as the foundational condition for an alternative approach to architectural sustainability that is presently dominated by a narrowly techno-scientific view, an instrumentalized circumstance that considers Green Architecture an innovation without historical, and above all without human, dimensions. Happily conceived and built edifices make human edification possible and edified human beings can only be involved in cosmopoietic acts. Consequently they can accept only durable and sustainable constructions.

Architectural happiness is both retrospective and prospective in character. It is a journey through the past, present, and future of constructions. These three temporal components of happiness are never alone in their influence upon the feeling of architectural contentment: interrelated and concurrent in their actions, they mutually perform and bring about the edifying potentialities of any well-tempered edifice. Well-tempered buildings must be conceived, built and inhabited happily. Metaphorically speaking, the amalgamation of what it is, was, and will be, reminds the configuring aspects of a typical Italian conversation around the dining table where the meal eaten, its planning and cooking are compared with past and future experiences of planning the eating of other meals.<sup>x</sup> From this point of view, meals and buildings belong to the activity of world-making; a cosmopoietic living totality, where any individual becomes “*copula mundi*,” i.e. the locus of the connection between mind and matter, spirit and substance, food for thought and for the body.

Following the convention of many medieval texts on theory, at the conclusion of the preface of his *De Architectura*, Leon Battista Alberti wishes a joyful grasp of his theory to the reader of the treatise by an imperative directive, *lege feliciter*, “read

happy.”<sup>xi</sup> This conventional wish makes clear that reading is a journey through the text since the condition of delight is not a condition to reach, but a manner of traveling. For Alberti, “man ... is born to be happy.”<sup>xii</sup> In the *De Ictarchia*, following Seneca’s lead, Alberti acknowledges that felicity is an essential condition for humanity that is also the result of architectural virtues. Furthermore, in his allegorical dialogue *Profugiorum ab Eerumna*, he indicates how efficient a well-conceived and built edifice can be in shielding individuals from physical and mental unhappiness.<sup>xiii</sup> The facture of blissful architecture is a crucial activity based on thinking well about the everyday essence of living well by using the ordinary resources of building well. Alberti is following a Tomistic tradition. The Tomists point out that joy is the response to happiness and results from *delectatio in bono*, a gladness to be appreciated in both the sensual and intellectual senses. Fostering a good life, joyful architecture is the result of living well in well-thought and well-built buildings.

If the pursuit of delight in the making and joyful use of buildings is not a futile quest, what are the means or steps by which we should undertake it? Is felicity an actual principle of architectural edification and construction? Are there felicitous buildings, building element or details? In the unfolding of architectural theory and practice, what is the difference between the promise of “feeling happy” and the declaration of “being happy”? Quite often, in the greedy world of fashionable architecture, the answer is given by substituting the vital question, “What is good?” with an escapist question, “What looks good?” In this case, the tail wags the dog; instead of architecture defining and constraining our satisfaction, our gratification delineates architecture. The result is intellectual emptiness where architectural theory is not seen as virtuous pleasure anymore. Consequentially, the notion that the role of edifices and the acts of building should foster happiness has become an elapsed concern. Buildings have become unsustainable and do not offer any sustenance to the human mind.

One of the predicaments to appreciate and comprehend felicitous constructions is that in their designs and theoretical statements, the majority of architects indirectly tackle the question of architectural happiness. The only architect who addressed, in an explicit manner, the matter of virtuous pleasure in architecture is Antonio Averlino (1400–1469), an artist who evolved from the physical alchemy of metal casting (the central doors for the old St Peter's Basilica in Rome) to virtuous alchemy of architecture (the Ca'Granda, the Main Hospital of Milan). A strange Neo-Galenic architect, Averlino was so conscious of the ethical importance of implementing virtuous happiness through constructed works that he carefully selected as his professional designation the Greek name of Filarete ( $\Phi\iota\lambda\alpha\rho\epsilon\tau\epsilon$ , Lover of Intellectual Excellence/Virtue).

In his architectural treatise, the first one ever written in Italian, Filarete indicates that intellectually excellent architects begin construction knowing that they are going to work with the malleable fabric of kinesthetic and visual intelligences and consequently will make our buildings both livable and edifying. In their ambiguous duality of making and doing, virtues are undeniably essential components of any architectural facture. On the one hand, humility, magnanimity, integrity, fortitude, simplicity, and ingenuousness are the edifying virtues to be embodied in the architectural configurations; and on the other hand, prudence and temperance are the cardinal moral standards of architectural edification. For Filarete, all these virtues must be loved and embraced in order for them to become part of our constructed environment. Architects and patrons must appreciate these virtues in an undeniable relationship, so they easily can take on a prudent and temperate tone when they project future constructions, knowing well that they have virtues to protect.

Filarete's *Trattato di Architettura* (1461–1464) is a parable, which begins with a debate initiated while sitting at a dining table and continues in a sequence of social calls and work outings to the construction sites of a new city named Sforzinda, and later to its

port, Plusiapolis. During the visits, the architect Otinona (anagram of Antonio) tutors a young prince in felicitous architecture and righteous happiness by explaining that architecture sustains a beatific life when the edifices increase the inhabitants' potential for investing in emotional ability. For virtuous architects and patrons, happiness is an ultimate goal in life: a final good that combines joy and delight. In architecture, joy is an objective beatitude and results from the making and use of architectural events that make us feel good; whereas delight is a subjective beatitude and results from the intellectual possession of architecture. Identifying the supreme good with an edifying happiness, Otinona strongly asserts that edifices "could grow the soul" of their inhabitants.<sup>xiv</sup>

### *Alvise's Virtues*

The construction of edifices that can grow the soul of their inhabitants was one of main interests of Alvise Cornaro, a Venetian nobleman whose branch of the family had lost its right to be registered in the Golden Book of Venetian Oligarchy and transplanted on the mainland. The son of a Paduan innkeeper, Cornaro spent a great part of his life proving that he was a direct descendant of the noble Venetian family of Cornaro. Alvise was a direct descendent of Doge Marco Cornaro, but unfortunately he was unsuccessful in his attempts to have his Cornaro ancestry recognized by the Venetian Government. Nonetheless, with his characteristic ability of circumnavigating problems, he arranged at least a legitimate Cornaro lineage for his descendants by negotiating the marriage of his daughter Chiara Cornaro to Giovanni Cornaro of the well-known Piscopia branch of the Cornaro family.

Bringing together the actions of a landowner with interest in literature, theatre, agriculture and architecture, Cornaro became a central character within Padua's humanist circle. He was very active in the intellectual and social life of Padua and his house was open to permanent worthy guests and to any notable individual who came to visit Padua.

Furthermore, to strengthen the power of his family unit, Cornaro made education a main issue within the family culture. A demonstration of this is that his great great granddaughter was *Dottoressa* Elena Lucrezia Cornaro, the first woman to be awarded a university degree.

The setting up of a merry and beatific life in the most serene architectural surroundings was the main objective of Cornaro and by fruitfully managing the inheritance from his maternal uncle, Padua Bishop Alvise Angelieri, Cornaro rose to financial well-being by land transactions and real estate development. His economic power, and love for erecting buildings, playwriting, and setting of memory images, combined with a love for temperance, agriculture, and land reclamation, made him a unique and remarkably curious public figure.

Cornaro's concern for architecture was unique. His attitudes toward the past and future of a built environment are crucial for rediscovering an architectural tradition able to mix a happy sustainability with a joyful intellectual sustenance. Many of his contemporaries had recognized Cornaro's extremely influential presence on the architectural stage of the 16th century Veneto. A major publisher of architectural treatises, Francesco Marcolini, praises Cornaro in the preface written to introduce Book IV of Sebastiano Serlio's *Regole Generali dell' Architettura* [Venice 1551, vol. I]. Marcolini gives to Cornaro the authorship of the Loggia in Corte Cornaro even though an inscription on the building says: *Antonius Falconettus archiyectus veronensis MDXXVIII*. In the Seventh Book of the *Regole Generali dell' Architettura* [Settimo Libro, Venetia 1600 p.218] Sebastiano Serlio's himself pays a tribute to Cornaro. In the *Quattro Libri dell' Architettura*, Andrea Palladio speaking of the construction of stairs indicates: "Two sorts of staircases were invented by the magnificent Signor Luigi Cornaro, a gentleman of an excellent judgment, as may be known by the most beautiful loggia, and the most elegantly adorned rooms, which he built for his habitation at Padua." (libro I, cap. xxviii).

Vasari mentions Cornaro's "*bellissima e ordinatissima loggia*" in his *Lives of the Most Excellent Painters, Sculptors, and Architects (Le Vite de' più eccellenti pittori, scultori, ed architettori)*.<sup>xv</sup>

Cornaro mentions his treatise on architecture in another of his writings, the *Apologia*, but by the end of 18th century, it was considered lost. Nonetheless, his manuscript on architecture was discovered by Giuseppe Fiocco, a renowned Veneto art historian, on the shelves of the Ambrosiana Library, in Milan, in 1952. The found manuscript consisted of two drafts of an architectural treatise and the two drafts were bounded together with a copy of Filarete's treatise on architecture, the one own by Cornaro. This binding together with the treatise is an obvious confirmation of the strong influence of Filarete's writings on every level of Cornaro's architectural thinking, ranging from the definition of architectural virtue, to the use, in his own writing, of Filarete's anthropomorphically unique description on how to set the standard for the foot-gauge as the length determined by holding the two hands as fists and joined at the tip of the extended thumbs.<sup>xvi</sup>

Cornaro wrote the two drafts of his architectural treatise at the beginning of the 1550s. Relating to the Venetian political project for a urban *renovatio*,<sup>xvii</sup> Cornaro's view of architecture is deeply rooted within the fertile soil of architectural speculations that nurtured such a diverse group as Francesco Maria Grapaldo's Aristotelian and sapiential *De Partis Aedium*,<sup>xviii</sup> Francesco Colonna's double architectural dreaming of the *Hypnerotomachia Poliphili*,<sup>xix</sup> and the happy city conceived following Platonic-Aristotelian, mystic-Hermetic, and post Counter Reformation religious canons by Francesco Patrizi Di Cherso's *La Citta Felice*.<sup>xx</sup> Cornaro's Epicurean view of happiness can be traced to Francesco Filelfo, the humanist and Greek scholar and friend of Averlino, and forged for him Filarete as a pen name. In an epistle, he points out that Epicurus advocated not only bodily pleasures, but also the mental pleasures that come

from the achieving of wisdom and virtues.<sup>xxi</sup> Another source of Cornaro's Epicurean view is the Cardinal, Francesco Zabarella, a celebrated Paduan canonist, who wrote *De Felicitate Libri III*. Zabarella was the first Christian writer to argue that Epicurus had not been properly appreciated, and that the detested Greek philosopher had exalted mental pleasures over physical.<sup>xxii</sup>

### ***The Third Way***

The nature of Cornaro's theoretical considerations and building practices are alien to most contemporary architectural belief. His pursuit of an architecture fostering high spirits is an amalgamation of visual and rhetorical suggestions derived from methodological meditations, historical contemplations, and practical reflections on life. All Cornaro's thinking took place "within architecture" rather than "about architecture." In his thinking within architecture, Cornaro connects the necessary anamnesis for construing syndromes with critical micro-histories of regional construction.

By looking at the medical paradigm, for instance, one becomes aware of how vital is the interconnecting of diagnostic and critical history. In making a diagnosis, physicians draw their understanding of an infirmity by transacting the infraordinary medical histories dealing with the events of a patient's health and the extraordinary finding of treatments for illness recorded by the history of medicine. In his treatise, Cornaro declares that his scope is:

To write and teach that part of architecture which is for the citizens and the gentlemen, that cannot be learned from Vitruvius, because his text is corrupted or lost, or because nowadays his terminology is not understood, and I learned more from ancient buildings than from his book.

Not only does Cornaro refuse to teach Vitruvius' principles, but also what he considers ancient buildings are not only limited to the Classical Roman Edifices, since he

also considers Gothic buildings such as San Marco in Venice and the Basilica del Santo in Padua worthy of investigation. In considering these two buildings, he praises construction techniques not listed in Vitruvius. Cornaro has a clear anatomical understanding of the building factures, a *forma mentis* clearly resulting from to the dominant anatomical methodology generated by the contemporary Paduan School of medicine combined with the emblematic unassuming nature of architectural making.<sup>xxiii</sup> As in a proper medical anamnesis, Cornaro's perception of architecture derives from history, but is not in itself historical.

Tafuri has described a polarity between *romanitas* (Roman Grandeur) and *mediocritas* (Venetian Modesty) in Venetian architecture. Moreover, in buildings sponsored by some reform-minded patricians, the former type are split between a modest Venetian exterior and a magnificent Roman interior. Those who favored the Roman style tended to be Papalist families such as the Cornaro—the family to which Alvise wanted to be connected again—and the Grimani. Those who wished to maintain traditional Venetian independence, such as Andrea Gritti and the Zen family, preferred the modest style.<sup>xxiv</sup> Alvise Cornaro's view of architecture does not fit this polarity, but rather it shows a “third way;” a reaction to both grandeur and modesty. Cornaro is proposing a radical orthodoxy. In Cornaro's third way, the ultimate truth of a piece of architecture is not contained in embryo in an original motivation, but by the processes developed in its facture in any other instance of it. Any piece of architecture is continuously defined and redefined by a constantly evolving meaning that constructs itself in accordance to its facture and our human physical and mental reactions to it.

A strange marriage between story telling and theory, Cornaro's distinctive endeavors can help to establish the necessary tension between narration and documentation of thinking within architecture. Based on an instinctual merging of two opposed realms, Cornaro's view of architectural constructions has a two-fold nature: an

outward or exoteric makeup and an inward or esoteric character. For him, a successful building results from the integration between solid and dream stuff taking place within the specifics of a clearly defined architectural region.

Architecture's exoteric character results from a technological effort to construct by transmuting lime, mud, reed, and other base materials in meaningful buildings. These constructions are not only transmuted compelling places, but are also ascribed with the capability of prolonging human life. They are, above all, therapeutic places within which is born the esoteric character. Using rational arguments such as price, cost, function, performance and durability, the solid stuff can be entirely bled dry of the dream stuff. However, playing a glorious relationship between the House of Cornaro as Cornaro's Family and the Cornaro's house as the edifice housing the family, Cornaro bridged the abyss between the solid stuff and the dream stuff created by human greed.<sup>xxv</sup>

Therefore I will write to teach and to encourage those citizens so that they get ready to build since I know from the knowledge of this art (*architecture*) is born the delight and the satisfaction of spending. As it happened to me, that as soon I began to understand (*architecture*), the pleasure of building compelled me to build beyond my means. However, it never had happened that I was not more than happy. Because these constructions, at my age of LXXV years old, I get myself free from the two extreme conditions that are the mortal enemy of old age: the severe cold and the intense heat. A group of rooms is warm without any stove and with just a little bit of fire and others (*rooms*) are cool at the time of the great heat. They are not humid and windy, because I built them wisely, following the art of architecture which has the power to prolong human life. (Page 89)

Cornaro's unusual view of the nature of building begins a line of technological understanding that culminates in the surprising anatomic drawings of edifices elaborated by Giovanni Maria Rusconi during the middle decade of 16th century and printed in 1590 as a treatise together with a collation of Vitruvian excerpts.<sup>xxvi</sup> This curious lineage shows that Cornaro's view of architecture is vital for bringing to light a hidden, but essential

condition of blissfully thinking in architecture. It is a technology founded on a tradition that generates a special “tuning” of the mind and the body in relationship to the materials and techniques of construction and their transmutation in a happy domain. It is a tradition that—as stated in his writings—Cornaro saw instituted in the region by traditional building techniques. Cornaro was an *anti littera* advocate for sustainable architecture.

In both of the drafts of his treatise, Cornaro asserts an alternative way for thinking in architecture. As he says, he is making a case for constructing infraordinary buildings not extraordinary edifices.<sup>xxvii</sup> “I talk about rooms for citizens, not for princes.”<sup>xxviii</sup> Cornaro is not taking position against outstanding edifices, but he is promoting architecture as a way of making happy the life of normal individuals. Cornaro is not showing any interest in affected architectural and urban assessments; pragmatically in both the drafts of the treatise, he states that he is not going to give instructions on how to build new cities since that event really never happens. Rather, his instructions are on how to improve life in existing cities and how to use architecture to elate and enjoy quotidian experiences since he sees the high spirits stemming from architecture as a Galenic remedy distilled from a built environment full of a proper balance of humors.

By organizing an operational triumvirate composed of himself, the painter-architect, Giovanni Maria Falconetto, and the playwright-actor, Angelo Beolco, better known by his pen and acting name Ruzante (meaning an obscene and scurried fool), Cornaro’s aim was to set up architecture as an essential component for the instauration and preservation of humor, i.e. a merry life, a *vita allegra*, or to be more precise, considering his temperate approach, the proper locution should be *vita allegra ma non troppo*, a tempered merry life. Both Falconetto and Ruzante together with their families resided in Corte Cornaro and partook of the full life of humors of this epicurean *hortus*.

The intellectual power of the trinity made up of Cornaro, Ruzante, and Falconetto depended on the cooking of allegories, which through their material agents—whether texts or images or real referents—or all of these—convey what lies at the other extreme: the provisional, transcendent idea to which those agents putatively refer. Cornaro is actually a *dilettante Veneto* of architecture: someone working in delight to build by knowing that felicitous architecture does not begin with an idea from which to generate a design, but begins with a set of materials out of which an idea is generated.<sup>xxxix</sup> In other words, for Cornaro an architect is the cook of the built environment, as for his fellow member of the *Accademia degli Inflammati*, Sperone Speroni, the orator is the cook of the mind.<sup>xxx</sup>

### ***Corte Cornaro***

The Corte Cornaro is the epicurean hub of Cornaro cultural and physical landscape. The date 1524, marked on the facade of the Loggia—economically speaking an unnecessary building if considered from the point of view of a strict belief in careful economic management—is the symbolic sign of the Cornaro divinatory discovery of two great friends.<sup>xxxix</sup> On the front, Corte Cornaro is a large dwelling composed of a main house facing the street.<sup>xxxii</sup> The back of the property is closed by a Loggia that was used as a stage for theatrical performances held in the central Court. On the right side of the main building is located an octagonal central plan building, the Odeo, which is a building for music modeled after the “studio” of Marcus Terentius Varro, the writer of the *De Re Rustica* (On Agriculture), and erected after the death of Falconetto. The Odeo shares the main courtyard of the complex with the Loggia, and two arches with a walkway on the top connect the two buildings. Together with the main building, the *foresteria* (visiting guest apartments) and other ancillary construction, by now demolished, framed the central open space of the complex of the Cornaro Court.

There are records describing a wooden temporary structure for audience seating erected in front of the Loggia during Carnival or similar events transforming the court in a theatre of Vitruvian conception to stage plays, in particular the Pavan tragicomedies and dialogues written and acted by Ruzante.<sup>xxxiii</sup> The place of the audience in the court was planned “*sub Deo* (under God),” a set of glorified bleachers as Cornaro states for “sitting high and without hanging worries (*senza pensieri*).” This was the first theatre of Padua and in northern Italy.<sup>xxxiv</sup> The ceiling was the real “*ciel*” not a painted sky, as Palladio will set up in the Teatro Olimpico in Vicenza a few years later.

Cornaro himself designed the Odeo it together with Falconetto who died before the construction took place in 1530. The edifice is a vaulted structure, with octagonal rooms at its center. The first floor is vaulted in stone, whereas the upper floor is vaulted in reed mats on a wooden framework and covered with plaster. The entire building shows Cornaro’s attempt to frugal means of construction in its making. The octagonal vaulted rooms have niches; an approximate plan of the Odeo is reproduced by Sebastiano Serlio in Book VII of his Treatise (Venice: 1575, *Delle habitationi di tutti li gradi di huomini*) and Serlio tells us that it was used for erudite conversations and musical performances—Cornaro himself was a good singer—and that the particular arrangement of this room offered special acoustical quality since the niches received and retained the sound of voices.

Furthermore, other visual and written documents that should be added to the Cornaro Court to uncover Cornaro’s idea of joyful human dwelling on earth are the Aricordo, presenting a scheme for an urban transformation of San Marco basin, and a proposal for the construction of defense walls around Venice. To further understand Cornaro’s successful amalgam of solid and dream stuff in his documents and monuments must be added the syncretic allegories of the Zodiac Room painted by Falconetto in Palazzo d’ Arco in Mantua and above all the figures of thoughts embodied the powerfully

“*pavan*” tragic-comedies and ironic dialogues written by Ruzante to be performed under the Loggia at the Cornaro Court or at Cornaro’s favorite countryside hunting lodge and residence in Fosson, a tiny rural community in the Basso Polesine (Lower Po Valley).

Angelo Beolco, alias Ruzante, was born in Padua probably as the consequence of his father’s—a respected physician—adulterous affair with a housemaid. However, being accepted into the family he grew up together with the legal siblings. Ruzante was the best play writer and actor of the Venetian Renaissance and his career as a writer-actor began quite early in Venice and he joined the Cornaro’s intellectual circle after he played a jester-like “bloody” joke that made him a persona non grata in the Dominante. The theatrical career of Ruzante in Venice ended when, during an official party, he played a politically incorrect staging of a running decapitated rooster on the white linen of the table in front of the French Ambassador to the Serenissima. (In Italian, rooster and Gaul are identical words: *gallo*.)<sup>xxxv</sup> Besides acting and writing plays, Ruzante also worked for Cornaro whose large agricultural properties he supervised for the administration.

In the “Pastoral”—his first work—Ruzante contrasts the worlds of Arcadian shepherds and rural Pavani. A contrast between two literary traditions, Arcadian and Classical, this first play is an anti-rustic satire where the peasant is the object of contemptible ridicule. However, later reversing his attitude towards rural life, Ruzante portrayed the Pavan peasants in a significant tragic-comic light. Ruzante’s dialect-speaking rustics represent farmers of the Pavano, the country region south of Padua, during the first decades of the 16th century.<sup>xxxvi</sup> The events of the plays attach them to the territory and its culture during the troubled years of the Chambray wars and the aftermath. The actors and Ruzante spoke an artificial stage language that sounded real, mostly because of the magical spell caused by the frequent occurrence of vernacular obscenities and blasphemies as *cancarò* or *pota*, marking the rustic speech with an expert awareness of their expressively thespian functions.<sup>xxxvii</sup>

### ***The Cosmopoiesis of the Mondo Roesso***

In discussing the association between Ruzante and Cornaro, the majority of the scholars praise the greatness of Ruzante and depict Cornaro as an individual who gave hospitality and protection, but exploited the great actor and writer by forcing him to do things against his social and cultural beliefs. Ruzante praised and presented some of the ideas of Cornaro in his plays and generally, those passages are regarded by many critics and scholars as unnecessary or badly done. They consider these passages to be a demonstration of the thespian acolyte's distaste for the ideas of his patron and a price that Ruzante had to pay for receiving his sustenance from Cornaro. These considerations are misleading since Ruzante's *mondo roesso*—an upside down, backwards, bottom side-up world—could not accommodate any kind of patronage charge. The *mondo roesso* is homologous to the ambiguous world singled out by Mikhail Bakhtins in his notion of carnivalesque, a status created when Carnival bends, mutates, and inverts the standards of societal makeup, and the demand for merriment does not leave any possible room for hierarchic and patronage distinctions.

A sustainable *mondo roesso* is a monstrous world within which it is possible to discern a way, a constructive dream, which demonstrates how the infraordinary and consequently infraordinary architecture is and always will be sustainable, flexible, and fertile. In this sustainable world, the search for mental sustenance reveals and generates a polyphonic and multiple presence of robust, vulgar, and transcendent traditions that accentuate the disproportion between the inanity of the object and the extreme artfulness of the artistic application, making possible a crucial making or better a “critical facture.” The odd mixture of ethereally sublime rational thought and low mockery is a trait of a metamorphosis of irony from a rhetorical trope to a metaphysical implement to transcend from the worldly finite into the spiritually infinite. It is the beginning of the modern quest for a transcendental integration of prosaic sustainability into the discourse of the sublime

by reworking the notion of the metaphysical split between the empirical self and the contemplative self into an effective merging. It is a world that belongs to the Counter Renaissance (*Anti Rinascimento*).<sup>xxxviii</sup>

The interaction of the luxuriously polymorphous in the higher extraordinary registers, which is atrociously inadequate in the lower, ordinary registers, together with infraordinary logic of middle terms, offers the ontological essence of real sustainable constructions. Based on a peculiar form of foretelling, an unreal and unsustainable architecture projects itself into nothingness since every abuse made of reason and explanation through fraud and humors is destabilized. The false sublimity of an objective finitude is crashed within the agenda of a continual teleological quest for subjective infinity. Parodist-travesty forms flourish under these conditions, and only within this milieu they are elevated to completely new ideological heights.

Cornaro's real interest in sustainability is not revolutionary, since his point of view is incompatible with any great program for a reordering of the world. Critical thinking is beyond politics, religion, or morals: it is a critique investing the imaginal basis of comprehension and representation of the world. The aim is not revolution but demonstration, a permanent presentation of monstrous evidences. For Ruzante as for Cornaro the "*logiche agricole*" (agricultural rationales), to make the uncultivated grounds productive, had to be added to the already consolidated "*logiche lagunari*" (lagoon rationales), with which they often collided. Cornaro was a passionate exponent of developing valuable farmland through constructing dikes and draining lowland swamps. Sometimes, however, his eagerness went too far and on one occasion, he was ordered to break his embankments and drainage ditches to avoid adverse effects on the lagoon.

The extreme carnivalesque actions of Cornaro toward the rationales produced by the thinking heads of the Venetian Republic are two shocking proposals (c. 1560). The

first proposal advocates the construction of a Roman theatre and an aqueduct bringing potable water to a fountain, both to be erected on an artificial hill made with the dragged soil and mud accumulated from the periodical cleaning of the canals. The hill was also to be surmounted by a temple. The hill was to be located at the center the water basin of San Marco, symbolizing the triumph of the terra firma over the lagoon. The second proposal regarded the construction of defensive walls around the islands composing the city of Venice. Cornaro's grandiose scheme for the city's defense was the construction of a fortified wall all around the islands composing the city. Such a civic proposal is the *roesso* of the government's perception of the myth of Venice's natural impregnability and a civilizing ecological artifice that Nicola Sabbadino's anthropomorphic vision of the lagoon could not have tolerated.<sup>xxxix</sup>

### ***The Merging of Antiquarian and Esoteric Knowledge***

Falconetto, a mediocre painter transformed into an excellent architect after a long exile in Rome, worked chiefly around Padua and erected a number of edifices based on classical forms.<sup>xl</sup> Besides the Loggia and Cornaro's villa at Este, he also designed two town gates in Padua, Porta S Giovanni (1528) and Porta Savonarola (1530). Cornaro, through his relationship with the Bishop of Padua (the rich maternal uncle), was also no doubt responsible for Falconetto's commission to design the magnificent Villa dei Vescovi (Villa of the Bishops) at Luvigliano (1535–42).

Antiquarian studies and ancient monuments particularly fascinated Falconetto. This interest was fostered especially during the 12 years he spent in Rome as a guest of the Venetian humanist, Cardinal Pietro Bembo.<sup>xli</sup> Falconetto was an active supporter of the Emperor and after the Venetian victory against the army of the Chambray League and he found himself in political disfavor and was forbidden to work in the Veneto. Cornaro was the one able to maneuver and revert the political opinions bring Falconetto in the

Veneto. The masterpiece generated by Falconetto by using his antiquarian knowledge is a cycle of frescos painted for one of the many branches of the Gonzaga family. In the back garden of what nowadays is identified as Palazzo D'Arco in Mantua, there are the remains of an older Gonzaga building and a cycle of frescoes covers all the walls of the main room with an architectural decoration that frames 12 views of imaginary landscapes associated with the signs of the Zodiac and the Months.<sup>xlii</sup> A masterpiece of antiquarian knowledge, its literary sources range from the Byzantine novel *The Love Story of Ismenio and Ismene*, by Eumathios Macrembolitanus to Procopius's *The Gothic Wars*. The visual references used by Falconetto to produce the images vary from the Arena of Verona and the Mausoleum of Theodoricus in Ravenna to Roman coins and sculptures.

The Antiquarian stuff in Corte Cornaro merges with the esoteric stuff and with the material facture of the buildings. A large underground passage decorated with grotesques connected the Odeo with a magnificent set of gardens on the other side of the street beyond the apse of the Santo. A Paduan cultural site, these gardens are, from a intelligentsia point of view, comparable to Uricellari Gardens in Florence. The Court and the Gardens were open to the members of the Accademia degli Infiammati to be used for their meetings and theatrical events.

Cornaro's solution for managing the physical and intellectual temperatures within the Odeo is inspired by the system devised by the Trento Brothers in their "happy villas" in Costozza, a site near Vicenza.<sup>xliii</sup> Trento's Villa Eolia used ventiducts connected to old quarries and Roman troglodyte prisons (Costozza means custodial) to provide natural air-conditioning. During the hot summers, cool, dry cavern air is vented into the villa through ornate stone floor grills.<sup>xliiv</sup> The nature of this ventilation structure is based on the Galen's theory of "psychic *pneuma*." Galen thought that *pneuma*, through an indissoluble merging of air and spirit, would affect corporeal and mental well-being through its transformation by the heart's heat into an internal spirit. In its most rarefied form,

*pneuma* is the spiritual substance reconciling soul and body.<sup>xlv</sup> Pneumatic theories were also closely associated with the belief in an invisible world-spirit.

Both the villa Eolia and the Odeo embody this perception of *pneuma*, joining comfortable fresh air with spiritual, intellectual, and corporeal well-being. Villa Eolia's ventiducts join the "grottos of the winds" with a cryptoporticus called "The Prison of the Winds." This octagonal room is a subterranean counterpart of the octagonal room of the Odeo. In Villa Eolia, the interconnected underground spaces are also used as wine cellars demonstrating another vital aspect of the comprehensive spiritual cosmopoiesis of pneumatic well-being. Cornaro describes the spiritual and restorative powers of wine taken in moderation—two glasses a day—as "truly the milk of the elderly," in his prescriptions for a sober life.<sup>xlvi</sup>

In the Villa as in the Odeo, the whole building breathed a spiritually-loaded cool air flow in the rooms, which then became inspiring places dedicated to intellectual epicurean leisure. Cornaro's Odeo, an inspiring place also for playing musical arias, was breathing through the underground passage connecting it with the gardens. Following literally Filarete's suggestion, Cornaro knew that with its pneumatic breathing the Odeo would grow the souls of its inhabitants into a *vita beata*.

The *vita beata* results from, and is embodied in, an architectural landscape conceived for a "happy existence." Ruzante poetically describes the *vita beata* in his tragicomic plays. For him, a virtuous happiness and beatific existence is a way of life with no temporary impairment caused by psychic commotions.<sup>xlvii</sup> Ruzante presents the most crafted and radical form for the notion of *vita beata* in a letter addressed to Marco Alvarotto. It is an epiphanic allegorical tale, not only because the letter is sensibly dated "Padua, the Day of Epiphany, 1536," but also for the epiphany about the *vita beata* that takes place in this emotional monologue. Ruzante was not in attendance at the customary

mid-winter hunting session at Cornaro's estate in Fosson, but he had sent a letter that narrates an intellectual search for happiness.

At the beginning of the letter Ruzante states, "I spoke at length with my fellow little books (*libretti*) and found that their answer is that to live a long life I have to find Madonna Sophrosine."<sup>xlvi</sup> The story of the search takes place in dream, where a decorous and well-fed Barbapolo—a friend who had recently died—appears to Ruzante and explains that the name Madonna Sophrosine is a misnaming. The real Pavan name is *Madona Legracion* (Italian: *Madonna Allegrezza* English: Milady Merriment) or *Temperanza* (Temperance), but the reference is not to a Lady who dilutes wine with water. After this explanation, Barbapolo offers to take Ruzante to the court of this powerful Lady, which is full of Good Fellows (*Buoni Compagni*) as is Ruzante himself since he makes people laugh and cry with his acting. The followers of *Madona Legracion* and the *Buoni Compagni* live in a homestead located at the center of a large and well-protected vineyard, which does not allow intrusions of melancholic and negative characters. A life is long for its intensity, not for its length, and the allegory makes use of the ambiguity between vine (*vite*) and life (*vita*) to lead to an understanding of happiness as satiation, a metonymical thirst-quencher that re-hydrates bodies and souls parched by melancholy.<sup>xlix</sup>

The Moon Goddess and Deity of the Hunt, Diana, is many faceted. Diana as Lady Temperance, is the dominant metaphorical figure of Cornaro's architecture; a metaphorically three-headed supernatural being that looks to past, present, and future and feeds on poetry, classical myth, and popular fables. The figure is not only a major visual presence within the iconographic program of Corte Cornaro, but also in one of Ruzante's tragic-comedies through the figure of a high priest, a Diana Ragomant (Ragomant is the Pavan deformation of the Italian *Negromante* [Wizard or Priest], a character probably played by Cornaro himself during the first performance) presents in a kernel the prudent

and well tempered theories of Cornaro. Written as entrainment for the usual Cornaro's January hunting party, in 1525, Ruzante's dialogue entitled "An Extraordinarily Witty and Extremely Ridiculous Dialogue" (*Dialogo Facetissimo et Ridicolissimo*) is another double epiphanic tale. Once more, conjured up by Diana-High-Priest, a deceased friend materializes and explains the philosophy of life and what will be the final reward for the Buoni Compagni. In the play, there are direct mentions of Corte Cornaro in Padua and of a Diana statue that does not exist anymore, but was located on the façade of the main building fronting the street. Furthermore, this character of the high priest is a distillation of the king-philosopher ruling the urban happiness devised by Patrizi in his *Città Felice*.<sup>1</sup> Patrizi's political model of a happy society not only corresponds to an aristocratic class society structured in accord to social-political, but also to cultural-intellectual canons. It consists of three subordinated classes (peasants, craftsmen, and merchants) and three presiding ones (soldiers, state administrators, and priests). A priest-magus and king-philosopher governs the city and takes care of the citizens' lives, religion and education, the town arrangement, position, and defense, and everything else that concerns the citizens' happiness.

Diana is the goddess ruling the weathering and the eternity of Cornaro's architecture. Cornaro's synergetic lunar figure has an Aristotelian origin. In Cornaro's understanding, *diánoia*, human comprehension can only explore the nature of the facture of things. *Dianoia* is based, on one hand, on a practical intelligence or prudence, *phrónêsis*, which comprehends the true character of individual and community welfare and applies its results to the guidance of human action. On the other hand it is based on *sophrosine* the essential moral virtue, since if it is properly conceived it acts as the mean between vicious extremes. Acting rightly, then, involves coordinating our desires with correct thoughts about the correct goals or ends. The merging of *sophrosine* and *phronesis* is the main way to build a tangible presence of *eudaimonia*.

Diana is Madonna Sofrosine transubstantiated in a powerful Lady Temperance. This Madonna is a character present in many of the primary oneiric texts of the period. She is a maid in the *Hypnerotomachia Poliphili*, a text without doubt known to both, Beolco and Cornaro.<sup>li</sup> Madonna Sofrosine is also found in Ludovico Ariosto's *Orlando Furioso* who clearly identifies Sofrosine with Donna Temperanza, a cardinal virtue. Cornaro as Diana Priest further amplifies the complex power of this multifaceted allegorical body by incorporating it with the young Lady Allegrezza. Diana, the Moon, is a common sense amalgamation of Temperanza and Allegrezza, a tempered merriment to counter to the harmful effects of the deadly Lady Melancholia.<sup>lii</sup>

On the façade of the Odeo on the ground level, there are two sculptures in two niches. One represents Phanes, the Sun, and the other one Selene, the Moon. These two figures are associated with Gnostic traditions that were smuggled in the Humanistic culture through the cultivation of Antiquarian pursuit. The figure of Phanes is almost a direct derivation of a Roman bas-relief belonging to the Gnostic collection of the Estensi.<sup>liii</sup>

For the figure of Selene, Cornaro's view of this extremely important figure can be traced through Falconetto's Room of the Zodiac. Painted in one of the many Gonzaga residences in Mantua during a short leave taken while Falconetto was living in Padua under Cornaro's protection, the Room of the Zodiac is a complex demonstration of the synergetic nature of these antiquarian fascinations and lucubrations in generating intellectual sustenance within sustainable environments.<sup>liv</sup> Within the panel representing January, Falconetto had painted on the background the Roman temple of Janus Quadrifons and the central figure is the statue of Diana of Ephesus surrounded by hunting regalia. The combination of the elements of this allegoric image presents "*in nuce*" the cultural and social sources and forces beyond Cornaro's epiphanic January hunting retreat.

Following the tradition of his friend Pietro Valeriano—who was guest for a period of Cornaro—and Valeriano’s teacher Egidio da Viterbo, Cornaro not only played with hieroglyphic and emblems, but also with elements derived from classical Greek Latin myths as well as kabalistic hermiticism and syncretically, including Christian belief, to convey his belief. The allegorical figure of Diana belongs also to the secreted traditions of pagan agrarian rituals as the joyful Benandanti (the Well Ambling Ones), who fought night battles against unhappy negative forces. They are an allegorical expression of fertility and agrarian cults that were still in existence during the later 16th century. The Benandanti, individuals “born in the cauls”—i.e. born with the amniotic sac around them—were the defenders of harvests and the fertility of fields and chiefly, they fought the Malandanti (the Bad Ambling Ones). The Benandanti prevented witches and warlock from urinating into wine, spoke with the dead and danced ecstatically under moonlight.<sup>lv</sup> The Buoni Compagni described by Zaccaroto, the dead friend of Ruzante brought on the stage by Diana’s Ragomant to help Menego, are like the Benandanti and participate in nocturnal events.

Having attempted suicide after losing his beloved Gnuia to a rival who offered her bread, Menego is cured by Diana’s Ragomant. Overwhelmed by gratitude, Menego declares:

Oh wizard sent by that goddess, you truly are that Lord God that I’m looking for! And having healed me so quickly, you will of course also provide me with bread and even make sure I get my Gnuia back (711, par. 89).

The wizard puts him in contact with his deceased friend Zaccarotto, who describes two paradises, one of hunts and fairs, but lacking a divine presence, and another where those who “took their joy in saying prayers, fasting, abstaining, living in solitude and similar activities neither eat or drink, but spend all their time contemplating God”

(715, par. 105). Zaccaroto points out that of the two paradises, the non-theistic is for the merry Buoni Compagni, whereas the theistic one is for the ascetic mystic. The mystics enjoy the leisure of the canonical contemplation of God, whereas the Buoni Compagni freely enjoy the leisure of excellent wining and dining in each other's company. The Buoni Compagni's Paradise and Cornaro's theory of well-built and well-thought architecture resonates evocatively within the hexagonal walls of the Theleme Abbey sagaciously described by Francois Rabelais in *Gargantua and Pantagruel*. Within the well-built and well-proportioned walls of this sustainable abbey located on a bank of the Loire, an elite of talented "monks" and "nuns" in the bloom of youth and beauty enjoy the art of living well by receiving a suitable edification and proper sustenance from the surrounding well-built architecture. The motto carved over the main door of Thelma is "*fay ce que voudras*" (Rabelais 1962:152) indicates that high spirits and happy thinking are sovereign in this paradoxical abbey. The Court of *Madona Legracion* is also a stronghold of a comparable blissful civility and within its precincts; life is joyful as within Rabelais's paradise of Theleme.<sup>lvi</sup>

### ***The Otherness of a Beatific Architecture***

Beatific architecture as Ruzante's plays looks monstrous since the lack of a stable referent for its "otherness" invites exaggeration of its extremes. At one extreme is its materiality on which architecture depends to convey what lies at its other extreme: the provisional, transcendent thought to which those constructional agents putatively refer. In establishing a setting for a *vita beata*, architecture molds bodies and minds to contemplate by posing the possibility of a joyful dialogic dance between dwelling well and constructing well.

The notion that the architects' talent is the capacity for transforming the art of building well into the art of living well leads to the development of an esoteric

disposition, which sees the mundane makeover of stones, bricks, plasters, and spaces as places able to metamorphose our time-limited human bodies into eternally built bodies—the ideal longevity. In a real architectural practice, the exoteric making of buildings becomes a means of esoteric erection of beatific edifices; since, in architecture, ideas do not exist. and architectsArchitects make them ideas (i.e. drawings) and theory happily meditate on the process. The process of construction (*fabrica*), as Vitruvius has pointed out, is a constant exercise of meditation (*continuata ac trita usus meditatio*). This enjoyable meditation elaborates thoughts about ordinary events and the craft of architectural thinking comes into being through extraordinary transmutation of the infraordinary. The visible or rhetorically visualized “making” of a beatific architecture draws our attention toward the hermeneutic necessity of its rhetorical contribution as image and figure, whether perceived, delusory, or imagined. In all these guises, what is visible and verbal is critical to its meaning.

The first lesson to learn from Cornaro’s hunt for sustainable and sustaining architecture is that architecture results from thinking through (*dianoia* = *dia*: through + *nous*: thought) the facture of building to achieve the result of a dwelling full of good spirit and a dwelling in good spirit. Together, there is a state of mind occurring when individuals take an active part in creating the projections of the activities or experiences, a virtuous and fruitful engagement of their attention. Architectural theory is then desire and consideration of the felicitous.

The second lesson is that happiness is not an underlying delightful aspect of the physical, but it is a generative force of it. Happiness is not commonly understood as the art of living well, merged with the art of building well and thinking well. Happiness generates structures, spaces, functions, and symbols. In its triadic merging, the sense is that happiness implies an intellectual activity and should be a consequence, but it cannot be in itself a condition of standards. The role of architects is to embody in well-built

physical constructs the human psychical well-being; i.e. having a delightful life in virtuous buildings.

The third lesson—the most essential from an architect’s point of view—is that architects must be happy to conceive sustainable artifacts that can give edifying sustenance. The last lines of Cornaro’s *Trattato di Acque* state:

Oh, what admirable power has contemplation that makes you see the things before they are made, and by thinking about them you get enjoyment. This is the happiness of those who design.<sup>lvii</sup>

This remark is essential for bringing to light a hidden, but essential condition of blissfully thinking in architecture. Promoting a good life, joyful architecture is the result of living well in well-thought and well-built buildings; a built environment satiated with a cosmopoietic bursting of humors.

## ***Endnotes***

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<sup>i</sup> Alvise Cornaro, *Trattato di Vita Sobria*, Gratosio Percacino, Padova 1558.

Alvise Cornaro, *Discorsi della Vita Sobria ...*, Paolo Meietto, Padova 1591.

Alvise Cornaro *Scritti sulla vita sobria: elogio e lettere*, Marisa Milani ed., Venezia : Corbo e Fiore, 1983.

For the complicate history of manuscripts, editions, additions and corollary writings see: Marisa Milani, “Introduzione” in Cornaro, Alvise. *Scritti sulla vita sobria : elogio e lettere*, Marisa Milani ed., Venezia : Corbo e Fiore, 1983

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<sup>ii</sup> Cornaro declared he was fifty-six years old in 1540, fifty-eight in 1542, seventy in 1551, seventy-four in 1552, seventy-five in 1554, seventy-three in 1555.

<sup>iii</sup> Loris Premuda, La filosofia macrobiotica del Galenista Cornaro, Lionello Puppi (a cura di), Alvise Cornaro e il suo tempo, catalogo della mostra, Vol 1& 2, Padova, Comune di Padova, 1980. p.154

<sup>iv</sup> Alvise Cornaro, Trattato di architettura (MS., c.1550–53; Milano, Bib. Ambrosiana); transcribed in G. Fiocco, Alvise Cornaro e i suoi trattati sull’architettura, *Atti dell’Accademia Nazionale dei Lincei*, Memorie, iv (Roma, 1952); also in P. Barocchi, ed.: *Scritti dell’Arte del Cinquecento*, III, (Milano, 1977), pp. 3134–61; and in Cataneo, P., Vignola, et al. *Trattati: con l’aggiunta degli scritti di architettura di Alvise Cornaro, Francesco Giorgi, Claudio Tolomei, Giangiorgio Trissino, Giorgio Vasari*. Milano, Il Polifilo. (1985).

<sup>v</sup> Lionello Puppi (a cura di), Alvise Cornaro e il suo tempo, catalogo della mostra, Vol 1& 2, Padova, Comune di Padova, 1980.

<sup>vi</sup> Manfredo Tafuri, “Alvise Cornaro, Palladio and the Grand Canal,” *A+U*, 7/1981, 130 p. 3–30, Manfredo Tafuri, ‘Un teatro, una “fontana del Sil” e un “vago monticello”’: La riconfigurazione del bacino di S. Marco a Venezia di Alvise Cornaro’, *Lotus International*, 94 (1984), pp. 40–51

<sup>vii</sup> Berti, Maurizio. *La casa di Alvise Cornaro. Diario di un restauro. (1983-2000)*

<http://w3.uniroma1.it/bertirestauro/08caso1casa/restaurocornaro/2diariorestcornaroberti.htm>. Accessed 25th August, 2007.

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<sup>viii</sup> Marisa Milani. Introduzione in *Alvise Cornaro Scritti sulla vita sobria, Elogio; e Lettere*; prima edizione critica a cura di M.Milani, Venezia: Corbo e Fiore, 1983, p. 42.

<sup>ix</sup> Alain De Botton, *The Architecture of Happiness*, Toronto: McClelland & Stewart. 2006

<sup>x</sup> Elinor Ochs, Merav Shohet, "The cultural structuring of mealtime socialization," *New Directions for Child and Adolescent Development*, 111, 2006, pp. 35-49.

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<sup>xi</sup> Alberti, Leon Battista, "Della famiglia," *Opere Volgari*, vol I, Collana "Scrittori d'Italia" Cecil Grayson ed. Laterza, Bari, 1966p.134

<sup>xii</sup> Alberti, Leon Battista, "De Iciarchia," *Opere Volgari*, vol II, Collana "Scrittori d'Italia" ed Cecil Grayson Laterza, Bari, 1966

<sup>xiii</sup> Alberti, Leon Battista, "Profugiorum ab Aerumna libri III", *Opere Volgari*, II, Collana "Scrittori d'Italia", a c. di C. Grayson, Laterza, Bari, 1966.

<sup>xiv</sup> An edifice "*crebbe l'animo*" of its inhabitants, *Filarete* 1972 1:42.

<sup>xv</sup> Vasari, *Le Opere*, Firenze 1832-38, I, p. 661

<sup>xvi</sup> For Cornaro as a careful reader of Filarete and for the sequence of owners before the Donation of the manuscript to the Ambrosiana see Beltramini 2000 pp. xiv-xviii.

<sup>xvii</sup> Manfredo Tafuri, *Venice and the Renaissance* Boston: MIT Press,1989

<sup>xviii</sup> Francesco Maria Grapaldo, *De Partibus Aedium*, Parma, 1533 (1rs edition 1439)

<sup>xix</sup> Francesco Colonna, *Hypnerotomachia Poliphili* Venezia, Aldo Manuzio, 1499

<sup>xx</sup> A Croatian, Patrizi original name was Frane Petric'. The "*citta felice*" presents ideas that Petric had already developed during the early stages of his Paduan period. Francesco Patrizi, *La città felice ... Dialogo dell'honore, il Barignano. Discorso della diversità de' furori poetici*, Venice: Giovan Griffio1553.

<sup>xxi</sup> Francesco Filelfo, *Epistulae familiars*, Venice 1502, VIII, 53.

<sup>xxii</sup> Cornaro read Zabarella in manuscript form, a couple of manuscripts are still in Padua, in the Biblioteca Civica e nella Bibliotec Vescovile; Francesco Zabarella, *De felicitate libri III*, Padua 1655.

<sup>xxiii</sup> Loris Premuda, *Storia della Medicina*, Padova, Cedam, 1960.

<sup>xxiv</sup> Manfredo Tafuri, *Venezia e il Rinascimento*, Turin: Einaudi, 1985.

<sup>xxv</sup> Cornaro's position on this relationship between "house" and "House" become unmistakably obvious in his Last Will where he forbids to the future inheritors the selling of the house and gives detailed instructions for the completion of the planned construction works.

<sup>xxvi</sup> This unfortunate amalgamation concocted by the publisher to gain a market has relegated these amazing drawings to a hidden corner of architectural theory. Giovanni Antonio Rusconi, *Della Architettura...secondo i precetti di Vitruvio...*, Venice: 1590

<sup>xxvii</sup> "Infraordinary" as to instruct the extraordinary" was coined by George Perec, a French writer, member of OuLiPo (*Ouvroir de Littérature Potentielle*).

<sup>xxviii</sup> Alvise Cornaro, Trattato d'architettura, 1, 58 r).

<sup>xxix</sup> I am not using dilettante as amateur, but in its original meaning of doing or making something in a blissful manner.

<sup>xxx</sup> The metaphor of the cook falls within the of Hans Blumerberg's discipline metaphorology, a further explanation of the use of this metaphor in the cultural world of Cornaro is elaborated skillfully by Giuseppe Barbieri in his presentation of the complex intellectual relationship between Cornaro and Sperone Speroni.

<sup>xxxi</sup> "Divinatory discoveries (*scoperte divinatorie*) is a meaningful locution used by Fiocco to indicate the relationship between Cornaro Angelo Beolco, and Falconetto. Sadly, this triadic relationship did not last longer than a decade; Falconetto died in 1534 and Ruzante passed away in 1542.

<sup>xxxii</sup> As all Cornaro's basic possessions, this property came from the inheritance left by the uncle Angelieri and the main building on the street resulted from the consolidation of preexisting medieval buildings.

<sup>xxxiii</sup> The main actors of Ruzante' theatrical company were Marcantonio Alvarotto called Menato, Battista Castagnola called Bilora (Weasel) and Gerolamo Zanetti nicknamed Vezzo (Affected).

<sup>xxxiv</sup> The Loggia was the official theatre of Cornaro productions. However, Cornaro had provisional theaters set up in other places in his properties of the surrounding countryside. He had theaters in the small towns of Codevigo, Este and Fosson. Camillo Semenzato, "La teatralità dell'architettura veneta e la Loggia Cornaro," in *Convegno Internazionale di Studi sul Ruzante*, a cura di Giovanni Calendoli e Giuseppe Vellucci (Padova, 26/27/28 maggio 1983), Venezia: Corbo e Fiore, 1987.

<sup>xxxv</sup> S. Bullegas, (1993). *Angelo Beolco : la lingua contestata, il teatro violato, la scena imitata*. Alessandria, Edizioni dell'orso.

Calendoli, G., G. Vellucci, et al. (1989). *II Convegno internazionale di studi sul Ruzante : Padova, 27/28/29 maggio 1987*. Venezia, Corbo e Fiore.

<sup>xxxvi</sup> Ludovico Zorzi demonstrated that Ruzante's idiolect does replicate a spoken dialect, but rather it is a compound idiom. It is not only pavan dialect--the dialect of the countryside of Padua—but also it is made of Provençal, Friulan, Lombardic expressions, a legacy of the cross-cultural events caused by wars taking

place in Northern Italy during the sixteenth century, and is also grounded in the Paduan Macaronic Tradition began with Tifi Odasi.

Ludovico Zorzi, *Ruzante Teatro. Testo, traduzione a fronte e note*, Torino: Einaudi 1967.

Baldan, A. (1986

<sup>xxxvii</sup> *Cancar*: indicates an ulcer-like sore on the body, especially the mouth, although in a general sense the term signifies an illness ranging from herpes to cancer, but it means also *cancar= cardine*, meaning “hinge” to refer to an unstable pivoting support of the condition of humanity. *Pota* or *potta*: female genitalia and metonymically twat or whore, is an expression that intensifies the sexual and domestic aspect of the infraordinary within the countryside.

<sup>xxxviii</sup> Eugenio Battisti, *L'antirinascimento: con un'appendice di testi inediti*. Milano, Garzanti 1989.

<sup>xxxix</sup> Alvise Cornaro e Cristoforo Sabbadino: un dialogo sulle tecniche e sulla Natura, Lionello Puppi (a cura di), *Alvise Cornaro e il suo tempo*, Padova, Comune di Padova, 1980, pp. 130-135; Vincenzo Fontana, Modelli per la laguna di Venezia nel Cinquecento. Alvise Cornaro e Girolamo Fracastoro, In ZORZI R., *Il paesaggio dalla percezione alla descrizione, volume 1*, VENEZIA, Ed. Marsilio, pp. 179-192.

<sup>xl</sup> Falconetto grew up in a family of artists: his father, Giacomo, a brother, Giovanni, and a great uncle, Stefano de Verona, were renowned Veronese painters. Fiocco, Giuseppe. “Le architetture di Giovan Maria Falconetto”. *Dedalo* XI (1931): 1203-1241.

<sup>xli</sup> Giuseppe Fiocco 1965:42)

<sup>xlii</sup> Painted probably during the period when Falconetto was living in Corte Cornaro, This cycle is the last major painting that had been executed by Falconetto after which he painted only interiors for Cornaro (Fiocco 1965:41).

<sup>xliii</sup> Barbara Kenda, “On the Renaissance art of well-being, Pneuma in Villa Eolia” 34 *Res* (1998) pp. 101-117, 105. See also her dissertation, *Medical Aspects of Renaissance Pneumatic Architecture* (University of Pennsylvania, 1998).

<sup>xliv</sup> Gino Panizzoni, *Villa Carli, Una Villa Che Respira* (Vicenza: Istituto Regionale per le Ville Venete, 2001).

<sup>xliv</sup> Rudolph Siegel, Galen’s System of Physiology and Medicine, An analysis of his doctrines and observations on bloodflow, respiration, humors and internal diseases (Basel: Karger, 1968).

<sup>xlvi</sup> Luigi Cornaro, *The Art of Living Long* (New York: Arno Press, 1979) p. 94.

<sup>xlvi</sup> For *vita beata* theorized in Ruzante’s plays see: Fino 1988, pp. 39-51.

<sup>xlvi</sup> (Zorzi 19\_\_ 1226-7)

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<sup>xlix</sup> The distillation of wine-mush generates aquavit=*aqua-vitae*= water of life or water of vineyard. Drinking wine and aquavit are old metaphors for attaining blessed life and happiness.

<sup>l</sup> Being a Croatian, Francesco Patrizi original name was Frane Petric.

<sup>li</sup> Colonna, 1980 I p.359, II p. 228 n. 6. For the connections existing between Cornaro, Ruzante and the publisher of the *Hypnerotomachia* see: Sambin, 1966 and Vescovo, 1967: p.107

<sup>lii</sup> A. Katzenellenbogen, *Allegories of the virtues and vices in mediaeval art, from early Christian times to the thirteenth century*. Nendeln, Liechtenstein, Kraus Reprint 1977.

<sup>liii</sup> The figure of Phanes is a copy derived from a Gnostic bas-relief of Aion, presently at the Museo Estense in Modena; the origin of the figure of Selene has not been found yet.

<sup>liiv</sup> AA. VV. *Il Palazzo D'Arco a Mantova*. Mantova: Banca Agricola Mantovana, 1980. Rodolfo Signorini, *Lo Zodiaco di Palazzo D'Arco in Mantova*. Mantova, Amministrazione Provinciale di Mantova, 1987.

<sup>liv</sup> This credence is tied to a larger complex of traditions connected with the myth of nocturnal gatherings presided by female deities. The caul or veil (Italian *camicia*) is often regarded as the seat of the "outer soul" and is linked to the ability of communicating with wandering souls. The caul is the bridge between the world of the living and that of the dead. In Denmark, for instance, the caul is associated with an ability to see ghosts (see Carlo Ginzburg, *Night Battles: Witchcraft & Agrarian Cults in the Sixteenth & Seventeenth Centuries*. Harmondsworth, Middlesex, England: Penguin Books Limited. 198560-61)

<sup>lvi</sup> In the abbey, the main symbol for this the lighthearted life is the fountain in the principal courtyard, a copy of the fountain put in the center of the Temple of Venus Phyzoica described by Colonna in his *Hypnerotomachia*. In Rabelais's' description, the materials are less precious and the corporeal expression is stronger, but the trinity of goddesses can be easily connected with the same cultural background that has generated the concept of Cornaro's Diana.

<sup>lvii</sup> "*Oh che mirabile virtù ha il pensiero che fa vedere le cose prima che siano fatte e pensandovi ne godero'. E' questa la felcità' di chi progetta.*"