VILLA MALAPARTE

Adalberto Libera and Villa Malaparte

Marida Talamona

From the mid nineteenth century onward, the island of Capri hosted a sophisticated cosmopolitan community. Benito Mussolini's daughter, Edda, and her husband, the Minister of Culture Galeazzo Ciano, bought a house there in the late 1930s, and other officials of the Fascist regime followed. The prominent intellectual and writer Curzio Malaparte (1898–1957) first visited the island in the autumn of 1928, during the four months he spent in Naples as editor of a local newspaper, *Il Mattino*. But it was not until December 1937 that he returned for an extended visit, accompanied by two close friends, the diplomat Guglielmo Rulli and the young painter Orfeo Tamburi. On this occasion Malaparte decided to build himself a house on Capri.

Malaparte wanted a house that would make no concessions to 'those hybrid marriages of the Moorish, Romanesque, Gothic and Secessionist styles, which certain Germans brought to Capri thirty or forty years ago, polluting the simplicity and purity of the houses of the island'. But above all he wanted a 'modern' house, and in 1938 he approached Adalberto Libera, one of the first architects in Rome to take up modernism. Malaparte was probably familiar with Libera's controversial installation for the *Mostra della Rivoluzione Fascista* (1932). The two men had been introduced to each other by Tamburi, who was designer of the journal *Prospettive*, which Malaparte founded in 1937. An editorial in the very first issue, probably written by Malaparte himself, expressed enthusiasm for modern architecture — at a time when many people were convinced that classicism was the only style able to embody the spirit of the new Imperial Rome:

> In order to express the revolutionary and imperial character of Fascist Italy it would be absurd and ridiculous to fall back on archaeological reconstructions, triumphs of columns and capitals and pompous catafalques of marble. A railway station, a market, a school, a hospital, an airport or an electric power station is very different from a Greek or Roman monument, a temple or mausoleum, a triumphal arch or an amphitheatre. The architectural complex of Sabaudia or Littoria, the Casa del Fascio at Como and the station at Santa Maria Novella at Florence, for example, express the very modern revolutionary and imperial character of Fascist Italy far more successfully than, say, the station at Milan, or the first stretch of Via Roma at Turin, or any of the other hideous works of architecture, which display the bad taste and antiquated anti-Fascist mentality of certain architects, and there are many, some of them famous, who imagined that they were expressing the revolutionary, innovative and creative spirit of Mussolini during the early years of Fascism.

The editorial went on to announce that a future issue of *Prospettive* would be devoted to Fascist architecture, and Tamburi proposed Libera and the architect Luigi Moretti as guest editors for this number.

Malaparte had already chosen a site for the house. Twenty years later he wrote:

> In the wildest, most solitary and dramatic part of Capri, in the part which faces the south and east, where the island loses its human quality and becomes ferocious, where nature expresses itself with an incomparable, cruel strength, there was a promontory of an extraordinary purity of line, a rocky claw flung into the sea. No other place in Italy has such a broad horizon and such a depth of feeling. It is a place clearly intended for strong men, free spirits. . . . There was no house in this place. I would be the first, then, to build in the midst of that nature.[1]

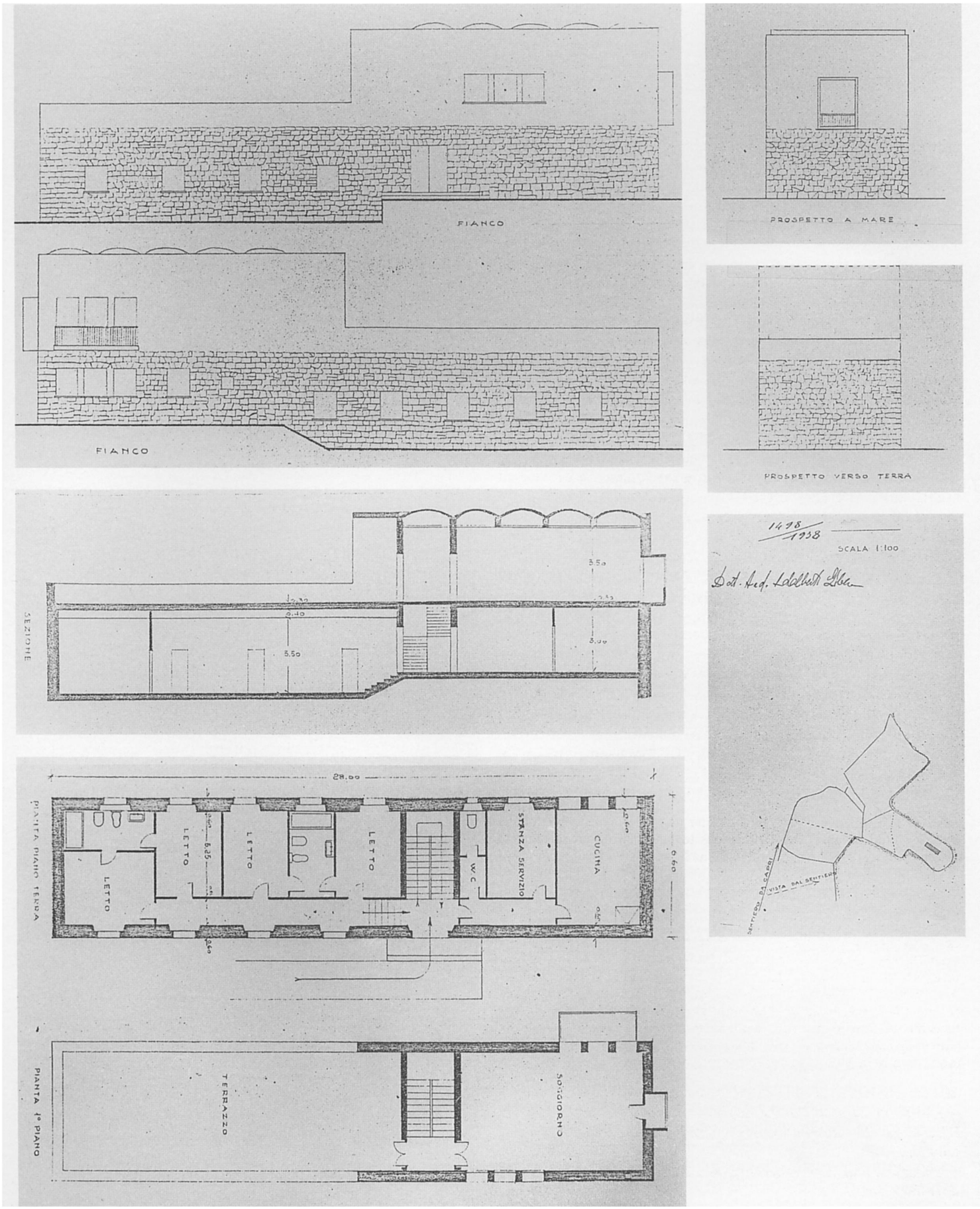
In January 1938, only a month after his holiday on Capri, Malaparte signed a contract to buy a piece of land, approximately twelve thousand square metres in size. A few weeks later he bought another small piece adjoining it. Thus, in a short time he had become the owner of an exceptional site on the slope of Matromania, stretching upward from the rocks at sea-level to the path of Pizzolungo, which ran halfway up the coast. A very steep flight of steps along the rocky slope of the crest led from this path of beaten earth to the long, level promontory of Massullo, a barren wind-beaten rock.

The purchase of the land had cost the writer very little. This was partly because building on Capri during that period was no easy matter. Since the second half of the 1920s the entire island had been under the protection of a law intended to safeguard its natural beauty. The central government had assumed direct control over all building activity on the island, however insignificant, and all applications for building permission had to undergo an extremely long and tortuous administrative procedure.

Although Malaparte followed the entire administrative procedure required by law, he managed to overcome the restrictions in a very short time. On 14 March 1938 he submitted to Capri Council a request for permission to build a small house, together with Libera's initial design for it. On that same day the Council's Building Commission examined the request and approved the attached design. The official report by the architect responsible for examining building applications stated that in this case it would be unnecessary to enforce the restriction on any new building in the area because the house would harmonize with both the site and the local architecture, while its position and external appearance meant that it would be virtually invisible, above all from the sea. (Clearly this decision must have come from higher up, for anyone who has ever seen Casa Malaparte would find it hard to share his opinion.) By September the Council had granted its permission, the only stipulation being that Malaparte should conform to the submitted design.

Of the three stages in the application for permission to build — the Council, the Superintendence and the Ministry — only the Ministry has preserved the file. Among the correspondence which passed between the Superintendence and the Ministry is a copy of the 'Design of the house belonging to Sig. Curzio Malaparte', signed by Adalberto Libera.[2] It comprises four sheets of paper showing a site plan and elevations, a longitudinal cross-section, and plans. The reference number confirms that this is the same design that Malaparte presented to Capri Council in March, which means that the architect must have worked out the design between January and the middle of March 1938 (the same months in which he was designing the Palazzo dei Ricevimenti e dei Congressi in Rome).

As is usually the case, discussions between the architect and his



'Design for a house for Sig. Curzio Malaparte' — drawings by Adalberto Libera, for presentation to Capri Council on 14 March 1938.

client were not documented. No trace of the commission remains in the Libera archives. It seems, however, that in March 1938 the architect had not yet been able to visit the site and that he had not even been given an exact topographical survey, but only some photographs of Capo Massullo and a site plan. Libera decided to position the building on the promontory, where the ground is less steep and the differences in level are less accentuated. Although the final design is quite different from the initial proposal, this crucial decision remained unchanged.

The house is on two floors, with the upper floor occupying exactly half the area of the ground floor and terminating in a large solarium-terrace which faces inland. Following the axis of the building on its southeast elevation is a small loggia, overhanging the sea and framing a section of the horizon. On the opposite side of the house, on the upper floor, there is a single aperture framing a spectacular view of the Faraglioni rocks.

The building is 28 metres long, but only 6.6 metres wide. A corridor on the ground floor connects all the rooms in the house. Although the cross-section is constant throughout, a change in the ground-level separates the sleeping area from that of the entrance hall, bathroom and kitchen, which is completely closed on two sides. In this design Libera was beginning to investigate an idea which may have been suggested to him by the shape of the plot, and which he was to take up again in later years: a type of detached house with an extensible linear plan, in which the width of the house is the determining element.

Libera's archives contain numerous studies and sketches based on this device. In 1940 he designed a 'Casa-studio per l'architetto' for a Housing Exhibition at EUR (which never actually took place). This 'studio-house' is a complex composition incorporating several different elements: living quarters, studio, patio, courtyard and garden. The building containing the living quarters has a strong resemblance to the house on Capri: its size and proportions are similar, while the plan, particularly that of the third-floor sleeping quarters, is almost identical.

Towards the end of the 1950s, Libera produced further variations of this house type, illustrated by an interesting series of preliminary sketches for five houses at Casal Palocco in Rome.[3] In these later versions the narrow rectangle, of a width varying between 6.6 and 6.75 metres, is even more attenuated, accentuating its studied horizontality.

The designs for Capri and for the Housing Exhibition also have similar façades: a single base of exposed stone interrupted at regular intervals by identical windows, above which runs a contrasting smooth plastered surface. The style is deliberately simple. In the September 1941 issue of the review *Stile* Libera wrote: 'We must deprive houses of their status as works of art, and insist upon their aesthetic and human character.'

After the initial design of March 1938, Libera probably developed his ideas for the house in a series of sketches which were the basis of consultations with his client. These consultations cannot have been easy. The enormous importance that Malaparte attached to his 'definitive house' from the very beginning must have made it impossible for him to take a secondary role.[4] Even so, it is surprising that by 1940 (the house was built between 1938 and 1942) relations between the two had degenerated to such an extent

that the architect was already trying to extricate himself from the commission.

In May 1942 the magazine *Stile* published a survey of Libera's work. Oddly, the author, Gio Ponti, makes no mention of this recent design for so illustrious a client, nor does he include any drawings or photographs of the house, already inhabited by Malaparte in spite of the fact that the exterior was still to be completed. One cannot help wondering whether this omission was not requested by Libera himself, almost as if he wanted to disown the building as his own work. Even before the article was published, the architect had imposed complete silence upon himself with regard to the Capri house.[5] Nowhere in his writings does Libera refer to Villa Malaparte — a building now recognized as one of his greatest works.

Translation by Charles Lambert. This article is drawn from a research project on Villa Malaparte which will eventually be published as a monograph.

Notes

1. From Curzio Malaparte, 'Relazione sulla casa di Capri', quoted in: M. Talamona, 'Lo scrittore e l'architetto', in *Adalberto Libera: Opera Completa*, edited by G. Polin and G. Marzari (Milan, 1989), p. 239, note 14.
2. Ibid. p. 239, notes 3–5, 10, for more information regarding these events and for archive details of the documents.
3. 'Disegni per cinque ville a Casal Palocco', in the Adalberto Libera Archive.
4. This interpretation was first proposed by Manfredo Tafuri in 'L'Ascesi e il gioco', *Gran Bazaar* 15, July–August 1981. He writes: 'The way in which Malaparte intertwines images of himself with the history of the house encourages one to suppose that there was considerable collaboration with Libera from the very beginning.' He goes on to say that there is sufficient evidence for us 'to judge the discussion between Libera and Malaparte as far less peaceful than it initially appears: the presence of the patron was, moreover, too great for us not to take into account his subjective requirements when we interpret the work.'
5. In Libera's only reference to Malaparte, the writer is grouped with Gabriele D'Annunzio and dismissed as a late-Romantic spiritualist. See: A. Libera, 'La mia esperienza di architetto', *La Casa* 6 (undated).

'Casa come me'– A sublime alienation

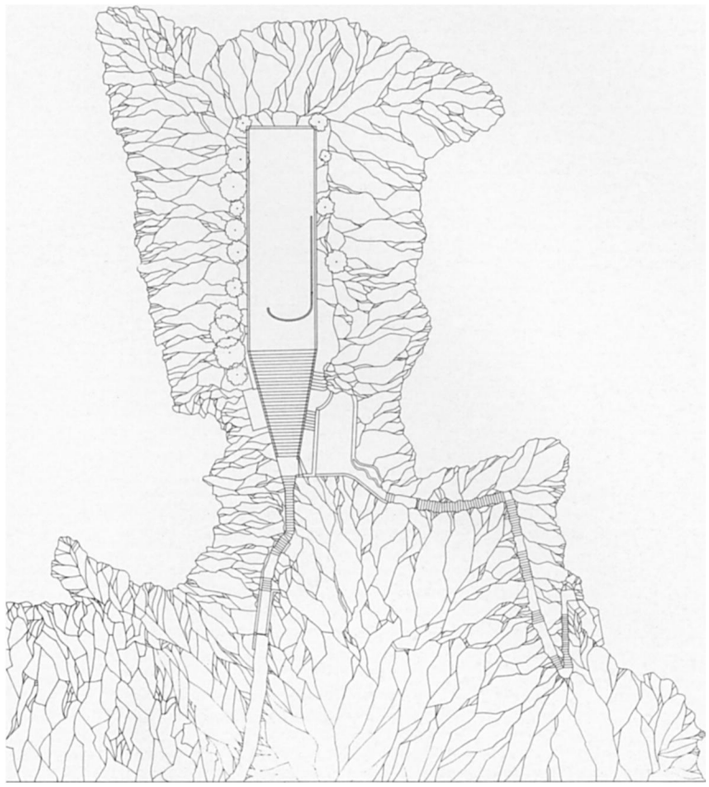
Wiel Arets and Wim van den Bergh

In his novel *La pelle*, Curzio Malaparte describes how he showed Field Marshal Rommel around his house:

I accompanied him all over the house, going from room to room, from the library to the cellar, and when we returned to the vast hall with its great windows, which look out onto the most beautiful scenery in the world, I offered him a glass of Vesuvian wine from the vineyards of Pompeii. 'Prosit!' he said, raising his glass, and he drained it at a single draught. Then, before leaving, he asked me whether I had bought my house as it stood or whether I had designed and built it myself. I replied — and it was not true — that I had bought the house as it stood. And with a sweeping gesture, indicating the sheer cliff of Matromania, the three gigantic rocks of the Faraglioni, the peninsula of Sorrento, the islands of the Sirens, the far-away blue coastline of Amalfi, and the golden sands of Paestum, shimmering in the distance, I said to him: 'I designed the scenery.'

Villa Malaparte is situated on the summit of Punta Massullo, a promontory that juts out of the southeastern side of Capri, offering a breathtaking panorama. It can only be reached by a four-kilometre walk along a narrow winding footpath, or from the sea via a steep flight of steps cut into the rocks. The experience is that of a highly dramatic confrontation between nature and artifice, orientation and disorientation, attraction and repulsion. From sea level, the villa appears as a ritual altar high above a rustic base, or perhaps a strategically placed military bastion. Even in its massive immobility there remains a slightly menacing suggestion of sentience: it not so much rests on the rock, but crouches like a cat about to pounce. Subtle distortions in site, form, structure, function and meaning call into question values such as beauty, truth, reason, dwelling, without necessarily rejecting them. The ideal dwelling becomes a violent scene of alienation.

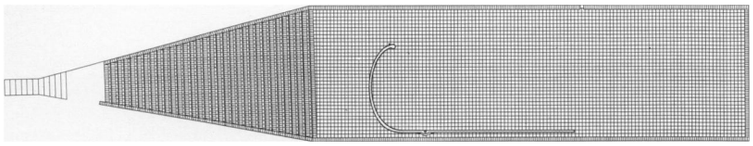
Malaparte had several names for his house, including 'Kasematte', or 'bunker' (related to another of the names he used, 'Casamatta', or 'crazy house'), but the most intriguing of all was 'Casa come me', or 'house like myself'. Whatever may be the truth about the original designer of the house — whether it was Libera, the Caprian master-mason Amitrano, Malaparte, or a combination of all three — the evil genius was surely Malaparte himself. But who was this *bon vivant*, for whom truth was just a matter of interpretation? You could say he was a hyperindividualistic poet, a near schizoid, a tinkerer, a *solitarius* — but he was also a public figure, an entertainer, an entrepreneur, a seducer, and master of the machine. These two sides of Malaparte's character, acting like the two centres of an ellipse, communicated with each other through the artifices he created: in the villa, his writings, and above all his life, he contaminated the codes in order to produce a condition of uncertainty and estrangement. By crossing the barriers of disciplines and distorting their language, he seems to have developed an inexhaustible source of possibilities. Although Malaparte saw himself first and foremost as writer and intellectual, whose most potent weapon and best defence was his pen, it is in his adventurous



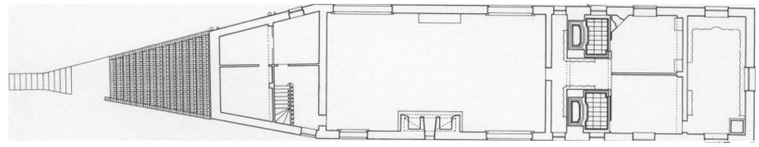
and turbulent life, and the way he dramatized it, that the key to the meaning of his villa resides.

Approached by land, Villa Malaparte first presents itself from above and sideways, giving a view of the roof-terrace with its curvilinear screen and broad staircase, which looks like a kind of two-sided theatre. The villa then disappears until one is actually ascending the monumental staircase. Originally, the entrance was within the staircase itself, as can be seen in early photographs, and thus the *piano nobile* would have been reached along the longitudinal axis of the villa. In fact the house seems to have been conceived of at first as a version of the classical villa type: a 'base' containing services, servants' and guest quarters; the *piano nobile*, reached through a porticoed entrance on the central axis, containing a vast central hall overlooking an idealized landscape, and the main living quarters; and finally an 'attic' consisting of roof-terrace and solarium. But like a film director Malaparte rearranged the 'set', gradually distorting this schema during the villa's slow genesis.

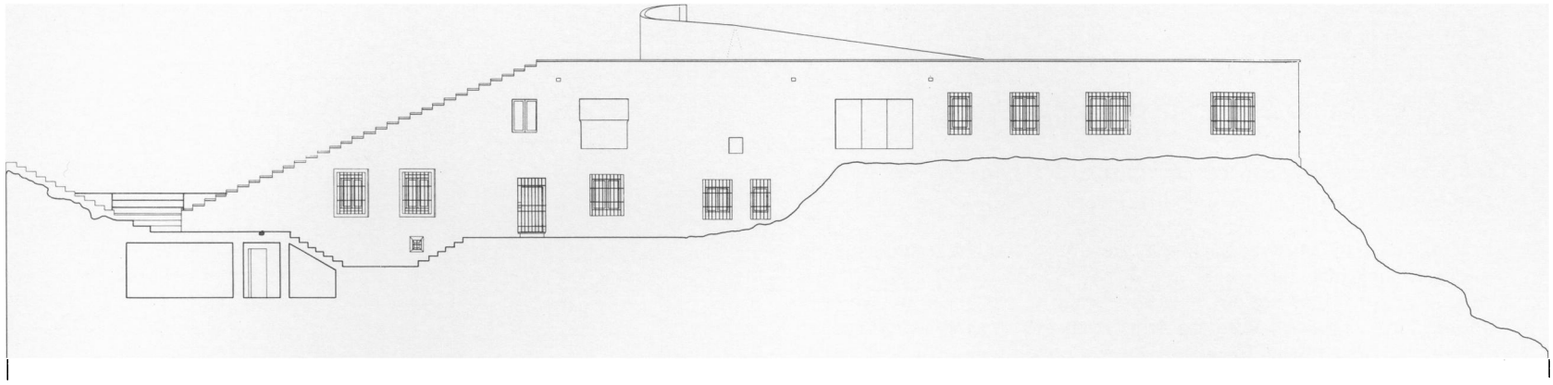
The entrance to the villa, now located in the base, consists of a rectangular opening cut into the wall, with a frameless glass door opening on to a small hall and wooden staircase which leads up to the vestibule of the *piano nobile*. Opposite the entrance is a small rustic room occupied by a large stove, table, and wooden benches, looking very much like the interior of a typical mountain lodge. To the left of the entrance and under the stairs, is the kitchen, and from there a narrow staircase leads down into the basement, with storerooms entered through transparent glass doors, each with the room's function etched onto it. To the right of the entrance, opposite the kitchen, another glass door, marked 'Ospizio' (guest quarters), leads to the central corridor and guest quarters.



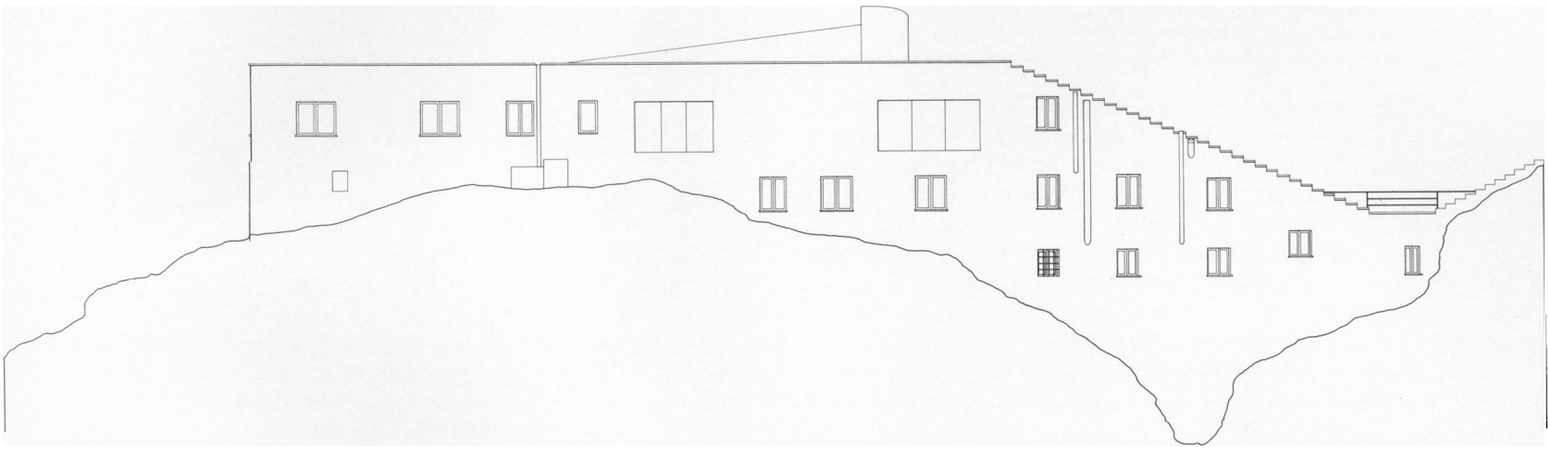
Roof plan



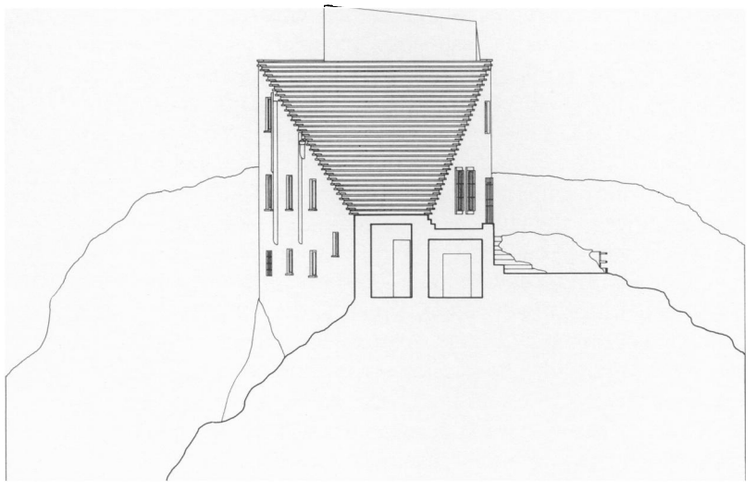
First -floor plan



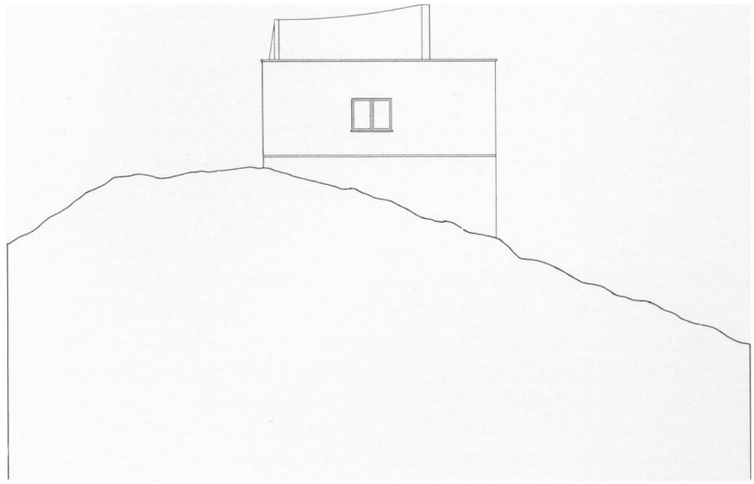
Southwest elevation



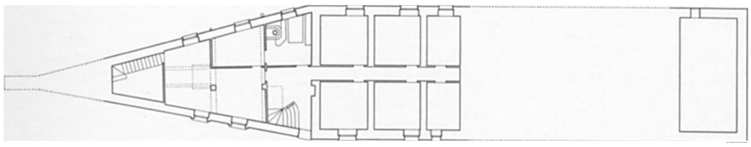
Northwest elevation



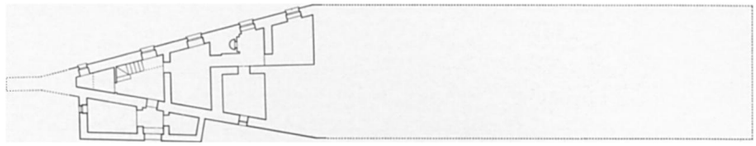
Elevation facing inland



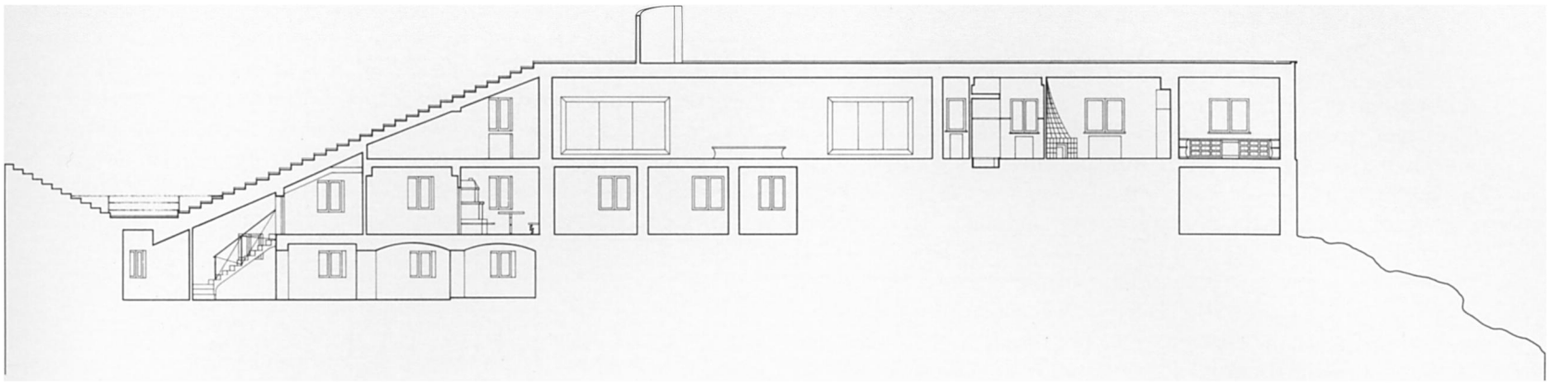
Elevation facing the sea



Ground-floor plan



Basement plan



Section

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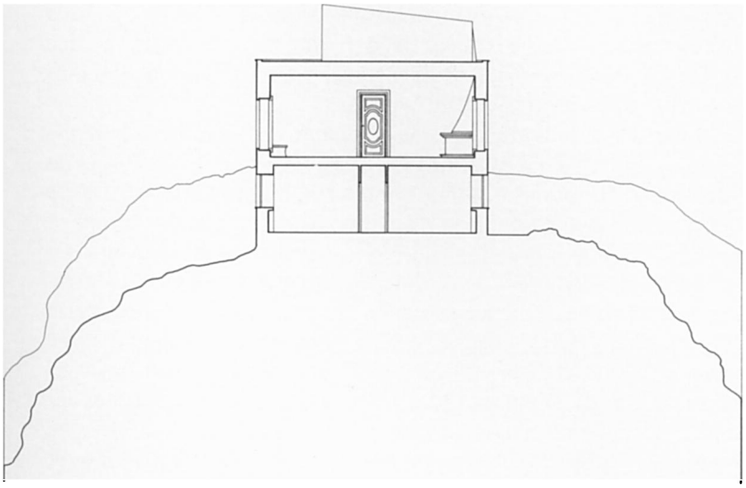

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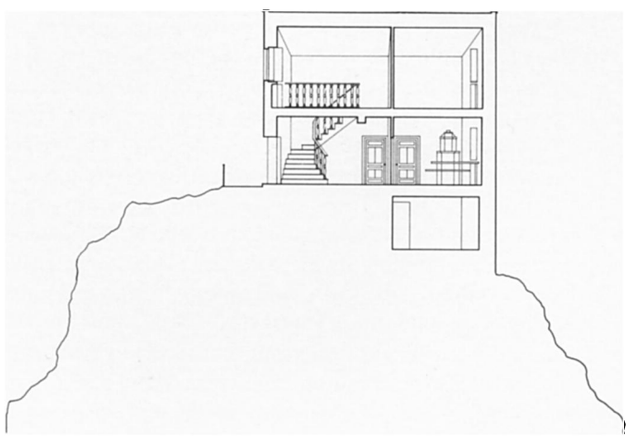


Section

At the top of the stairs a quite narrow door with elaborately worked panels acts as the entrance to the vast central hall. Strikingly simple in plan, the room is eight by fifteen metres in size and has two axes, which creates the impression of a double symmetry. But on closer inspection one sees that this is gradually distorted by the disposition of a number of architectural elements. The floor of rough stone flags reinforces the impression of an outdoor public space. Four enormous plate-glass windows (again without casings) are set into the wall, their smooth curved mouldings framing spectacular views of the landscape. Revealing the distance between nature and the viewer, they provoke a sublime anxiety. The transverse axis of the hall was defined by a Fazzini sculpture (since removed), placed between two of the windows, and a fireplace on the opposite side. The fireplace hearth incorporates a window of fireproof Jena glass, giving a view through the flames, as if on to a burning sea. Like the windows, the fireplace frames a mythical world, in which fire and water are reconciled.

This grotesque character is reinforced throughout the whole *piano nobile*, including the sparse and surrealistic furnishings. The tables, for instance, are composed of unrelated fragments — sections of a classical column covered with a pane of glass or a massive plank of undressed wood, or beautifully carved sections of a tree trunk with a skilfully moulded wooden table-top. Their presence suggests the setting for a ritual act, while the horizontal planes reinforce the idea of the house as an empty socle, and the hall, by extension, as an empty stage.

At the centre of the wall opposite the entrance to the main hall is a door that picks up the longitudinal axis of the villa and leads deeper into its mysterious voids. Behind it is a T-shaped antechamber of corridors, the corners of their intersection defined by a pair of book-cases with snake-like curves. At the end of the longitudinal corridor are two identical doors, the left one opening into the 'favorita's' bedroom, the right one into Malaparte's. Each room has a single window overlooking the sea and a magnificent bathroom of black and white marble, while the Favorita's room also has a corner fireplace.

A door in the far right-hand corner of Malaparte's bedroom opens into the most private space of all, his writing room, which is lined with tiles bearing a lyre motif (designed by Alberto Savinio). The transverse axis lies between two opposite windows, while a third one is the only window to take up the longitudinal axis of the villa, projecting it into the infinity of the horizon. In the corner opposite the door is a tower-like stove, and at the far end is a book-case and desk, where Malaparte, seated on the curved niche with his back to the door, exerts his power over the villa.

Villa Malaparte could be described as a museum of thoughts which are given form and content by the building and the objects it contains, colonizing its metaphysical emptiness. Each has its own story (autobiographical), and refers to another time and place. Malaparte conducts his guests through this museum of the self, in a kind of ceremonial promenade, but in the end it turns out to be an ingenious act of alienation. The villa, Malaparte's 'casa come me', is a kind of temple dedicated to the ultimate concern of metaphysics, the principle of identity. Cut off from the outside world both physically and conceptually, it is devoted to poetics rather than discursive thought. If dwelling is the mental and material creation of a 'world', a continuous redefinition of reality, Malaparte's villa as well as his writings could be seen as a 'living-*macchina*', a machine for dwelling through alienation, a machine (derived from the word *maghos*, or that which enables) which mediates between magic and might. It is an ingenious artifice, a perverted mechanism creating a kind of surreal delirium. Malaparte the *architecton*, who knows the causes of things and controls space and time, is master of the machine, and he leads us, his 'guests', into this sublime scenery, where we become voluntary prisoners, and then actors in the theatre of his life.

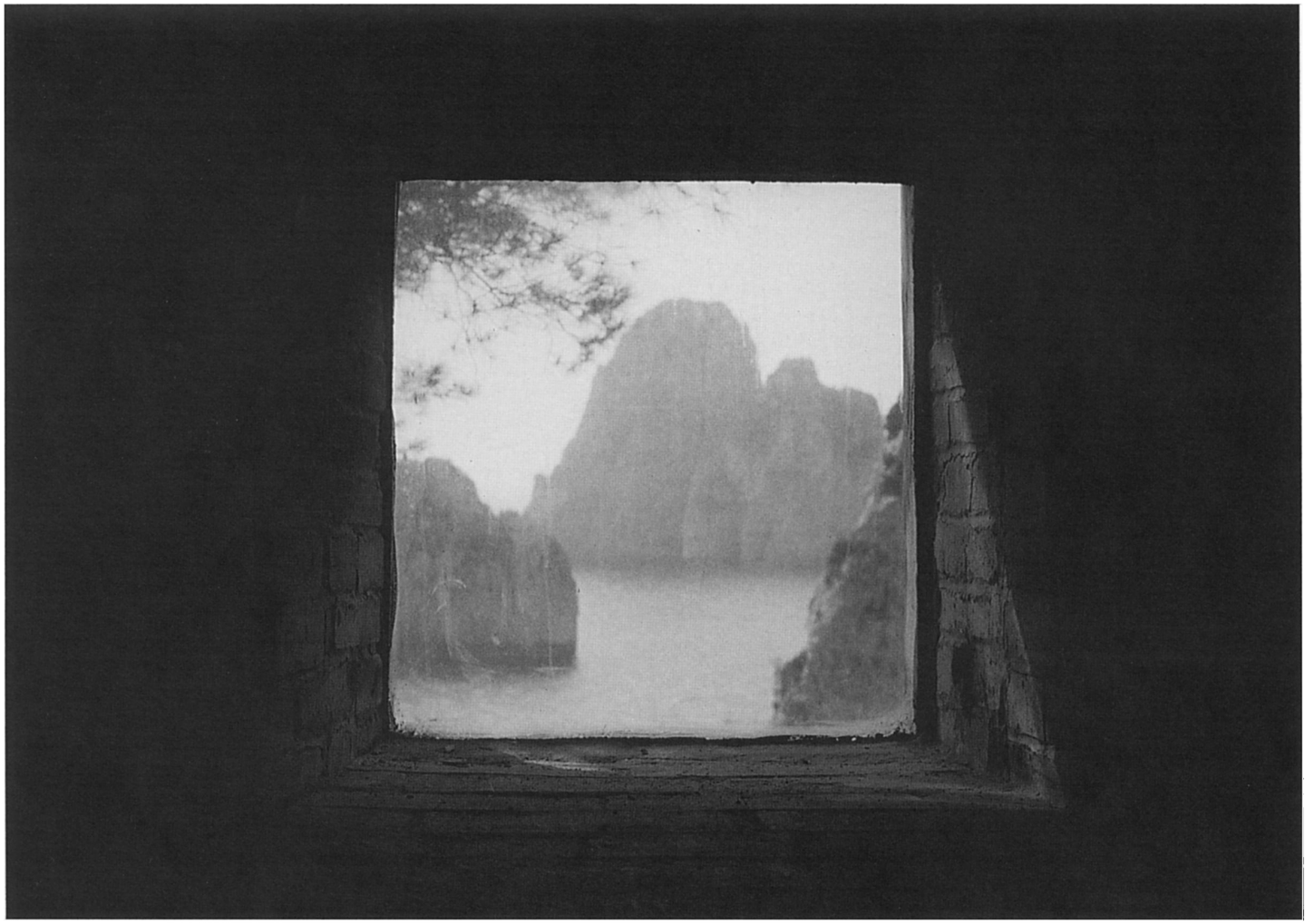
On the island of Capri

Yehuda Safran

Since its completion in 1942, Casa Malaparte has exercised the minds and imaginations of all those who have seen it. Of course we know some of the details of its genesis, most importantly Libera's role in the original site-planning and layout. Libera and his circle were intimately connected with the Italian side of Malaparte's international role, which included political pamphleteering, journalism, satirical poetry, play-writing, and an active part in the cultural life of Paris, Rome and Vienna during the 1920s and 1930s. Yet Villa Malaparte was not destined to serve any manifesto. On the contrary, it remains a most perplexing and demanding creation. Without origin or precedent, it is not really a house in the ancient Greek sense of *oikos*, but an *anti-oikos*, or anti-house.

Malaparte always maintained an ironic stance, which often created problems with the political regime. Around 1922 he became a Fascist, but soon fell out of favour because of his impertinent heterodoxy. In 1931 he published a pamphlet in French, 'Technique des coups d'état', which is said to have irritated Hitler and earned Malaparte a period of exile on the island of Lipari. And when his collected correspondence from the Russian front, *Il Volga nasce in Europa*, was published in 1942, it so enraged the Nazi command that he was confined to Finland, where he wrote his best book, *Kaputt* (1944), an apocalyptic vision of Europe crumbling under the senseless violence of war.

Malaparte's five-month exile on Lipari was formative in the building of his house on Capri between 1938 and 1942. It was on Lipari that he wrote the programme for Villa Malaparte, in an article published in 1936 in *The Yale Review*, 'On the Island of Lipari'. Although at that stage the text could not have been consciously intended as such, it represents the first step in transforming the crucial experience of exile. 'I came to Lipari', Malaparte wrote, 'not as Ulysses came, to demand of Aeolius, beloved of the immortal gods, the favour of a good breeze to bear me back home to the arms of Penelope and Telemachus. . . . I came under detention and was to remain for some time. . . . And yet', he continued, 'after two gloomy months . . . in cell 461, corridor 4, of Regina Creli, this little island lost in the midst of the Mediterranean seemed to be more spacious than the Albion of which the English are so proud.'



View from Villa Malaparte of the Faraglioni rocks

This urbane man was thrown on to an island of rock, 'black-stained and yellow, like the glutinous skin of sea-lampreys', and forbidden to leave the village where he lived. Each day he would climb to the town hall, situated on the grassy terrace of Aeolius' palace and opposite the entrance to the Acropolis, consoled by the knowledge that Ulysses had passed along that same road three thousand years before. He spent hours staring at the sea. 'Too much sky, and too much sea for one man alone,' he wrote, 'and, alas, not enough earth! Yet I already feel that I love this poor island, as a sailor loves his drifting ship, dismasted by the storm. Perhaps I also am but a shipwrecked sailor, clinging to an overturned keel, a piece of driftwood, a shelf of rock.'

A few years later, when Malaparte built himself a 'palace-terrace' on Capri, which he described as 'a shelf of rock', he must have had that view from Lipari in his mind's eye: 'on the other side of the Ionian sea, snowy Olympus, Parnassus, Cythera and the other peaks of Greece'. On Lipari he had written: 'I look over the sea and I feel that I am contemplating from the height of a tower the piazza of a provincial town, an admirable scene for the comedy of which Ulysses is the hero.' On Capri he built a house with a window from which he could gaze on to that same sea, which he conceived of as a kind of piazza bordered by the shores of Europe, Africa and Asia.

For Malaparte, Joyce's Bloom in the city streets was more compelling than Homer's Odysseus, yet the reader of *Kaputt* and *La pelle* cannot fail to observe a certain parallel with the latter. In terms of quixotic fantasy and imaginative deceit, there is something of the Homeric hero in Malaparte's determination to build his house in the least accessible part of Capri where no one had ever built before, nor can one ignore the epic qualities of the villa's archaic steps and its altar-like podium, or of its large hall, reached via an antechamber in the style of an Alpine hut. And, just as Malaparte was notoriously heterodox, his villa is pluralistic in style. The windows in the main hall, for instance, stretch almost from floor to ceiling, giving views which have an affinity with Northern landscape painting, in which the emphasis is on the sublime and inaccessible qualities of a landscape.

Malaparte, like Ulysses, was not a Christian, who regards the earth as a place of exile from heaven, or home. For Ulysses, Ithaca

was home, and his house there the *oikos*, a large noble household with its complex texture of relations governed by a divine order, the *themis*. But for Malaparte Capri was a solitary retreat with neither community nor governing laws. He completed there a cycle of metamorphosis which had begun with involuntary exile on Lipari: 'I seem to move in the centre of a market-place, and all the world of the near or distant shores sees me, smiles at me, greets me with waving handkerchiefs, blows me kisses.' He was still an exile, but voluntarily.

On the island of Lipari

Curzio Malaparte

When the sudden storm which had cast me, shipwrecked . . . , eventually washed me ashore on the island of Lipari — where the Greeks placed the kingdom of Aeolus, ruler of winds and storms . . . I was not, I admit, in the same mood as was Ulysses when he climbed that same road towards the mansion of King Aeolus. . . . I came under detention, and was to remain for some time: I had been sentenced to five years of exile. . . . Imagine me, then, as alone upon this island of rocks. . . . I climb each day to the castle of Aeolus, and spend long hours there, all my desire centred upon the sea. The sky is immensely wide, and one can see the distant shores of Sicily and Calabria. Too much sky, and too much sea for one man alone; and alas, not enough earth! Yet I already feel that I love this poor island, as a sailor loves his drifting ship, dismasted by the storm. Perhaps I also am but a shipwrecked sailor, clinging to an overturned keel, a piece of driftwood, a shelf of rock. From the castle terrace, I survey the sea. . . . I look over the sea and I feel that I am contemplating from the height of a tower the piazza of a provincial town, an admirable scene for the comedy of which Ulysses is the hero. This sea may well be thought of as a market-place, a town square. . . . Even in that (Homer's) distant time, the Mediterranean was more a public square, an agora, than an inland sea. The deeds, enterprises, the adventures, of which it was the theatre, unrolled themselves under the eyes of everyone. . . . The stories Ulysses told to an intimate circle of friends, quite sure that there were no witnesses to give him the lie, related events that were common knowledge, and had been witnessed by all the residents of the piazza, from the windows of their homes. . . . Never have I felt so little alone, never has life seemed less solitary than since I have lived on this small island lost in the Mediterranean.

I seem to move in the centre of a market-place, and all the world of the near or distant shores sees me, smiles at me, greets me with waving handkerchiefs, blows me kisses. The story of my imprisonment, of my sentence, of my exile, is it not a simple incident, a stupid provincial story, a tale of children, which the children of today will remember one day when they are men with a smile, precisely because it is so sad? But is this really a prison, this small white house perched on the summit of the ancient acropolis? It looks more like a cage suspended perpendicularly over the sea from the castle bastions, formidable bastions of squared smooth stones, with here and there reddish rocks resembling copper. . . . At the foot of the high cliff, towards the north and just beneath the prison, the cavern where Aeolus held his winds enchained opens onto the sea; tides engulf it with a noise of thunder, and the imprisoned winds are heard in the hollow rock howling and complaining. . . . And the old man dreams — as I myself now am dreaming — that a fish-tailed woman takes him by the hand, and leads him, on a moonlit night, over the sea.

Curzio Malaparte on Lipari during his exile there. Note the striking similarity between the staircase in the background, with its unusual trapezoidal form, and the external staircase of Villa Malaparte (observation and photograph courtesy of Marida Talamona).

Extract from an article published in *The Yale Review*, summer 1936, pp. 724–41.

In October 1988 students in Wiel Arets and Wim van den Bergh's AA Diploma School Unit 1 spent a week at Villa Malaparte, where they made an intensive study of the building, and the measurements that were used to prepare the drawings on pp. 10–11. Initial drawings by Douglas Oyugi. Final drawings by Wiel Arets & Wim van den Bergh Architects. Diploma Unit 1 students: Maha Alusi, Juan Echeverri, Fergus Henderson, Nadim Khattar, Andrea Liu, Katerina Panagiotou, Beng-Kian Saw, Aamer Taher, Tanya Trevisan, Ana Velez, Voon Yee Wong, Vynsan Wu, Zuraidi Yusoff. Photographs of Villa Malaparte on pp. 1, 6–7 and 8 by Gabriele Basilico.