

RENAISSANCE AND BAROQUE PRIVATE GARDENS OF VENICE AND THEIR URBAN IMPACT

VENEDİK'İN RÖNESANS VE BAROK ÜSLUPTA ÖZEL MÜLKİYET BAHÇELERİ VE KENTE ETKİLERİ

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ABSTRACT

Gardens have been and still are a relevant element of the city of Venice. Many reasons made gardens since the fifteenth century an essential part of the house of middle and upper class Venetians, from the privileges contacts with the middle east from where many rare botanical species were introduced to the so called "ideology of villa life", revived from Roman antiquity, opposing city and country life, negotium and otium, palace and villa, with its garden as open air extension of the house. Due to the complicate water supply in a city surrounded by salted water and to the limited space in the centre of Venice gardens were at times very small, just the idea of the garden. With the widespread of late Renaissance and Baroque domestic architecture gardens became a looked after element of aristocratic houses, and they developed in a peculiar way, adapting the functional and aesthetic requirements of the new life style to the new shape the city was acquiring with the urban plan of hydraulic engineer Cristoforo Sabbadino, approved in 1556. So suburban residences developed usually in a narrow and deep area, where buildings, courtyard with the well for water supply and garden open with a water gate on the lagoon or on a channel succeeded one another along a central axis, as we deduce from a rich variety of documents, and particularly maps and printed and painted views, that are also the point of departure for their restoration.

ÖZET

Bahçeler geçmişte olduğu gibi bugün de Venedik kentinin belirgin bir elemanıdır. 15. Yüzyıldan itibaren birçok sebep, bahçeleri orta ve üst sınıf Venediklilere ait evlerin temel parçası haline getirmiştir. Orta Doğu ile kurulan ayrıcalıklı ilişkiler sonucunda nadir görülen birçok bitki, "villa yaşamı tarzı"na kazandırılmıştır. Roma antik dünyasından gelen bu tarz, kent ve kırsal, negotium ve otium'u, saray ve bahçesi açık hava uzantısı olarak düşünülebilecek villayı karşı karşıya getirmektedir. Söz konusu dönemde bahçe fikri olmasına rağmen, tuzlu su ile çevrili kentin sahip olduğu karmaşık su tedarik sistemi ve Venedik'in merkezindeki mekân kısıtlılığı yüzünden,

dönemin bahçeleri boyut olarak küçük kalmıştır. Geç Rönesans ve Barok ev mimarisinin yaygınlaşmasıyla bahçeler, aristokratik evlerin bakımlı elemanları haline gelmiş, hidrolik mühendisi Cristoforo Sabbadino'nun 1556'da onaylanmış olan kent planının getirdiği yeni yaşam tarzı ve yeni kent biçiminin işlevsel ve estetik gerekliliklerine uyumlu hale getirilerek gelişmiştir. Kent çevresindeki konutlar, çoğunlukla dar ve derin alanlarda inşa edilmiştir. Özellikle harita, basılmış ya da basılmıyş ya da resmedilmemiş görünümmler gibi çeşitli belgelerden bu konutların avlularında su temini için kuyular bulunduđu, bahçelerinin birer su bendi kapısı ile bir lagüne ya da kanala açıldığı ve merkezi bir eksen boyunca birbirlerini izledikleri ortaya çıkmaktadır. Bahsedilen belgeler yapıların restorasyonu için de hareket noktası olmuştur.

Gardens have been and still are a relevant element of the city of Venice. In the following pages, after a general introduction on the impact of Renaissance culture on the idea of the garden, I will examine the evolution of the suburban residence and its garden from the late fifteenth century to the fall of the Republic in 1797, relaying mainly on written and visual documents (partly well known, partly ignored by scholars), that can open new perspectives to the research.

Gardens, orchards and other open air green spaces have been present in great number in Venice since the origin of the city, responding at first mainly to utilitarian purposes. Actually, not only gardens existed but their perception was quite relevant. In fact **one of the aspects of Venice that most impressed visitors** since the late Middle Age was the number of gardens and green areas in general and the abundance and variety of their vegetation, something that looked like a miracle, due to the fact that Venice was surrounded by salted water¹.

The problem of water supply was solved quite early with an ingenious system of wells collecting rain water in underground cisterns, that was perfected with time. Wells are documented since the eleventh century, and, due to the fact that water is an essential element for the survival of human beings, they were located everywhere in the city, in public, religious and private places. Wells relayed to different jurisdictional principles, according to those responsible for them. The State, through the office of the "Provveditori di Comun", established in 1487, helped by water and health authorities, was directly responsible for public wells (said "pubblici" or "di pubblica ragione"), whose maintenance was controlled by the parish "piovan", the "capocontrada" and the "facchini degli stazii". Wells had heads, in general

elegantly decorated, that became with time a most peculiar element of the lagoon city, and of its public and private spaces. In fact Venice boasts the largest and the finest number of well-heads of all European towns. From a survey of mid nineteenth century we know that private wells (usually at the centre of a courtyard partly or completely paved, located at the back of the house, as we will see in the following pages), were more than thirty times so many as public ones still active².

Each of the small islands that in time joined to form a compact city developed around an open public multifunctional area, sometime quite large, today paved, but originally mainly covered with grass, as is clearly visible in the famous Jacopo de' Barbari's bird's eye view of Venice, printed in 1500, and is confirmed by the fact that these open spaces are still called "campo", it is to say field³. Monasteries had usually large areas dedicated to the cultivation of edible and medical plants, as is evoked by the toponymy: San Francesco della Vigna (of the vineyard), Madonna dell'Orto (of the kitchen garden), etc. Some agricultural areas are still in part recognisable around monasteries situated on the outskirts of the city, as S. Francesco della Vigna, San Giobbe, etc.

But my aim here, as I said, are those private open air areas, particularly courtyards and gardens, considered essential sections of upper classes' domestic architecture. It seems, actually, that the oldest Venetian houses, whose model was directly derived from those of ancient Rome, included a small *viridarium*. Multifunctional courtyards, with well for water supply and stairway to reach the upper store, were part of Venetian houses since the late eleventh century, and perhaps a section of this open space was dedicated to medical plants, fruits and vegetables, together with

sections employed for storage of merchandise and perhaps boats repair, since Venetians' wealth came from sea and trading.

The more pretentious gothic palaces had large and beautiful rear courtyards with wells and staircases but apparently no gardens. Good examples are Ca' Foscari and the twin nearby Giustiniani palaces, as well as Ca' Barbaro and Ca' d'Oro, all on the Grand Canal⁴.

Many reasons made gardens since the fifteenth century an essential part of the house of middle and upper class Venetians. To start with, the humanistic association of intellectual work and garden culture, that goes back to antiquity and was revived in the fourteenth century by Francesco Petrarca, who dedicated great care to his houses and their gardens in Italy and abroad⁵. Saint Jerome's studio painted by Antonello da Messina around 1475 for a Venetian patron (in 1529 it was owned by Antonio Pasqualino) have windows opening on a landscape that favour meditation.

With the wide spreading of Renaissance, gardens were more and more looked out, but, since space was scarce in Venice, every place was good to build a garden or at least the idea of it, even the smallest one, as a narrow balcony or a window sill, adapted to become a kind of miniature garden, like that in Carpaccio's *Dream of Saint Orsola*, decorated with two elegant vases containing a herbal (carnation) and a shrub (Fig. 1). Flowers in vases are present also in the above mentioned *Saint Jerome in his studio* by Antonello da Messina. More astonishing for foreigners, since more visible and quite peculiar, were the "altane", a kind of wooden suspended square platform, laying on four brick-built pillars over the roof, from which one could enjoy an extraordinary panorama of the city. "Altane" were present in great number at least since the fifteenth century, as we infer from painted views of Venice (Figs. 2-3), and are still today a widespread element⁶.

Writers, artists and cultivated people in general, like Pietro Bembo, Andrea Navagero, Trifon Gabriele, Titian and many, many others, explain how a garden can be a source of inspiration, satisfaction and relief from everyday worries.

In a long letter written from Spain, where he was ambassador of Venice from 1525 to 1526, Andrea Navagero recommend to his friend Giambattista Ramusio to take care of his beloved garden in Murano, and give him detailed instructions on how to deal with the existing vegetation, to obtain the results he wishes, as a cypress palisade, or a small wood of laurels, etc.

The Venetian noble Giovanni Maria Memmo explains well in his *Dialogo* of 1563 the joy he received from his garden (and its annexes, loggia and courtyard) coming back home after a day of hard work, and recommends to everybody «di havere una corte grande & spatiosa, & un bel giardino ornato di vari & delicati frutti, herbe, & fiori di molte sorti, qualità & odori. Perché stando il Cittadino una gran parte della vita sua nel palagio, di non poco giovamento & ricreazione gli saranno cotai cose, & massimamente diletlandosi dell'agricoltura tanto locata, e apprezzata, & usata da i saggi antichi: il giardino, la loggia, & la corte gli leveranno una gran parte de i pensieri, & delle noie, che apportano seco i negotij umani. Et diletlandosi de gli studi delle buone lettere, troverà una infinita ricreazione ogni fiata, che stanco dallo studio entrerà nel giardino, & con un coltellino in mano anderà scegliendo qualche odorifero & delicato fiore; coglierà una insalatuccia di sua propria mano, torrà un maturo frutto: & stando in tali diporti & ricreazione, farà altissimi & divine concetti: de' quali poi ritornando allo studio riempirà le dotti & onorate carte» (Memmo 1563: 80-81).

The writer Moderata Fonte ideally sets her posthumous book, *Il merito delle donne* (1600), in the garden of her private Venetian palace, decorated with plenty of topiary, to confirm it as ideal place for intellectual conversation⁷.

Moreover, as in other parts of Italy, and even more in Venice in the second half of the fifteenth century, emerged a new interest for natural sciences, linked to the "rediscovery" of Latin and Greek authors of medicine, pharmacology, botany and agriculture, Galenus, Theophrastus, Dioscorides and Pliny the Older. They have been a starting point for a more direct, experimental approach to nature and its mechanisms, introduced by Leonardo da Vinci, which opened the way to the scientific Renaissance.

Medical plants, grown at least from the early ninth century in monasteries and in small orchards linked to pharmaceutical laboratories, started to be accurately collected by private persons in their own gardens, following the example of the cultivated Venetian humanist Ermolao Barbaro. Between the earlier herbals where plants were reproduced and commented the fifteenth century *Liber de simplicius*, for two centuries consultable at the chemist's shop Testa d'oro at Rialto, today recognised as a work of Nicolò Roccabonella, with magnificent plates by Andrea Amadio, representing well known species as well as rare ones from the lagoon. Venice was facilitated in the introduction and study of medical plants by its privileged contacts with the near east, from where most of such peculiar spices were introduced, as explained in the foundation act of the medical garden of Padua university, dated 1545. The Venetian noble Pier Antonio Michiel developed his interest for botany from a widespread hobby into a real scientific connoisseurship, growing plants in the small garden of his Venetian palace of San Trovaso. For his competence he was asked in 1552 to collaborate to the construction of the medical garden of Padua University, and later he felt the need to catalogue and illustrate the plants he knew in a magnificent, unpublished *herbarium*, in five books, *I cinque libri di piante* (1555-1576), greatly illustrated by Domenico Dalle Greche, a pupil of Titian, in plates representing some botanical specie in its context, as is the case of the mirth, arranged in the shape of a eagle (Fig. 4). The peculiar lagoon vegetation was also studied and collected, particularly by Lorenzo Patarol in his garden of the Madonna dell'Orto and in a manuscript *Erbario*, dated 1724⁸.

The new importance given to gardens was also and particularly linked to the revival of what is called the "ideology of villa life", a way of leaving invented by ancient Romans and well described by Pliny the Younger in his letters, founded on the opposition of city and country life (but it could apply also to public and private life in the city), the first identified as the crowded, noisy, busy, polluted and corrupted site of politics, work and money (the latin *negotium*), from where the citizen escaped whenever possible to reach his suburban or extra urban place, where, abandoned formal dresses (the *toga*), he could finally relax and enjoy *otium*, it is to say spend his time walking or occupied in other physical exercises,

reading, writing or entertaining a small, selected company in a pleasant intellectual conversation and dinner (*convivium*), in a quiet, beautiful natural environment, where, "having houses, gardens, fountains, and such like pleasant places, and above all, their virtue, they could easily attain to as much happiness as can be attained here below", as "the ancients sages commonly used to retire to such like places", as explain Palladio in 1570⁹.

Let's consider now the architecture of Venetian suburban private gardens, or better of the Venetian suburban residence and its garden, since domestic architecture, and particularly the suburban and extra urban house or villa, is the result of the interaction between three different elements: buildings, gardens and the surrounding landscape. In fact gardens are depending, for their design, on the peculiar characters of the building of which they are the open-air extension and of the site in which they are located. Consequently I am convinced that to understand properly private gardens one should consider them in relation to their context. I have repeatedly complained that architectural historians for too long considered buildings apart from the open air areas planned with them, often by the same architect; we risk now to exceed on the other side considering the garden as a individual item. For their number and variety of solutions Venetian country villas are a very interesting example of the ability of landscape architects to adapt to the site, profiting from it or adjusting it to their own requirements.

The relationship between buildings and garden in the Venetian house, as well as that between the entire residence and the site is as well of great interest, as the unique urban structure of this town literally emerged from water, induced to invent new and unique solutions. Moreover, while the villas of the Veneto and their relationship with the site have been already investigated by scholars, the relationship between buildings, gardens and the site in Venetian domestic architecture is up to now almost neglected, notwithstanding the existence of a rich and varied amount of documents that can help following this story quite in detail, and the large and in great part excellent bibliography on Venetian domestic architecture published in the last decades, which insists almost exclusively on buildings (Azzi Visentini 1988).

The suburban house owned at the beginning of the sixteenth century by Vincenzo and Marina Trevisan on the Giudecca Island, at Ponte Longo, is a good early Renaissance example. Not so much remains today of its garden, but visual and written documents give us good information about it. The primary reference is of course the magnificent Jacopo de' Barbari's bird's eye view mentioned above (Fig. 5), a huge woodcut on six folio sheets extremely precise, especially regarding what appears in the foreground, as is the case of the Giudecca, whose southern side was at the end of the fifteenth century an uninterrupted sequence of private and religious gardens and orchards (Schulz 1978; Albrizzi and Pool 1989; Cunico 2009). As almost everywhere in Venice, these suburban residences occupied a long rectangular area, with a quite narrow front facing the canal.

This suburban houses were a kind of hybrid composition, opposing to the main palace front, overlooking, from the canal, the Bacino di San Marco (the huge water square in front of Saint Mark squares, the centre of Venetian political power), a rear prospect open with portico and superposed loggia toward the courtyard, very similar in its composition to contemporary villa fronts, as, for example, Villa Cornaro in Luvigliano, on the river Sile, easily reachable by water from Venice, built at the end of the fifteenth century (Fig. 6). From de' Barbari's view we deduce that the quadrangular courtyard of Palazzo Trevisan was paved in squares that we imagine of brick encircled by Istrian stone, as was Piazza San Marco at the time. In its centre there was the well and against its two sides walls green seats probably similar to those described by Pietro de' Crescenzi in his *Ruralia commoda*, written around 1303-05, and reprinted more times in the 1490' and early 1500' in Venice, in Italian, with illustrations representing contemporary Venetian gardens. A valuable source of information on early Renaissance Venetian gardens is also *Hypnerotomachia Poliphili*, the precious novel written by Francesco Colonna, accompanied by extremely interesting woodcuts, printed in Venice by Aldo Manutio in 1499. The southern wall of Palazzo Trevisan, separating the courtyard from the garden, is partly treated as a grid trellis that, as a transparent diaphragm, allows to see through the long perspective of the garden, a perfect scenery for theatrical and other per-

formances. In fact we know that in 1515 the Compagnia della calza of the "Ortolani" performed here "new" and "lascivious" comedies, while in 1530 receptions were organised in honour of famous guests, as Eleonora Gonzaga and the duke of Urbino. A similar kind of trellis, with important stone gate, is represented in the background of Jacopo Tintoretto's *Miracle of St. Marc*, of 1548 (Fig. 7).

The garden itself is divided into two sections by an arched pergola running exactly all along the main central axis, a regular, clear distribution that contrasts with that quite casual of the nearby late gothic house. Both properties have land cultivated in long and narrow strips according to an agrarian technique widespread at the time, represented in Giovanni Bellini's *Deposition of Christ*, today in the Louvre. The Trevisan and nearby gardens are delimited at the south by a wooden palisade, standing on a irregular, amphibian land, in instable balance between earth and water [the so called *velme* present in different parts of Venice, but particularly extended at its edges, north (from St. Alvise to the Arsenal), south (Giudecca Island), east (Island of San Pietro di Castello) and west]. In fact at the end of the fifteenth century most of the extreme sections of Venice, overlooking the lagoon (the Giudecca Island on the south, but also areas on the western and northern borders, or, even northern, the island of Murano, as well as some part of the centre of the city, a had land defended from water corrosion simply by mean of a barrier made of woven wattles, in a city without walls, whose area was still under development. It is significant that Vincenzo and Marina Trevisan had to pay a fine for illegal land reclamation in 1502 (Azzi Visentini 1988: 83-85).

The problem of the city's shape and consequently the design of its gardens will be solved once for ever fifty years later, in 1556, when the comprehensive urban plan for Venice and its lagoon conceived by the hydraulic engineer Cristoforo Sabbadino became executive. In fact the plan coincided with the passage from early to full Renaissance and Baroque domestic architecture, and inevitably had a decisive impact on it, since one of the main objects of Sabbadino's plan included the complete abolition of the amphibian lands, or *velme*, with the definition of its perimeter by an uninterrupted stone edge. The opportuni-

ty to fix once for ever the perimeter of the city induced to make it more regular where it was not so, with the reclamation of new land, as was the case on the north of the church of SS. Giovanni e Paolo, from the Sacca della Misericordia to San Francesco della Vigna, where the so called Fondamenta Nuove were built, a large stone quay extended for more than one km. Sabbadino's plan also reconsidered and more rationally transferred the main activities of the city, with a clearer separation between the residential and productive parts. So the activities linked to timber transportation were relocated on the Fondamenta Nuove, in the north, and in the Canale della Giudecca, on the south, opening the way to the transformation of the Canal Grande in a continuous sequence of noble palaces, only at times interrupted by some church or more simple houses, and, of course, by the large and convulsive area of the Rialto market. Philippe de Commines at the end of the fifteenth century defined the Canal Grande the best road in the world. We will consider later the presence of gardens along the Canal Grande.

We said that the revived "ideology of villa life" accompanied the evolution of Venetian suburban domestic architecture from late gothic to early and full Renaissance, giving a special function and therefore more space and meaning to gardens and other open sites. Moreover, the suburban residence so renown was perfectly capable to profit from the urban reshape of the city of Venice according to Sabbadino's plan, in which this architecture perfectly fitted, adapting, or better taking advantage from its new peculiarities, and particularly the construction of stone borders and *fondamenta*, as we said. This evolution can be accurately followed through painted and printed views, cartographic maps, plans and other visual and written documents, as we will later see.

Let's consider first the impact of late Renaissance Roman architecture on suburban Venetian residences. One of the earlier and more representative ones is certainly the palace built by the cultivated jurist Camillo Trevisan just after 1554, when he inherited the land in the island of Murano. Finished by 1557, the palace had its main, simple square front, with a large Venetian window on the *piano nobile*, corresponding to the central hall and consequently to the main central axis, on the *fondamenta* accompanying the more important canal of Mura-

no (today San Donato canal), and extended considerably to the back, where the rear, U shaped palace delimited a courtyard with well followed by a garden extended up to the lagoon. Between the courtyard and the garden there was an elaborate, classical loggia functioning as a diaphragm, having at its two sides two rustic artificial grottoes of great beauty, in the style of Rome ("di eccessiva bellezza", "alla romana"), with water plays, according to Francesco Sansovino (Sansovino 1561), an element up to then unknown in Venice and the Veneto, due probably to Daniele Barbaro, responsible also for the contemporary grotto of his Maser villa, at the foot of Asolo's hills. We can try to imagine the original aspect of this important garden through a good number of eighteenth century drawings and plates executed by Francesco Muttoni (Fig. 8), Giorgio Fossati and Antonio Visentini¹⁰. We do not know so much about the rear garden of Palazzo Trevisan in Murano, except that it was extended more than one hundred meters, and was overlooking the lagoon, from where one could admire in clear days the far-away profile of the Alps, a picturesque touch very much looked after for Venetian villas surrounded by a monotonous plane of flat fields, and also an appreciated background of Venetian cartographic views, as de' Barbari's woodcut.

We also ignore how the garden of Palazzo Trevisan was connected with the lagoon. But the quite similar residence of Sante Cattaneo in the Giudecca island, described in detail by Giustiniano Martinioni in the 1663 new, updated edition of Francesco Sansovino's *Venetia città nobilissima et singolare...*, presented on sequence, along the main central axis, palace, courtyard paved in bricks, decorated with grottoes and water plays, and garden, extended up to the lagoon, towards Chioggia and Malamocco, with plants of orange, citrus, jasmine and other exotics. At the end of the garden, overlooking the lagoon, there was a beautiful loggia, or better a small building, decorated with frescoes, containing corridors, rooms and other comfortable and delicious sites, that remember the important, late Renaissance loggia between courtyard and garden of Palazzo Trevisan (Sansovino - Martinioni 1663).

The presence of a loggia or other kind of water gate open on the lagoon was possible after having reinforced the border with the construction of a

solid stone edge (sometime accompanied by a quay or *fondamenta*), imposed by law as part of Sabbadino's plan.

Drawings, literary descriptions, printed and painted views and other documents can certainly give specific information on single gardens, but only the cartography related to the entire city can show the extension of the gardens in late Renaissance and Baroque Venice, and their general impact on the site.

Particularly interesting for a good understanding of the evolution of residential architecture in Venice and its gardens after the construction of the stone edge is the large, detailed bird's eye view of the city (Figs. 9, 9a), painted on canvas before 1677 (since the Salute is there but not the Punta della Dogana da mar, built according to Giuseppe Benoni's plan chosen by the procurators of San Marco that same year between those which applied to the public competition), preserved in the Abegg Stiftung, Riggisberg, Switzerland, that I have first discussed and published in 1979, and considered and reprinted many, many times since then, but that scholars have nevertheless up to now completely ignored. The colors of the beautiful painting make gardens even more visible, their intense green contrasting with the bleu of the canals and the lagoon, the red of the roofs and the orange or pale yellow of buildings. The large, topographic plan drawn by Lodovico Ughi and printed the first time in 1729 indicate symbolically the areas occupied by gardens, extended in the more than fifty years from the Abegg Stiftung bird's eye view (while buildings are left white), adding more information on the subject¹¹. At first glance it is evident the incredible opportunity that the new form of the city, clearly defined by the stone edge, have made possible for suburban domestic architecture, allowing a second exit on the lagoon where previously were amphibian *velme*. More or less articulated water gates, in the form of loggias or small pavilions, became in short widespread, in larger and even smaller gardens, suburban but also located in the centre of the city, acting as scenographic background of the garden and of the entire composition. One of the earlier is the sixteenth century casino of Palazzo Contarini dal Zaffo at the Misericordia (Fig. 10), a place where a group of intellectual friends could meet and discuss quietly, a kind of *diaeta*, as ancient Romans called such small detached retirements located in their villas.

From the late seventeenth century libraries, art and antique collections and music took often place in such small buildings located in Venetian gardens, at times functioning also as water (or ground) gate. Those of Palazzo Zane, Palazzo Zenobio and palazzo Foscarini ai Carmini, Palazzo Cappello in Rio Marin, Palazzo Patarol at the Madonna dell'Orto, Palazzo Lezze at the Misericordia, and others are still there, while those of Palazzo Gradenigo in Rio Marin, Palazzo Tron at San Stae, on the Grand Canal etc., have been demolished. Channel fronts encouraged also the presence of fanciful water gates, with astonishing transparencies that allowed to look through. Separation walls partly transparent, loggias and water gates were often represented as backgrounds in Venetian paintings. Let's just mention Benedetto Caliari's arrival to a villa along a channel (Figs. 11, 12, 12a), Tintoretto's *Miracle of St. Mark* just mentioned and G.B. Tiepolo's more replicas of *Rinaldo and Armida* in love, that revive garden elements painted two century earlier by Paolo Veronese¹². Most probably the famous dinners painted by Paolo Veronese and other sixteenth century Venetian artists in fanciful loggias were inspired by this element so common in the gardens of Venice. With pavilions and water gates, statuary was a fundamental presence in the gardens of Venice as in those of Venetian villas. The Caesars of Palazzo Soranzo Cappello courtyard in rio Marin are between the few surviving¹³.

Gardens were so much required, and space so limited, that in many cases old buildings have been demolished to make space for a garden. Those, more than ten, along the Grand Canal are the most astonishing, starting with the two at the sides of Mauro Codussi's Palazzo Loredan-Vendramin-Calergi, obtained at the beginning of the seventeenth century clearing poorly built areas just bought by the Calergi, in the occasion of the marriage of their only daughter to a Grimani, with, at the two extremes, the Giardini Reali, wanted by Napoleon on the place of the mediaeval Terranova Granaries, and the Papadopoli gardens at the Tolentini, built just after the purchase in 1834 of the area previously occupied by the dismissed monastery of Santa Croce, that broke the almost uninterrupted sequence of palaces (with a few churches, and the market section of Rialto) along this more than three km meandering water *allée*¹⁴.

Just a few observations, in conclusion, on the use of

the garden: in the beginning a cosy space for meditation, inspiration, intellectual conversation and love, with time open to different kind of social entertainments, theatrical and musical performances, but also for sport and competitions. In fact, after the restrictions (1287 and 1291), followed by the prohibition in the fifteenth century to go by horse in public spaces, horse training continued in the riding-school of SS. Giovanni and Paolo, and in private gardens. Those, quite huge, of Palazzo Gradenigo in Rio Marin had stables for a large number of horses which participated in races in the garden, where in the carnival of 1768 (1767 *more veneto*) took place a memorable bull hunting¹⁵.

Accurately discussed in Giustiniano Martinioni's edition of Sansovino's *Venetia...* (1663), the private gardens of Venice started to be again the object of critical studies in the nineteenth century. In the early twentieth century they stimulated the imagination of great writers as Gabriele d'Annunzio and Henry James. Gino Damerini dedicated to the subject two books, and Charlotte Elfiede Pauly investigate the relationship between gardens and paintings in her thesis, *The venetianische Lustgarten* (1916) (Berlese 1842; Gera 1847; Pauly 1916; Damerini 1927; Damerini 1931). A new season of studies started in the early 1970' with Lionello Puppi's activity at Padua University. His very important articles on Venetian gardens bring a large amount of new documents and information on the patrons, their love, care, use, perception and appreciation of the garden, with only a few considerations on its architecture and urban impact. While nineteenth century public gardens, built or simply planned, were considered in the monographic studies of Elena Bassi on Giannantonio Selva and Giandomenico Romanelli on nineteenth century Venice, the first scientific consideration of the architectural presence of the garden as part of domestic architecture is in Elena Bassi's scattered observations in her valuable *Palazzi di Venezia* (1976 and later reprint) (Bassi 1936; Puppi 1972; Puppi 1978; Puppi 1978a; Romanelli 1977; Bassi 1987; Moldi Ravenna and Sammartini 1992). Some specific palace (Trevisan at Giudecca and Trevisan in Murano), its garden and urban impact are put into evidence in the book on the gardens of the Veneto I edited in 1988, immediately followed

by the first comprehensive serious survey, due to Mariapia Cunico, that systematically considers the gardens of the entire city, including accurate architectural and botanical plans. Since then many valuable studies considered the gardens of Venice, but no attempt have been done up to now to reinstate the global presence of the garden in the city. John Dixon Hunt's recent book on *The Venetian city garden* gives in fact a good comprehensive general overview, with some new documents and quite good photographs, well presented and certainly very useful for non Italian readers, but it is not the revealing study we expected from such a renowned scholar, a real point of reference for so many of us. Moreover, due perhaps to some technical production problems, the bibliography is not always reliable, names, titles and dates are occasionally misspelled or inexact¹⁶.

In conclusion it will be extremely important to realise a general survey of Venetian gardens and their evolution in time based on the rich documentation and related to cartographic documents, views and maps over mentioned, integrated with the Napoleonic, Austrian and Austro-Italian cadastres, closing with the "fotopiano" (or comprehensive zenithal photo) of 1982. This survey, accompanied by accurate visits that could discover elements still preserved and not yet recognised, will allow to find out the existence and state of consideration of historical and new gardens, and could be the point of departure for the systematic preservation, restoration and re evaluation of what still remain of the magnificent "emerald necklace" (to adopt a word used by Olmsted for Boston park system), that once framed the city, and was perceived only through glimpses from the partly transparent water gates, gardens that nowadays could be at times opened and so appreciated by a larger public. It is the case of the garden of Palazzo Soranzo Cappello in Rio Marin, given for almost lost and recently reborn, thank to the intelligent and careful reinterpretation of Giuseppe Rallo, who is now involved in the restoration of San Giobbe's botanical garden and other projects, while Mariapia Cunico is restoring some relevant garden, or what remain of them, at the Giudecca and elsewhere.

NOTES

- ¹ At the end of the sixteenth century there were in Venice «diversi giardini, oltre à i comuni di semplici, notabili e famosi per piante nobili e rare, cosa incredibile à forestieri, poi che essi pensano, che l'acqua salsa non possa cedere all'artificio humano», wrote Francesco Sansovino in the chapter on gardens of his *Venetia città mobilissima et singolare*, printed at first in 1581. The large number of the gardens of Venice, in the past and today. Sansovino mention around twenty of them, a few more are added by Stringa and Martinioni in the 1604 and 1663 editions of Sansovino's *Venetia*...only in Venice, except Murano. Around 1690 Maximilian Mison remember reading in a guide that the gardens in Venice at the time were around 335 but he could not believe it. Around two hundred those identified in the survey directed by Mariapia Cunico, founded on cartography and investigation on the site, but also on the *fotopiano* of 1982, 170 those considered in the book Cunico edited in 1989. The many pilgrims from central Europe waiting (at times even a few months, or years) to embark in Venetian boats for the Holy Land, as Felix Faber and Pietro Casola, were impressed by the many gardens (Sansovino – Martinioni 1663; Puppi 1972; Puppi 1978; Puppi 1978b; Cunico 1989).
- ² In a list of 1795 “li pozzi di pubblica ragione, dipendenti dal Magistrato Eccellentissimo de' Provveditori di Comun”, divisi a Sestier per Sestier, e Contrada per Contrada”, were 157. The statistics issued by the Ufficio Tecnico of the city of Venice in 1858 documented the existence in Venice (with Lido and Murano) of 6046 private wells and 180 public ones active, while 556 had been filled in. The number increase with those in the lagoon islands and in Chioggia. Today they are at least 2500 (Rizzi 1981: 337-340, for the 1795 list see Azzi Visentini 1985).
- ³ See Wichmann 1987.
- ⁴ Aristocratic houses were in Venice usually called ca', house, since the only building named palace was the Ducal one. On Venetian mediaeval upper classes' domestic architecture see Schulz 2004; Rössler 2010, Azzi Visentini 2011.
- ⁵ See Luciani and Mosser 2009.
- ⁶ See Bacchin and Pasqualin 1989.
- ⁷ See Azzi Visentini 2008. See also Azzi Visentini (ed.) 1999.
- ⁸ On Michiel's *herbarium* and his importance for Venetian garden history see Azzi Visentini 1984. This book was based on Azzi Visentini's “tesi di specializzazione” (a kind of doctoral thesis), discussed at the University of Padua in 1977-1978, tutor Prof. L. Puppi, on the Botanical Garden of Padova as a Renaissance garden. On the subject see also Azzi Visentini 1980, 2004: 111-115. On private plant collectors in Renaissance Venice and on P.A. Michiel see Marsili 1840; De Visiani 1854; Michiel 1940.
- ⁹ Palladio 1738 (1570), Second Book, p. 46.
- ¹⁰ The grotto, oval in plan, with two small niches on the sides and a larger one on the back, was «composta di tufo, di marmi colorati, e di crostacei rappresentanti varie figure, e nicchie di puttini, per formare scherzi e giuochi di acque con il mezzo di un ampio conservatorio eretto per tal effetto in una stanza grande in sito alquanto eminente». «Dirimpetto a questa», at the opposite end of the loggia, there was «una nicchia minore, con vasca e statua», explains Muttoni. Muttoni (architetto N.N.) 1743; Bassi 1987: 528-43; Azzi Visentini 1984; Azzi Visentini 1988.
- ¹¹ The Abegg Stiftung bird's eye view of Venice was first printed in Azzi Visentini 1979, and from that moment often discussed and printed by the same author (Azzi Visentini 2005).
- ¹² On paintings as documents for the study of Venetian historical gardens see Puppi 1972; Azzi Visentini 1998a; Azzi Visentini 2002a.
- ¹³ On Venetian gardens and sculpture Azzi Visentini 1998; Azzi Visentini 2000; Azzi Visentini 2002; Azzi Visentini 2005.
- ¹⁴ On Venetian gardens in the 19th century, and particularly on those on the Grand Canal, see Azzi Visentini 2010.
- ¹⁵ Zorzi, Muraro, Prato, Zorzi 1971: 107, 113; Azzi Visentini 2005. A “cavallerizza” was also built in a garden of the Giudecca (Cunico 2009).
- ¹⁶ Hunt 2009. See also Hunt 1981.

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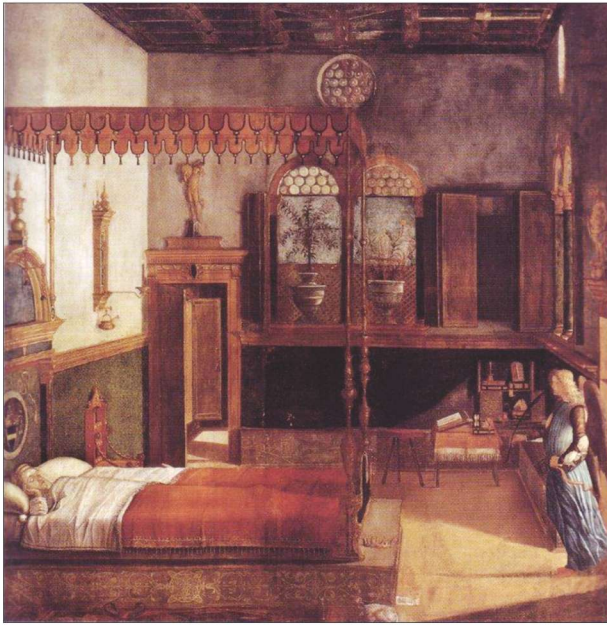


Fig. 1. Vittore Carpaccio, *Saint Orsola's dream*, 1495, oil on canvas, Venice, Gallerie dell'Accademia



Fig. 2. Vittore Carpaccio, *Miracle at Rialto*, 1494, oil on canvas, Venezia, Gallerie dell'Accademia



Fig. 3. View of houses with altana along the Rio delle Eremiti, Venice (photo of the author)



Fig. 5. Jacopo de' Barbari, *Bird's eye view of Venice*, 1500, woodcut, detail with Canal Grande, Punta della Dogana, Canale della Giudecca and Giudecca Island, Venezia, Civici Musei Veneziani



Fig.4. Domenico Dalle Greche, *Myrtle adapted on the shape of a eagle*, colored drawing, Erbario Michiel, Libro azzurro, 1555-76 ca., Venezia, Biblioteca Nazionale Marciana



Fig. 6. Villa Cornaro-Dall'Aglio, Luvigliano (Treviso), front overlooking the river Sile, end of the fifteenth century (photo of the author)



Fig. 7. Jacopo Tintoretto, Miracle of Saint Marc, oil on canvas, 1548, Venezia, Gallerie dell'Accademia

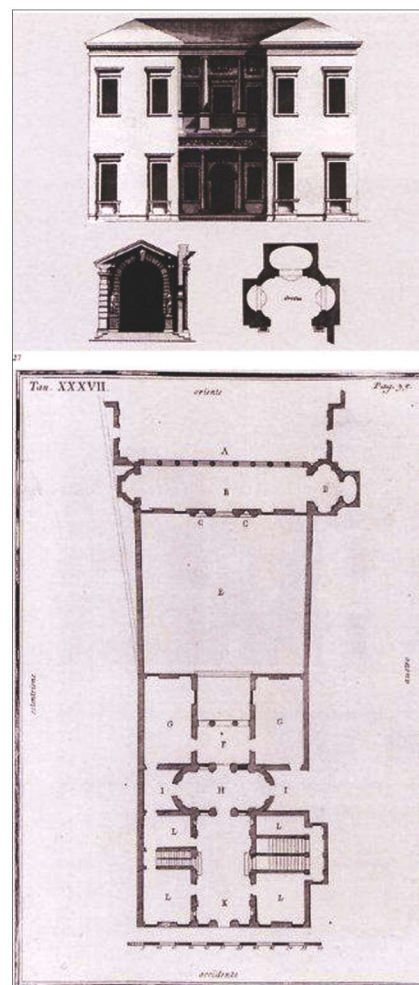


Fig. 8. Palazzo Trevisan in Murano, Rear front of the palace and grotto; general plan, from Francesco Muttoni (Architetto N.N.), *L'architettura di Andrea Palladio vicentino...*, vol. V, *Le fabbriche inedite di Andrea Palladio*, 1744, tavv. XXXVII, XLIV-XLVI



Fig. 9. Artist Unknown, Bird's eye view of Venice, oil on canvas, Abegg Stiftung, Riggisberg, Switzerland (entire painting in color)



Fig. 9a. detail of Giudecca



Fig. 10. Francesco Guardi, Garden of Palazzo Contarini dal Zaffo alla Misericordia with, on the background left, the sixteenth century casino of the Spirits, drawing on pen and water color, 1780 ca., Oxford, Ashmolean Museum



Fig. 11.
Benedetto Caliari,
Arrival at a water
gate of a lagoon
residence, second
half of the sixteenth
century, oil on
canvas, Bergamo,
Accademia Carrara



Fig. 12. Palazzo Michiel-Clary, Water gate on Rio Ognissanti,
(photo of the author)



Fig. 12a. Palazzo Giustiniani, Water gate on Rio Ognissanti
and altana (photo of the author)