The Good, the Bad and the Malaparte
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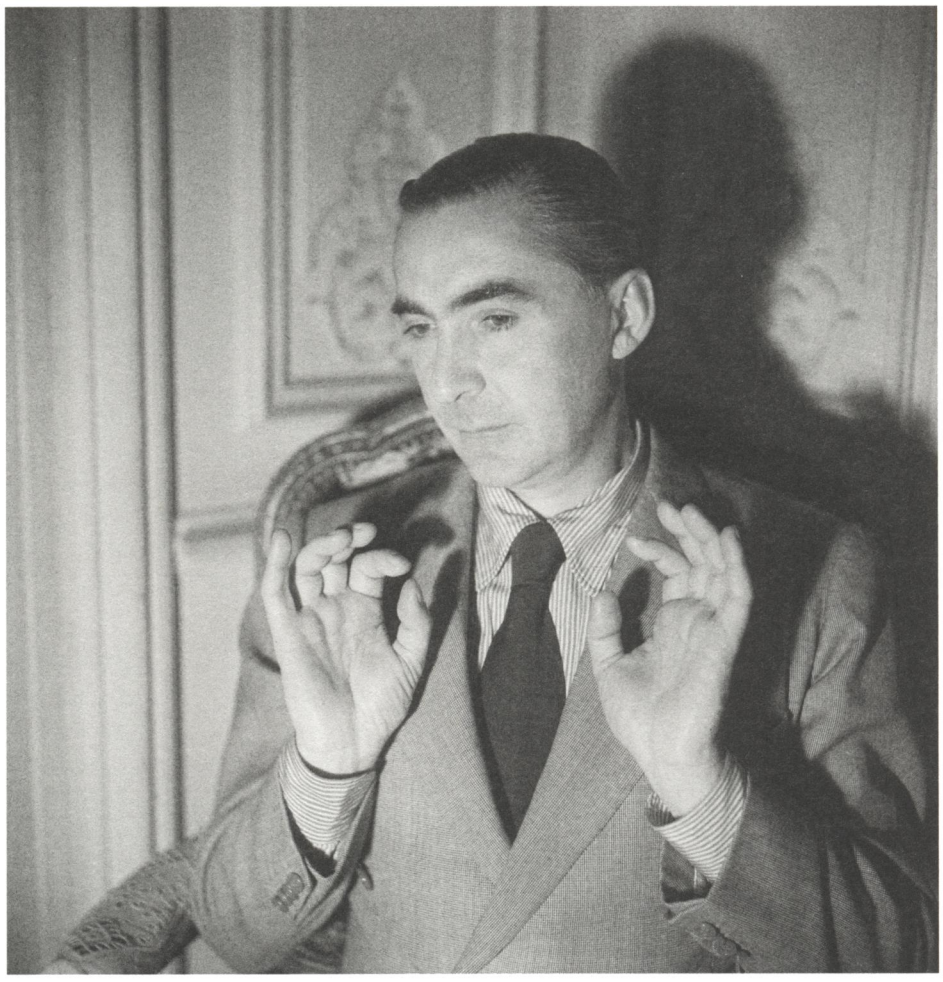
The Good, the Bad and the Malaparte

Davide Spina



Curzio Malaparte,
Paris, 1948
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Projecting into the void from a rocky cliff on the southeastern edge of Capri is a peripherally located building that occupies a central place in architectural culture. Casa Malaparte is so isolated that you cannot simply stumble upon it during a casual visit to the island, you have to really want to see it. One of those hard-won destinations of architectural pilgrimage, like Eileen Gray's E1027 or Kazuo Shinohara's Tanikawa House, the casa requires you to journey by plane, train, taxi, ferry and funicular before slogging the last part of the way on foot through Capri's tangled underbrush. Yet even those with the greatest sense of purpose are often thwarted. Casa Malaparte is private property, and an invitation to visit is accorded only to a privileged few. Most people, then, approach the building along the cliffside path, only to find the most mundane of devices, an inconspicuous gate, blocking their way. Bypassing this obstacle and instead tackling the house from the sea – as some do by climbing the steps connecting it to the water – is feasible, but illegal. So when you reach the gate you can only retrace your steps, stop at a given spot along the path where the view of the building is unimpeded by the shrubbery – the same standpoint that has long given us the iconic shot of the building – and stare at it from the prescribed distance, savouring a brief moment of unmediated visual contact with the coveted object.

Mystical inaccessibility aside, the peculiar design of the building, 'one of the strangest habitations of the western world',[1] has remained an enduring source of fascination. Casa Malaparte does not quite fit into any style. To this day there is no consensus on whether it is surrealist, rationalist, vernacular, modern, postmodern or something else entirely. The figure of its original owner, the writer Kurt Erich Suckert, more familiar by his *nom de plume*, Curzio Malaparte, has proved equally hard to pin down, and not just in terms of literary genre, but personality-wise too.[2] Negotiating writers' houses always implies a tension between what you see – the biographical details supplied by the domestic environment – and what you know about the owner and his work. This undertaking becomes even more difficult when the writer plants decoys in the physical space of his house and hides behind a smokescreen in his books, as Malaparte does. That said, the story of its original owner, and his uncommon life, is a useful place to start if we want to unlock the Casa Malaparte and access its wider political and social habitat.

Born in 1898 in Prato, the 'Manchester of Italy', Kurt Erich Suckert had a Milanese mother and a German father, a master textile dyer. The third of seven sons, he was placed shortly after his birth with the family of his wet-nurse, Eugenia Baldi, and her metalworker husband, Milziade, who raised him until he was seven. After a few years spent with his itinerant natural family, in textile towns in Piedmont and Lombardy, young Kurt was sent back to Prato in 1911 to attend the prestigious Liceo Cicognini, the same school that had famously fostered the talent of Gabriele D'Annunzio, writer, poet, journalist, playwright, all-round Casanova and ultra-nationalist, who would go on to be a major influence on Italian culture under Mussolini and beyond. As a promising high-school student, Kurt lodged with Guido Perini, a republican lawyer known for his broadsides against the church and Italy's dysfunctional monarchy. And it was through his teachers at the Cicognini that Kurt met the writer and poet Bino Binazzi, who became his mentor, introducing him to the classics and to nineteenth-century French literature, and who would take him on Sundays to literary gatherings at the Florentine cafés Paszkowski and Giubbe Rosse ('Red Coats'), where the talented Kurtino, aged only 14, would first encounter the irrational and anti-democratic avant-gardism of a number of writers affiliated with *Lacerba* magazine, namely Ardengo Soffici, Aldo Palazzeschi and Giovanni Papini. These café visits not only nurtured his gift for words but sowed the seeds for his lifelong affair with politics, a topic discussed with peculiar virulence in these Florence hotspots – witness the famous 1912 brawl at the Giubbe Rosse between the local contingent and a squad of Milanese futurists led by Tommaso Marinetti. This was Italy on the eve of the First World War, a country inflamed by class tensions, colonial delusions and nationalism, all related in varying degrees to a widespread frustration with the failings of the *Risorgimento* (the process of national unification) and resulting disillusion with parliamentary democracy.

Mario Vellani Marchi,
Caricature of Curzio Malaparte, 1928
© De Agostini Picture Library /
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Intoxicated by this turmoil, the restless Kurt explored the far reaches of the political spectrum. So while head of the Prato branch of the Young Republicans, he also flirted with Garibaldi nostalgics, went on strikes with anarchists and stormed the streets of Prato alongside right-wing syndicalists inspired by the French political theorist Georges Sorel, a group whose ranks would later supply the 'muscle' of fascism. Perhaps the natural outcome of this thirst for confrontation was to embrace war. At the age of 16, against his family's wishes, Kurt went to Avignon to train with an Italian branch of the French Foreign Legion led by Giuseppe Garibaldi's nephew Peppino. This was in February 1915, three months before Italy's entry into the war. After this, the Legion was disbanded and its members absorbed into the 51st Infantry Regiment of the Italian army.

For the next three years Suckert fought in the Eastern Alps on Italy's border with Austro-Hungary – experiencing all the butchery of trench warfare, at high altitudes and with punishing winters. When the Austro-Hungarian empire collapsed in the summer of 1918 he was sent to the trenches in the Marne, to support French and British efforts to contain the final German offensive on the western front, where he distinguished himself as commander

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of the 94th Section of Flamethrowers. For Suckert, the Legion was 'the harbinger of fascism', and the Great War his 'first life experience'.[3] He returned from it a prodigiously young lieutenant – just 20 years old – proudly displaying French and Italian medals on a chest bursting with patriotism, yet with a lung damaged by German mustard gas. He went on to excel both as a press officer during the Treaty of Versailles and as an executive in the Warsaw embassy during the Polish-Soviet war (1919–21). At this point he could easily have embarked on a diplomatic career, but he chose instead to pursue literary glory in Rome, armed only with his charm.

His first years in the capital were not easy. In 1921–22 you might have seen him approaching the likes of Giorgio De Chirico or Luigi Pirandello at the Caffé Aragno in via del Corso, or editing articles for local newspapers *Il Tempo* and *Il Mondo* in his boarding house in via Lucina. However, he initially struggled to gain the recognition he hoped for. His political invectives and poems, expressing the ethos of a movement of his own invention called 'Oceanism' – naturalism meets the Nietzschean übermensch – elicited no more than a few raised eyebrows among the Roman intelligentsia. 'One must be anti-bourgeois ... usefulness is not necessary in life', Suckert declared.[4] Both left and right saw him as ideologically inconsistent, but possessed of a dangerous gift for rhetoric. His *Viva Caporetto* (1921), a pamphlet denouncing the 'bourgeois' and 'cowardly' Italian military apparatus during the war, was banned only two weeks after publication. 'Those men who push people to war and, when war is declared, go into hiding in a safe corner ... they are fodder for the rioting plebs' – Suckert's words were now as incendiary as his flamethrower had been.[5] While such a talent for agitating passions in the populace might have been regarded with suspicion in the literary world – no less a person than the communist ideologue Antonio Gramsci branded Suckert 'a wild arriviste with a streak of chameleonic snobbery' – it did not go unnoticed in more turbulent circles.[6] Impressed by his persuasive hyperbole, Mussolini's blackshirts approached Suckert, keen to harness his talents in recruiting new young members. Won over by the success of their charismatic leader and his revolutionary agenda, Suckert joined the party in September 1922 as a trade union manager in Florence. 'It is the first time a man of letters takes control of a union', he pointed out immodestly upon his appointment.[7]

During his first years in the party Suckert demonstrated a strong commitment to the fascist cause, and was one of the signatories of the 1925 'Manifesto of the Fascist Intellectuals', alongside D'Annunzio, Marinetti and Luigi Pirandello. 'Fascism is like an empty tube, you can put whatever you want in it', Pirandello would later say, and indeed the party operated *per via negativa*, attracting a motley crowd who were bound together more by being *against* something – against modernity, against democracy, against rationalism, etc – than *for* anything in particular. In the absence of such a common purpose, there was ample scope for marking out individual positions.[8] 'I am a maverick fascist', Suckert said, unsurprisingly.[9] But there were also structural reasons for his endorsement of the movement. Mussolini's call for national renewal by turning against communism and against capitalism resonated both with his advocacy of *Risorgimento* ideals and his sense of discontent – victory in the First World War had come at the cost of crippling public debt, swingeing wage cuts and escalating class hatred. In fascism, Suckert saw an authentically Italian alternative to the moral bankruptcy of northern European civilisation, made manifest in its ruinous war: 'the fascist revolution will restore authority, faith, dogma and heroism against the sceptical, critical, rationalist and Enlightenment spirit'.[10] Not long after penning these words in *Europa Vivente* ('Living Europe', 1923),[11] Kurt Erich Suckert turned into Curzio Malaparte.

Curzio Malaparte, 1940
© Ullstein Bild /
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'A fascist writer must have an Italian name', Mussolini commanded in 1926.[12] Suckert embraced the order, insisting that he longed to be 'Italian not only in spirit, but also in name'.[13] His quest for the perfect literary handle was happily resolved when he chanced upon an obscure 1869 booklet about the alleged Italian origins of one of the *Duce*'s role models, Napoleon Bonaparte, and discovered that his family name was formerly 'Malaparte', a surname with overtones of an aristocratic lineage, akin to Malaspina or Malatesta, the latter perhaps best known to an architectural audience for being the clients for Leon Battista Alberti's first building, the Malatesta Temple in Rimini. Soon Suckert was writing to a friend, 'Malaparte is my banner!'[14] The choice was not accidental: *Mala*-parte – the *bad*-side, as distinct from Bonaparte's *bon* or good – had multifarious connotations that reverberated with the writer's mixed Italo-German background and his mission of stirring up the masses by offending bourgeois sensibilities at every possible opportunity. A master in the art of branding, Suckert slowly introduced the public to his manufactured persona, only making Curzio Malaparte his legal name in 1937.[15]

By then Malaparte had elbowed his way up to the highest echelons of public life. 'To achieve success he was capable of any amount of mischief', noted the disproving Antonio Gramsci a few years later.[16] He became the mouthpiece of 'fundamentalist' fascism (*fascismo integrale*), not only as editor, from 1924 to 1928, of *The Conquest of the State* – a magazine defiantly named after a 1919 article by Gramsci himself – but also as leader of the literary movement *Strapaese* (from 1926) and author of tomes such as *Barbarian Italy* (1925), *Don Camaleo* (1926) and *The Arch Italian* (1928). Expressing his

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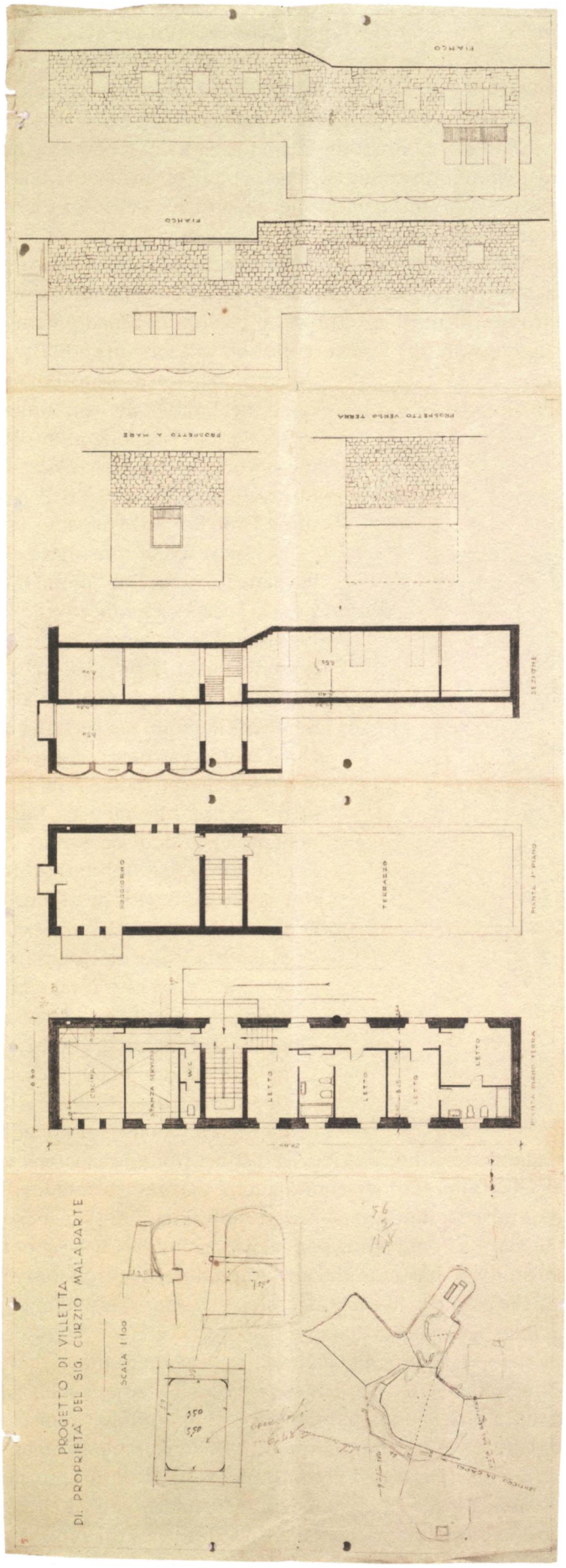

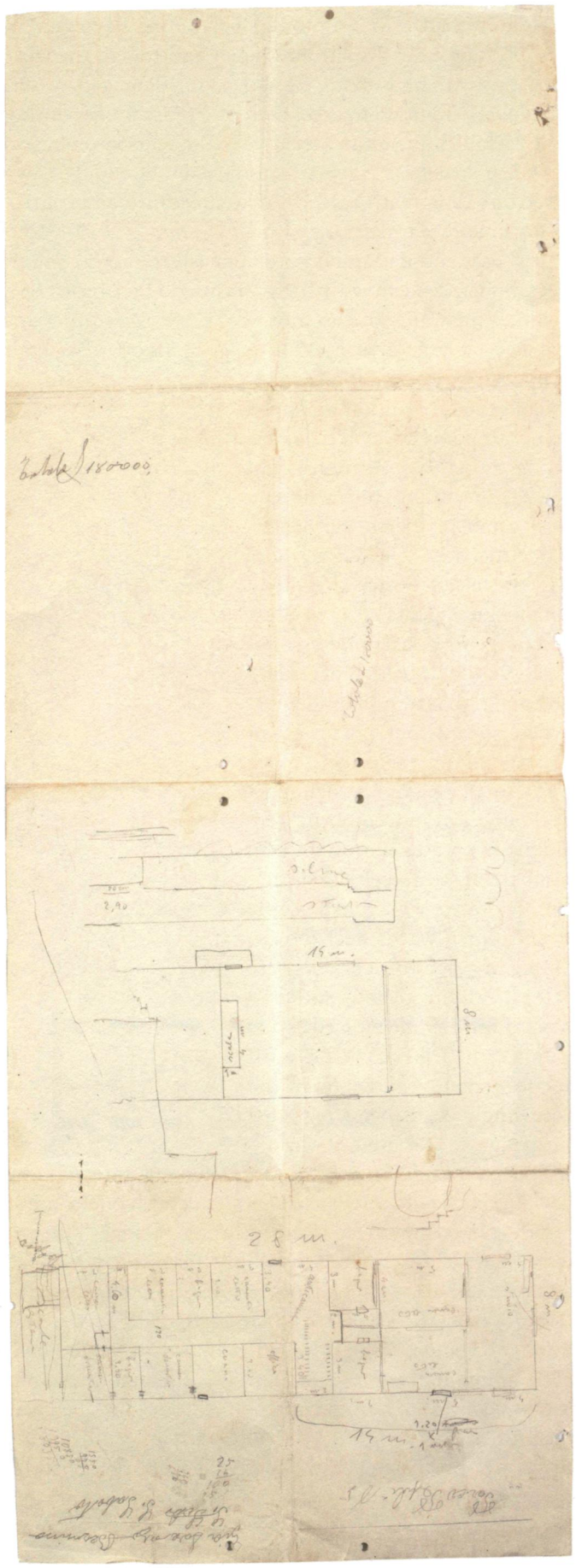

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antagonism at will, not least against Mussolini's regime in Rome – which he criticised for making 'compromises with the bourgeoisie ... inappropriate to the revolutionary spirit'[17] – Malaparte gained a following among provincial hotheads the length and breadth of the peninsula.

In late 1929 this ability to probe and shape the *vox populi* secured him, at the startling age of 30, the post of editor of the Naples daily *Il Mattino*. Just three months later, he took over the helm of an even more prestigious publication, Turin's *La Stampa* – Fiat's newspaper. At that time the car manufacturer was in conflict with its left-leaning workforce, and company boss Giovanni Agnelli saw in Malaparte the right man to reverse the situation: he was to turn *La Stampa*, a 'serious' newspaper with declining sales, into a popular daily with sensationalist local news and sports sections, all the better to distract workers from politics, and dampen their fervour.

Whilst at *La Stampa* Malaparte seems to have been especially prolific. Aside from the daily editorials, he found time to skewer topics as diverse as *The Intelligence of Lenin* (1930) – a political analysis of Soviet Russia – and *Technique du Coup d'État* (1931) – a treatise on the Machiavellian skills of a number of professional revolutionaries including Napoleon, Trotsky and Mussolini. Yet Malaparte was perhaps too self-confident an editor: he ran the newspaper in an autocratic manner, often ignoring Agnelli's directions, rubbed shoulders with the factory workers (like the union manager he once was) and used his new platform to criticise the regime in Rome and the odd attention-seeking blow on the *Duce* himself.[18]

As a result, Malaparte quickly exhausted the patience of his employer, who in January 1931 asked the *Duce* for permission to fire him – a request that must have been granted without too much brooding. A disgruntled Malaparte then cashed in a generous severance cheque and relocated to Paris to lick his wounds. From the French capital he supervised the publication of his *Technique du Coup d'État*, which enjoyed considerable success, despite Trotsky's scathing criticism: 'in the book of the Italian writer Malaparte, who is something of a fascist theoretician, Lenin and Trotsky have many conversations, and they display as much intelligence as nature made available to Malaparte'.[19] That text was Malaparte's last real attempt to establish himself as a leading political thinker and launch a new career in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs – an ambition which was not entirely ungrounded. Rumours from Rome suggested that the *Duce* approved of the book – possibly because he emerged from it as an inflexible leader – and was considering making its author an ambassador-at-large.[20] Thus Malaparte spent several months in Paris waiting for a call from Rome.

But it was a call that never came. Crushed by the silence of the 'boss' – 'there is no place for me in Italy'[21] – he filled letters to friends back home with a stream of vitriol aimed at Rome's establishment, heedless of the consequences. In two of these letters, intercepted by the Italian secret service, he lambasted the withered fascistness of Air Marshall Italo Balbo, heir apparent to Mussolini and a fiery man famous for his jet-black goatee and obsession with Charles Lindberg-style transatlantic flights: 'Balbo has gotten fat',[22] Malaparte sneered, 'he seems a minister of Louis Philippe I',[23] 'if he is given free rein bad things will happen to fascism'.[24] This time the *enfant terrible* of the regime had gone too far. Balbo immediately reported the insult back to Mussolini – '*My Duce*! Before assuming command of the second Atlantic crossing, I have the honour to proceed against Malaparte'.[25] The seasoned statesman resolved that the writer should 'have a dose of his own medicine'.[26] Consequently, when Malaparte returned to Italy in late 1933, he was arrested, charged with anti-fascist activity and defamation, and sentenced to a five-year exile in Lipari, a tiny arid island off the northern coast of Sicily.

Banished to this rocky Mediterranean outcrop, Malaparte soon found himself lost for things to do – 'there is too much sea, too much sky, for such a small island and so restless a spirit'.[27] Suddenly aware of his own powerlessness against the political machine of the fascists, Malaparte found solace in re-reading the classics, and in particular Homer, in the original language.[28] But his stay in Lipari was short-lived. After only seven months, claiming lung problems, he managed to be transferred first to the more salubrious island of Ischia, in the gulf of Naples, before moving again in 1934 to Forte dei Marmi, a seaside haunt of the wealthy and cultured in his native Tuscany. The transfer came as a great relief – 'finally people of quality after a year among fishermen and shepherds'.[29]

In Forte dei Marmi, Malaparte's existence was hardly that of the outcast: he sojourned in the opulent mock-Renaissance Villa Hildebrand (completed in 1901 and a former residence of D'Annunzio), rode around in a state-owned Alfa-Romeo, and was a habitué of the Negroni-fuelled parties hosted by Forte's cosmopolitan elite. He also returned to his journalistic work, writing satire under the 'innocent' Voltairian pseudonym of 'Candido'. In 1935 his old friend and the *Duce*'s newest heir apparent Galeazzo Ciano then granted him early release from this gilded confinement.[30] Malaparte proceeded to buy the Villa Hildebrand, complete with its Arnold Böcklin-frescoed rooms, and prepared his comeback.

Though he was now *persona non grata* in Rome, Malaparte soldiered on. In early 1937 he sought to boost his career with the launch of *Prospettive*, a magazine he described as 'printed on American art paper'[31] and 'in the style of *Fortune* and *Minotaure*, yet completely Italian and fascist in spirit and content'.[32] *Prospettive* was additionally Janus-faced: political in its first years (1937–39), vocally supporting the government agenda in order to secure public funds granted to pro-regime publications, it was more self-consciously 'literary' in its second incarnation (1939–43), when it was on financially and politically firmer ground, and could therefore afford to have a liberal mandate, publishing pieces by André Breton, Federico García Lorca and James Joyce, as well as essays on surrealism and existentialism – then taboo topics in Italy.

It was at this point in his career, after a visit to Capri in December 1937, that Malaparte decided to build his own house on the island. By the late 1930s Capri, already a choice destination for high society, had become particularly attractive to the fascist elite. The discovery of Roman villas on the island (Villa Jovis in 1931 and Palazzo a Mare in 1935) had sparked a great deal of excitement among Mussolini and his men, who were always seeking to legitimise their rule through a suggested kinship with Imperial Rome. A 1937 exhibition in the capital, highlighting a bond between ancient Rome, Capri and fascism, was followed a year later by a series of events on the island.

Left: Adalberto Libera, 'Progetto di Villetta' preliminary design, with sketches by Malaparte and Amitrano, March 1938
Right: Curzio Malaparte, sketched alternations, reverse side, March 1938
© MART / Archivio del 900, Fondo Casa Malaparte

Yet if almost overnight Capri had acquired Roman affiliations for adherents of the regime, it had also long fascinated intellectuals and artists as *Mediterranean*. The myth of the Mediterranean runs deep in European culture, going all the way back to the birth of the Grand Tour,

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and Capri was – perhaps still is – a key location for its production and consumption. Especially in Malaparte's turbulent times, the word 'Capri' conjured up images of a pristine realm untarnished by the evils of the machine age. But long before the Tuscan writer made his appearance on the local scene, the island was home to a number of eccentric personalities seeking moral, spiritual or sexual liberation. A few of these characters even proclaimed their love for the place architecturally: former American Confederate officer John Clay McKowen built the Red House (1899), French dandy Jacques d'Adelswärd-Fersen the Villa Lysis (1905), Swedish physician and socialite Axel Munthe the Villa San Michele (1907), which Malaparte dismissed as 'a fake prison'.[33] To varying degrees, Capri's bohemians were fascinated by the classical heritage of the island, and especially the figure of the Roman emperor Tiberius, who galvanised their own delusions of grandeur.

However, Capri was of interest not only to lay architects in love with the classical world, but also to a number of forward-looking professionals who were more concerned with its 'mundane' past. The island's pre-modern buildings inspired the modern fantasies of the highly influential Gruppo 7, whose members were seeking a 'spiritual' and 'Italian' variant of modernism. Another fan was architectural globetrotter and Capri resident from 1932 to 1934 Bernard Rudofsky, who co-designed the Villa d'Oro in Naples alongside local engineer Luigi Cosenza in 1937. Later in life Rudofsky would conceptualise his interest in vernacular buildings in his acclaimed *Architecture Without Architects* (1964).[34] And even futurist leader Tommaso Marinetti had a soft spot for the island, where he set *The Island of Kisses*, an erotic novel co-authored in 1918 with Bruno Corra, and where he later honeymooned with the painter Benedetta Cappa. In the 1930s, then, sweet Capri was a magnet for powerful people – classic megalomaniacs as well as the avant-garde – and as such, it provided the ideal location for a dramatic statement from a man fallen into (relative) disgrace.

The site Malaparte cherry-picked for his house was Cape Massullo, a remote promontory in the southeast of the island. Up till then the land had been used for rough grazing, as it was a non-building zone. How local regulations were bypassed is unclear, but a comment by the writer in 1939 alluded to 'the distinguished interest of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs' – ie, his old friend Ciano, whom he had met in Rome when they were both young and dreaming of breaking into theatre writing.[35] Where Malaparte got the money for the house is also something of a mystery. Detractors pointed to the severance package from *La Stampa*; Malaparte himself, in a 1944 memoir, claimed to have used revenues from his book sales and hefty bank loans – a version of events partially supported by documents in the MART archive in Rovereto. What is sure is that the sum was enough to buy the entire cliff, and to think of building on it.

In early 1938 Malaparte entrusted the design of the building to Adalberto Libera, an architect affiliated with Gruppo 7 and Italian rationalism. By then, Libera was an established name in Italy, a strong brand whose icy marble-clad buildings seemed to make manifest fascism's pretence of a spiritual revolution. The extent of Libera's involvement in the project is still disputed – Malaparte insisted that he used him 'only for legal matters',[36] but Marida Talamona's 1997 study provides a more convincing account.[37] In March 1938 Libera handed in a preliminary design, the famous Progetto di Villetta. This was essentially a two-storey elongated block, 28m × 6.6m, rusticated at the bottom, rendered on top. On the ground floor, a corridor running along the southern edge of the building connects bedrooms, bathrooms and kitchen. On the first floor the architect positioned a dining room looking towards the sea, and a large terrace set back into the cliff-face. A simple staircase connects the two levels. The design was submitted for approval to Capri's planning committee, but Malaparte was already thinking of changes, because he pencilled a new plan on the back of a copy of the submitted drawing. Talamona has interpreted this sketch as an attempt by Malaparte to explain to the contractor, Adolfo Amitrano, a design that Libera had discussed with him but had not yet completed. A letter from Malaparte to the architect ten days later seems to support this hypothesis – 'Amitrano is begging me for a copy of the plan, without which he cannot do anything ... please send it to him as soon as possible, okay?'[38]

In the absence of definitive evidence, however, this point remains unresolved. What is clear is that Malaparte is in a hurry: 'We must be quick, quick, it's crucial to be quick',[39] concerned as he was about the amount of red tape he had to fight through. Libera soon complies: the new scheme is a slightly larger and longer block (29m × 9m), but the volumetric qualities are unchanged. The rusticated cladding covering the lower half of the elevations has disappeared, and the ground floor features a new layout. The entrance has moved to the north, while the corridor is in an axial position with rooms either side. And to the front is the blueprint of the *appartamento padronale* as we see it today: two identical doors, two symmetrical bedrooms and bathrooms, the studio spanning the whole width of the building. The appearance of this drawing was followed by a flurry of activity. In mid-May Malaparte discussed with Amitrano the idea of an external staircase; in early June the two were in Capri concocting the first design featuring the famous wedge-shaped element; in mid-June the writer sent the contractor a new rough draft of plans and elevations. At this point Libera mysteriously disappeared off the radar: 'I have tried to call him many times, but no one answered'.[40] The Tyrolean architect and the Tuscan writer were distinctly different personalities – Manfredo Tafuri described them respectively as 'rigorous' and 'amoral'[41] – but there is no indication that this alone caused their rift. The end result, in any case, was that Malaparte, left to his own devices, made so many changes to Libera's design that the architect never claimed authorship of the final building.[42]

Instead, the odd couple – the sophisticated writer and the pragmatic contractor – spent the next year refining the details of the design and preparing the site for construction. Their collaboration was not always smooth, Amitrano being too slow for the impatient Malaparte: 'That's not how things are done'[43]... you're wasting my time[44]... I have no reason to be satisfied with you.'[45] The project got the green light from the planning office in September 1938, and construction began in early 1939. Yet it advanced by fits and starts, since from late 1939 to mid-1943 Malaparte served as war correspondent in Ethiopia, France, Greece, the Balkans, Romania, Ukraine and Finland, and returned to Capri only when on leave. Throughout the construction process Amitrano built and demolished portions of the building, first giving Malaparte's architectural fantasies material consistency, and then patiently tearing them down if the result was not to the untrained designer's liking. The prime example of this is the entrance of the house, first carved on the southern elevation, then pierced through the staircase in axial position, and finally restored to its original position. This

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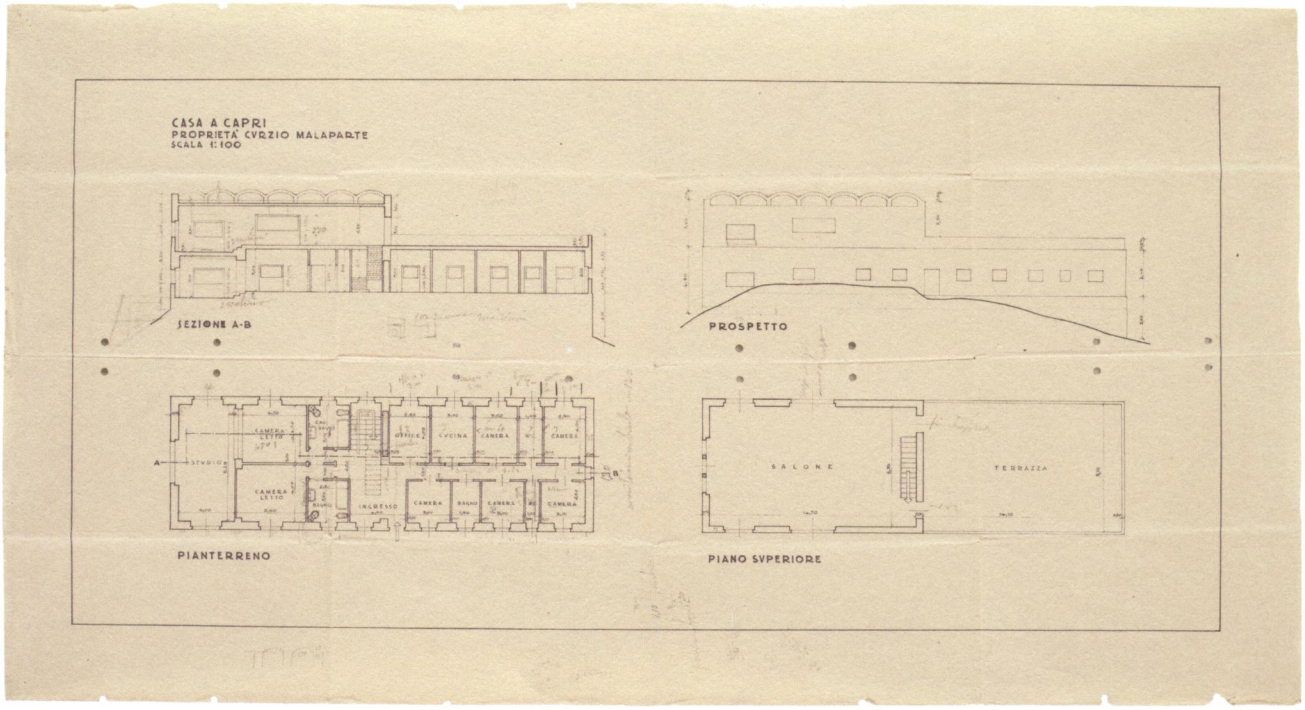

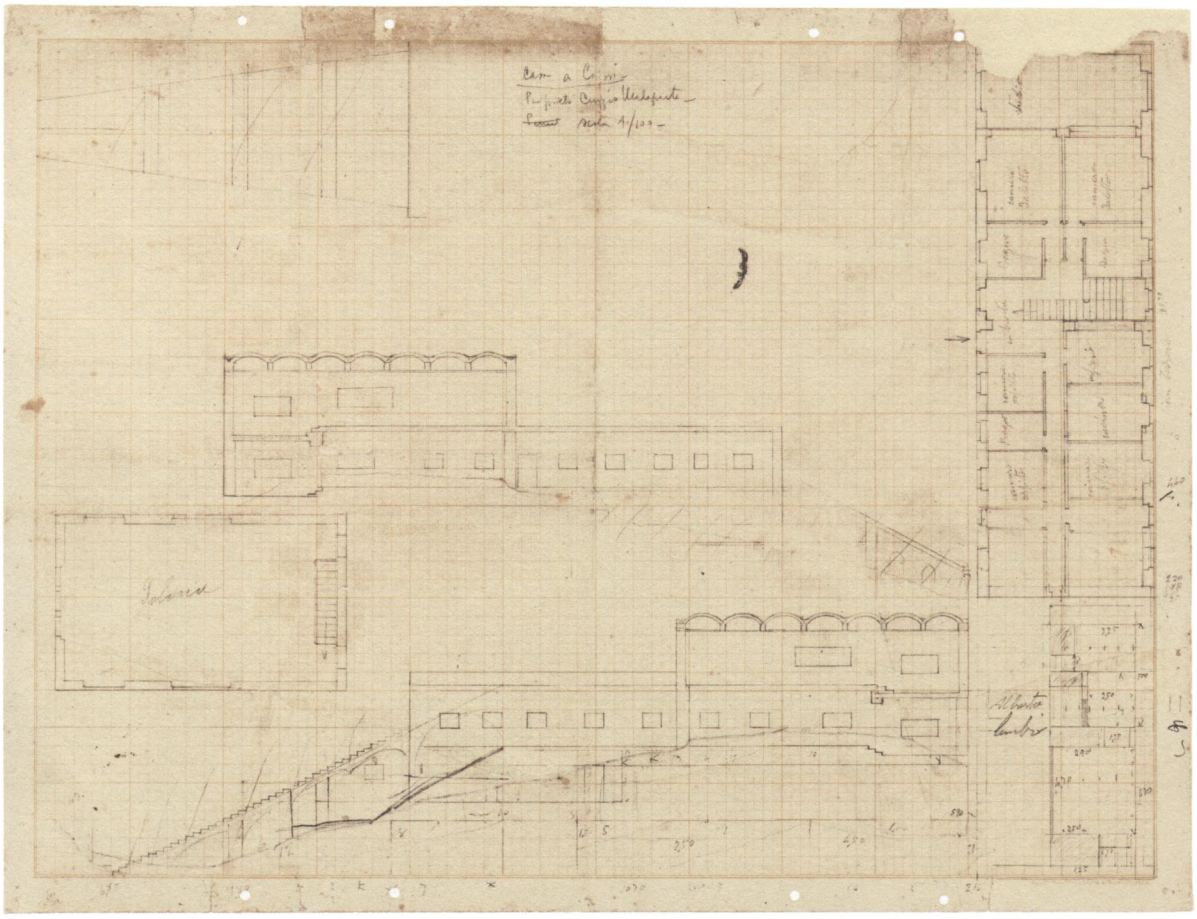

Above: Adalberto Libera, revised design, Casa Malaparte, April 1938
Below: Curzio Malaparte and Adolfo Amitrano, revised design, with introduction of wedge-shape, June 1938
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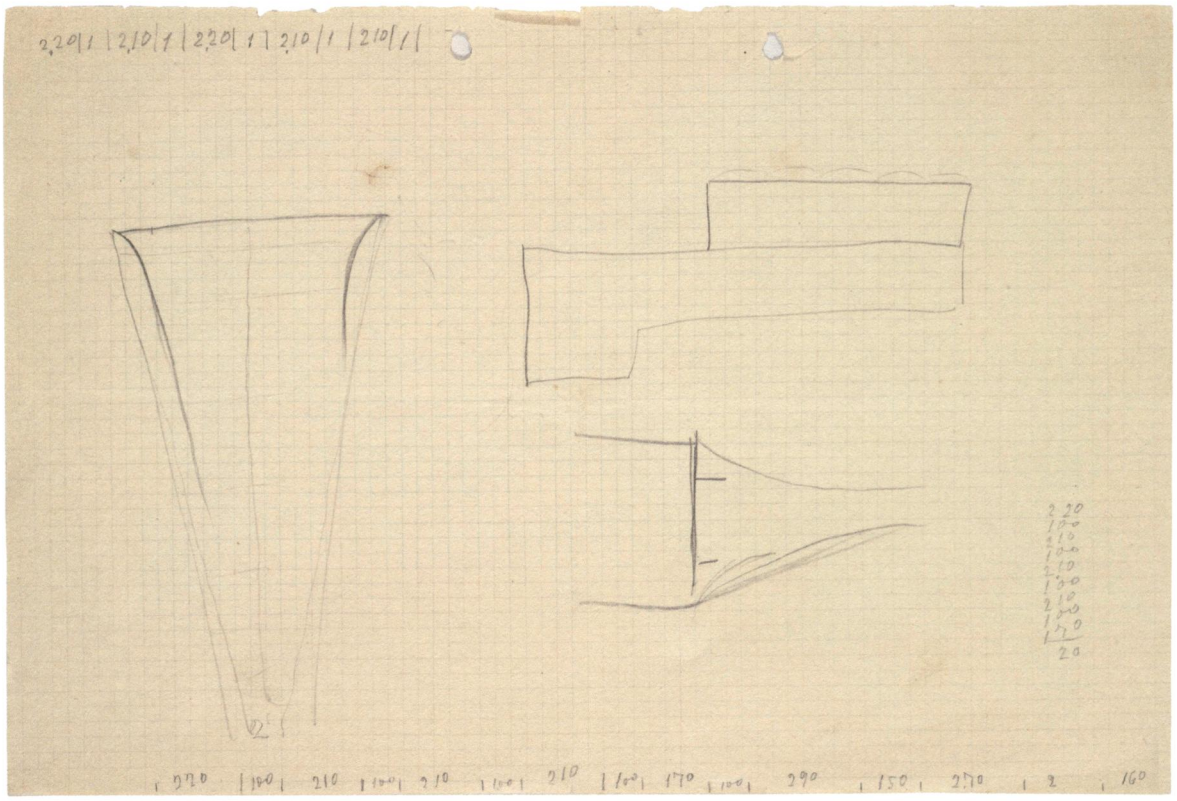

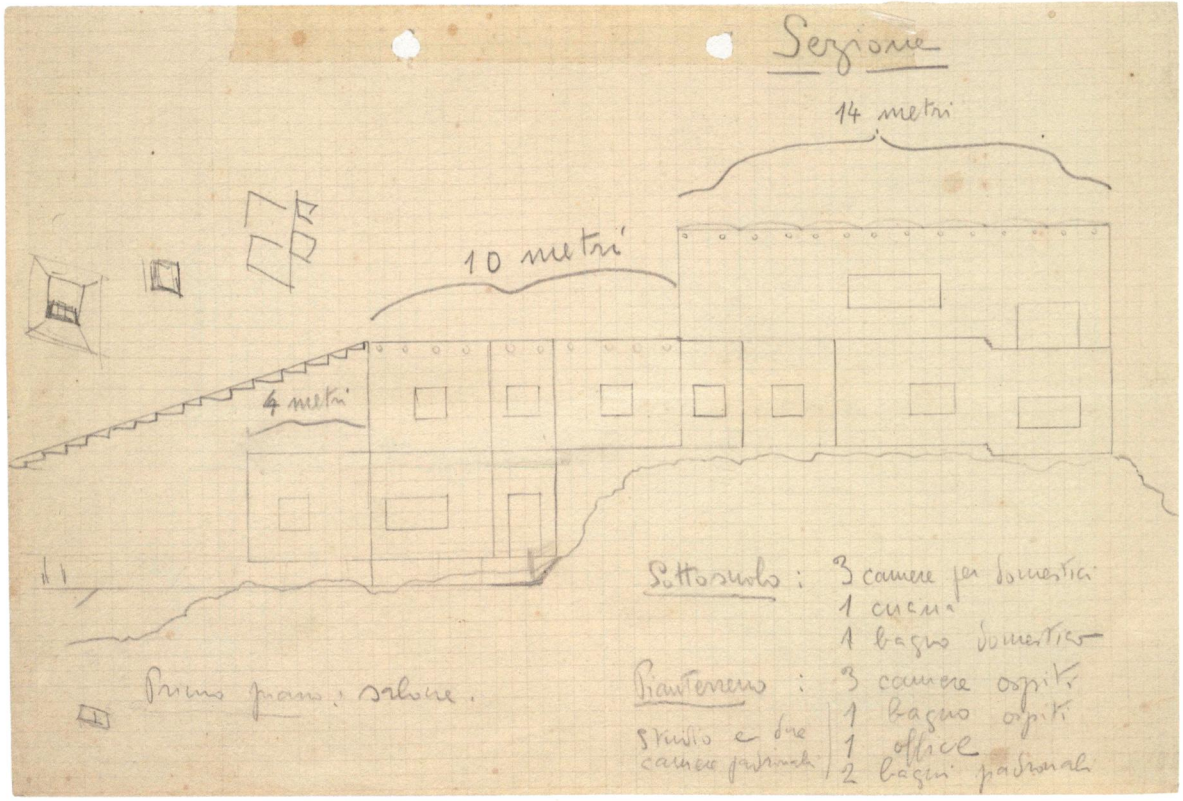

Curzio Malaparte, revised designs,
Casa Malaparte, June 1938
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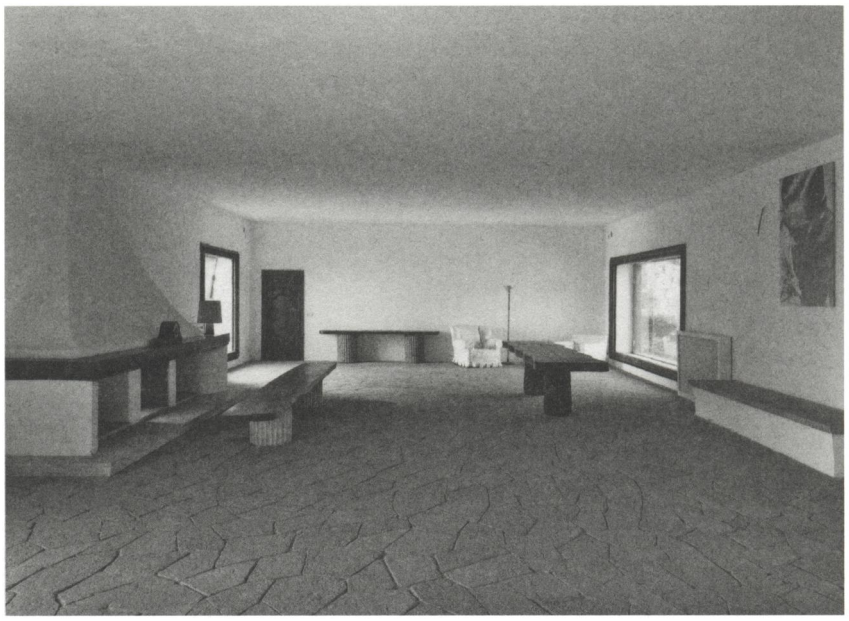
was a piecemeal, trial-and-error approach to building: costly and decidedly unmodern.

What *was* modern was 'the design from within' logic of Malaparte's method. The predominance of plans and cross sections among the writer's drawings suggests that his primary concern was to sort out the layout of the interior. The exterior then followed, its design responding to the arrangement of the rooms inside: windows randomly punctuate the facades, as well as practical needs; the staircase is moved to the outside to give the building more mass, and with it, more rooms. Little by little Malaparte remoulded Libera's block and for a short period in 1939, following the latter's departure, ideas were communicated to the contractor using technical drawings drafted by Uberto Bonetti – a young futurist painter and acquaintance from Forte dei Marmi, following the writer's 'aesthetic and architectural directions'.[46]

As an amateur architect Malaparte needed help to get things done, and continuously sought advice from his entourage: Roman architect Luigi Moretti – 'Tonight at nine Moretti came for dinner';[47] *Prospettive* art director Orfeo Tamburi – 'It was I who gave him the design of the curl on the rooftop';[48] Naples architect Carlo Talamona – 'a more harmonious distribution of the openings could bring the design of the house back to the concept of a modern house';[49] and even his housemaid – 'Maria told me that the house looked better before, but hers is the taste of the common people, and I do not trust it'.[50] Yet the final decision always rested with Malaparte, who developed some architectural skills in the process and personally fetched the material for the fit-out on numerous trips through the peninsula: marble slabs from Carrara, stone slabs from Castellammare di Stabia, windows from Pisa, alabaster from Volterra, woodwork from Rome, 'super-expensive'[51] horsehair mattresses and sofas from Milan. Construction often stalled, not just because of Malaparte's periodic absences, but because of the difficulty in procuring building materials, especially steel, during wartime, and then transporting them to the site by boat and on the backs of mules. In summer 1943, however, the house was ready for the writer to move in on his return from Russia, his final stint as a war correspondent.

Malaparte christened the house by completing *Kaputt* in its studio in the autumn of that same year, but did not take up permanent residence in his 'portrait in stone'. After serving as liaison officer for the American army between 1944 and 1945, he shuttled to and from Rome over the next two years before relocating to Paris in 1947, where he resided until 1950.[52] Letters to and from the house custodian Ciro Amitrano reveal the reasons behind his absence: 'I cannot leave Paris before finishing this book', Malaparte wrote, 'If I come to Capri, I will do nothing' [53] ... 'Capri is cut off from the world'.[54] 'You are right', Amitrano replies, 'after a while Capri obfuscates the mind'[55] ... 'it makes you stupid and the brain stops working'.[56] Malaparte seemed to fear that a long stay on Cape Massullo would diminish his most cherished asset, creativity. This concern is also reflected in the design and use of the house. Female guests with whom Malaparte ostensibly entertained intimate relations were allocated a room of their own – 'the room of the favourite' – a space close to, yet separate from, those spaces in which 'masculine' creative powers were exercised and restored, that is to say, Malaparte's studio and private bedroom. Kurt Forster has commented on the 'misogynistic obsession with creativity' of writers and filmmakers orbiting around Casa Malaparte.[57] This obsession is much in evidence in Malaparte's notes: 'every woman is an enemy of the work of man',[58] 'bitches, not good women, make you want to excel'.[59] For Malaparte, women are a catalyst for creative production, and are to be managed with care – 'he gave to himself, and reluctantly, no more than one a week',[60] hence the sharp demarcation in the plan of the house.

This preoccupation with creativity, as much as compartmentalisation, is also found in the most famous cinematic representation of the house, Jean-Luc Godard's *Le Mépris* (1963), which, among other things, is a story about a film that struggles to take shape. On Cape Massullo, Malaparte not only preserved and exercised his creativity, but also put it on show. In one of his books he relates how Erwin Rommel had paid a visit to the house prior to the Allied landing on mainland Italy. The Wehrmacht general was so impressed by the building that he asked the writer whether he had bought it readymade or designed it himself. The answer was a typical Malapartian pun, 'the house was already here, *I designed the scenery*',[61] accompanied by 'a sweeping gesture' towards the four large windows in the living room, whose edges are surrounded by a moulded wood frame of the kind traditionally used for paintings. Though this anecdote is most likely apocryphal, it is nonetheless significant because it exemplifies how Malaparte designed and used his Capri house as a platform to promote his creative persona.



Living room, Casa Malaparte, Capri
© Gabriele Basilico / MART, Archivio del 900, Fondo Adalberto Libera

In the late 1940s Malaparte was in the limelight again thanks to the success of *Kaputt* (1944) and *The Skin* (1949), hallucinatory war accounts that assaulted the reader with a catalogue of obscenities, human misery and general *marciume* ('rottenness'). Many were curious to see his Capri house. When Malaparte was on the island, artists, media people, politicians and military officers were regular visitors: 'we would spend two or three days sitting on the rocks, fishing or drinking in the hall by the fireplace, or stretched out on the terrace looking at the blue sky'.[62] When he was absent, the custodian was instructed to allow those who asked to visit to admire his work '*una casa come me*'.[63] And of those visitors, he wanted to know 'their name ... that is the only thing that interests me'.[64] In this way,

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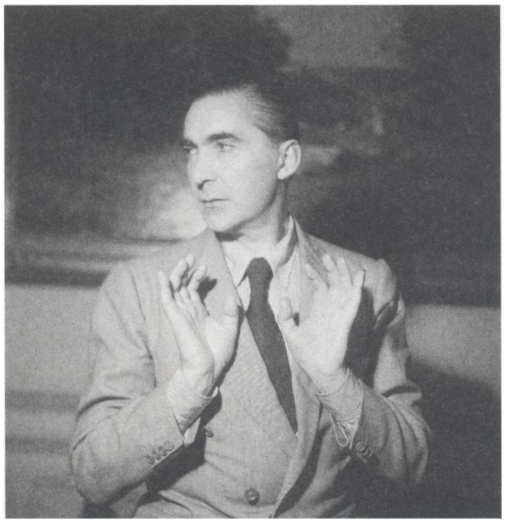
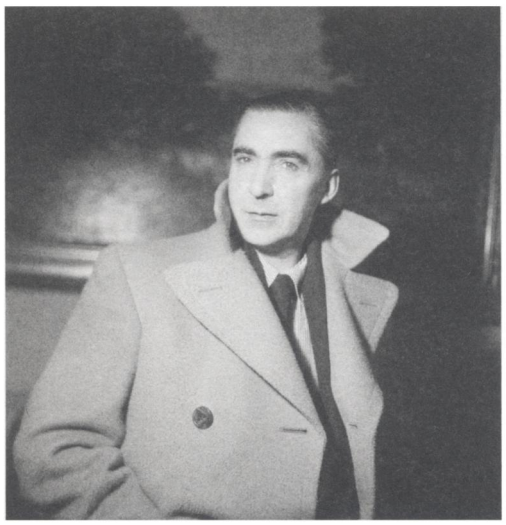
'the house, like me' amplified the resonance of Malaparte's written work, reviving a social capital much diminished by his years of exile.

And perhaps fundamental to the house's profile was its flat roof, whose size and conspicuousness make it the actual main facade in the eyes of the visitor, and a sort of Corbusian solarium. Malaparte naturally had an agenda of well-being and hygiene, but he seemed to value this space even more as a stage for his public appearances. In a similar way, the interior design aims to keep the spotlight on its owner. The generous provision of bedrooms on both floors – four bedrooms on ground level, one on the *piano nobile* – suggests the presence of guests in the everyday life of the house, yet visitors would usually only see Malaparte around lunchtime (he preferred to work at night and slept all morning in his quarters), when he made his grand entrance into the living room through a small, yet conspicuously placed, wooden door.[65] This living room, a hall the size of a ballroom, was, and indeed still is – as the layout and furniture have been admirably restored by the Suckert family inheritors to their original state – punctuated with pieces of furniture so distant from each other as to make communication difficult, unless during an unusually busy event. And the rough-hewn stone used for the *opus incertum* flooring was meant, as Malaparte offhandedly revealed, to 'thwart anyone from dancing',[66] so as not to divert attention from the celebrated host. If Casa Malaparte is an 'architecture of hedonism', then, as Martino Stierli suggested at the 2014 Venice biennale, it is not everyone's idea of hedonism, but Malaparte's own particular brand, which seeks the subtle pleasure of imposing on others his own idiosyncratic desires. Nor is it entirely correct to say that the house is the abode of a 'Dionysus', as Tafuri wrote in 1981. For what Dionysus suggests is an abandoned pursuit of pleasure, whereas in this space thoughts and actions are instead disciplined by the owner, who uses the building's iconographic and choreographic potential to overwhelm his guests, even 'starving them' on one occasion[67] – behaviour more appropriate to Narcissus than Dionysus. Also in some sense appropriate to Narcissus is the articulation of the design of the house around two large voids – the living room and the rooftop terrace – which in turn corresponds to a Freudian reading of narcissism which highlights in its aetiology the idea that something is lacking, and a state literally rendered in this architecture through the absence of matter. It seems especially telling, then, that these voids are the most celebrated spaces of the building.





Narcissism, like its cousin dandyism, implies a certain contrarian style, which in Casa Malaparte is present in spades. Malaparte and his guests may have belonged to the Italian middle class, but instead of bourgeois comfort we find a Spartan austerity peppered by flashes of luxury reflecting the martial temperament of the owner, a decorated war veteran and man of action, aloof and self-disciplined but with a penchant for teasing and ambivalent leanings towards delicacy and roughness. The living room, for instance, is too large for informal meetings, too draughty in winter and too dark at night, having no chandelier and few outlets for electric lighting. This is not a space to share and mingle, but rather to contemplate – the objects on display, the view outside, Malaparte himself striking a pose like a statue: 'it seemed as if he were always wearing a mask'.[68] In contrast, while the living room has an aloof feel, the dining room – small, dominated by a large Tyrolean stove and clad entirely in dark wood – exudes a kind of Alpine domesticity. This is a place where people can actually get to know each other, with a suggestion that such relations are possible only outside the normal bounds of bourgeois sociability. The guest accommodation on the ground floor is also far removed from anything you would find in a standard middle-class interior. In its dark corridor and four stripped-down bedrooms you breathe an atmosphere of privation more suited to a prison than a house – 'the house must have a hard character, like a jail or a fortress'[69] – a fetishisation of Malaparte's experience as an exile and convict. Outside, archive photographs show that until February 1944 a railing ran around the sides of the rooftop, evidently to prevent people from falling down the cliff. But Malaparte clearly grew impatient with such commonplace concerns, because the railing was soon gone. Removing it made the rooftop a relatively unsafe space to walk – echoing Malaparte's feelings about his professional condition: 'it is dangerous to be a writer in Italy'[70] – but it also enhanced the view of the beautiful surroundings and provided a more appropriate stage for his superman public persona – gods do not need railings. Fashion brand Ermenegildo Zegna channelled this quality in a recent TV ad for one of its men's fragrances, which shows an impeccable young professional speed to Cape Massullo in his 1965 Alfa Romeo Giulietta, climb the staircase at a solemn pace, and finally experience a moment of pure ecstasy with a heavenly female partner on top of the building.

All of these features confirm that Casa Malaparte was devised to put on show a 'blissful state of mind', yet it would be simplistic to dismiss it as just a piece of PR. The Capri building is the autobiographical house of a controversial man who navigated first fascist and then republican politics with remarkable vigour and cunning. But apart from his *trasformismo,* Malaparte is interesting because his life and work provide a commentary on Italy's difficult relation with the apparatus of modernity, to which his personal brand of fascism promised an alternative. And so whereas Giovanni Gentile, the official theorist of the party, attempted to legitimise fascism by promoting it as a fully-fledged modern doctrine spawned from the German idealist tradition,[71] Malaparte saw it as a non-modern *way of being*, as having to do with *spirit*, not intellect. As his friend, the novelist Alberto Moravia implied, Malaparte was perhaps 'not an intellectual' because 'he did not believe in ideas' –

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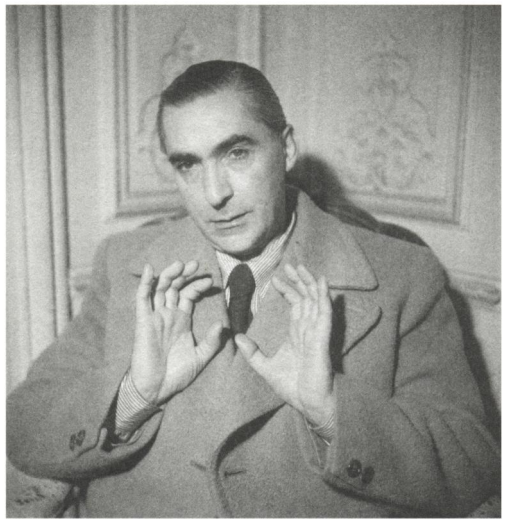
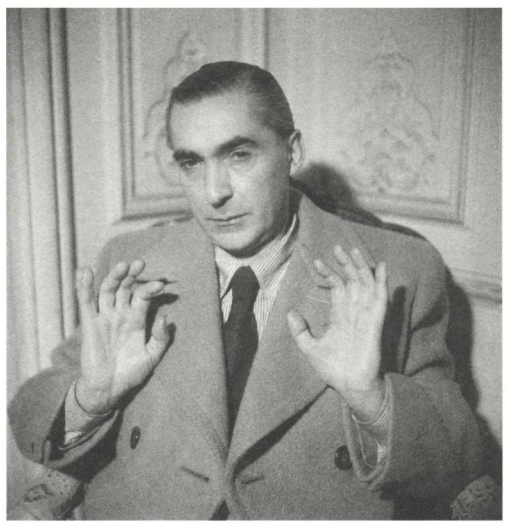
a comment echoing scholarly observations of fascism as *praxis*, not ideology.[72] Therefore if the house is interesting, it is also because Malaparte managed to translate this spirit into built form. From this standpoint, the Casa is not just the daring feat of a controversial writer, but a precious piece of historical evidence. For what we see in this isolated corner of Capri speaks of issues that transcend the geography of the house and the history of its designer – issues having to do with the past of an entire national culture.



Let us start with the distinctively Greek look of the house. Besides the setting (from the windows one can easily picture Odysseus' ship sweeping by the nearby sea stacks), there are other evocations of ancient Greece in the dramatic isolation of the building, poised even more precariously on the cliff edge than the Temple of Poseidon in Cape Sounion; in the theatre-like staircase leading to the altar-like rooftop terrace; in the living room, with its rough-hewn stone floor, chopped Minoan columns and Pericle Fazzini's wooden relief; and in Alberto Savinio's lyre-themed floor tiles in the studio in the front. Here, Malaparte reveals a fascination with the ancient world akin to Munthe and company, but with a polemical twist. As the writer noted in the early 1950s, central to his work is the analysis of decline – 'the gist of my activity as a writer is to see why and how societies become rotten to the core'.[73] This condition preoccupied a contemporary of Malaparte, the German philosopher Oswald Spengler, who saw it affecting modern western civilisation as a whole.[74] For the Tuscan writer, however, decline was concentrated in one modern nation: Italy. In his view, the country had 'lost its spiritual sovereignty over the world after the Lutheran reform' and ever since had been condemned to a vicarious existence, compelled to 'copy, badly, the European democratic and liberal system', in the process losing 'its historical originality'.[75] As a 'Latin nation', Italy was – in Malaparte's opinion, at least – 'unfit for modernity'.[76] 'Counter-reformation', or the establishment of a fascist anti-modernity, seemed to him the only way out of this stalemate.



This was Malaparte in the mid-1920s, but these convictions are also to be found in his mature production, which bears the same undertone of anti-modernism and nostalgia for an authentic past, located in ancient Greece and its myths. However, this love for Greece and the Greek idiom of the Capri house ran counter to the prevailing mood in the capital, where the regime's iconography revolved around ancient Rome. Malaparte considered Mussolini's regime – which had just discarded him – as not representative of *true* fascism, which was instead 'a phenomenon with a rural origin',[77] whose 'capital never was Rome',[78] and whose true roots lay in the Strapaese, the galaxy of Italian villages and provincial cities, like his own Prato. 'Rural fascists were key to Mussolini's seizure of power ... he must carry out their will'.[79] Malaparte's fascism therefore took aim not only at modern systems of belief – capitalism and communism – but at Mussolini's imperial Roman fascism as well. In this respect, the uncorrupted Greek look of Casa Malaparte is a condemnation, equally, of modernity and of the critique of modernity via ancient Rome proffered by official fascism.[80]

Aside from these ideological implications, the building speaks of another problem, the condition of Italian intellectuals after national unification. Given the chronic underfunding of the culture industry, this is a sector that has traditionally been underemployed.[81] A common solution has been freelance work in journalism and politics, fields that are always keen to enlist fresh new talent in the perpetual struggle for hegemony in the writing of the history of the nation. Unsheltered by institutions, Italian intellectuals have therefore consistently been valued for their ability to persuade a wide public (as opposed to engaging in critical thought with their peers). And with persuasion to be achieved by any means necessary, the result has often been media saturation as they take on the role of *outré* preachers, rather than thinkers, in order to reach 'the most illiterate population' and 'the most ignorant bourgeoisie in Europe', as the character played by Orson Welles curtly states about Italian society in Pierpaolo Pasolini's short film *La Ricotta* (1963).

As an overexposed and underemployed writer (the former by choice, the latter because he burned bridges with publishers and patrons all too easily), Malaparte exemplifies this category. Writing inflammatory texts was for him first of all a source of income – 'I have to make ends meet, and therefore write articles ... you don't make a living from literature or politics, but from freelance journalism'.[82] And it is no accident that the floor in the front studio of Casa Malaparte contains a great number of lyre-themed tiles, an obsessive reminder of the double nature of his job, the lyre being at once the symbol of the art he loved and practised – poetry – and the currency he was paid in, the Italian *Lira* – 'Do you know what they say when I walk in this room? They say that Malaparte walks on *Lire*!'[83] Selling his virtuosity to the strongest leader must therefore have seemed to him a minor concession in return for the recognition and financial security he coveted. In a moment of painful honesty Malaparte admitted that 'For many years I, too, have been a whore, like all the others.'[84] In doing so he offhandedly accorded himself a title that only consummate professionals with a big drive but little qualms can aspire to – for example, note the same self-appraisal Philip Johnson made in terms of his architecture ('I do not believe in principles ... I am a whore'). Malaparte also seems to have shared with the designer of the Glass House the conviction that he could not be on top of his game unless he was constantly in the public eye. And this impulse permeates the house on Capri just as it does the one in New Canaan, a house whose

Curzio Malaparte, Paris, 1948
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main feature is precisely a narcissistic disregard of the border between public and private spheres, enacted through the transparency of its glass.

In Italy there are around 60 writers' houses that are now used as museums.[85] One of the few to have reached a level of interest comparable to Casa Malaparte is, not coincidentally, the 'Vittoriale degli Italiani' belonging to another, albeit more conventional, dandy, Gabriele D'Annunzio. Both Casa Malaparte and the Vittoriale – the citadel built by D'Annunzio ('The Prophet') on Lake Garda from 1921 to 1938[86] – are born out of similar motivations. Both were constructed by unruly writers upon their forced removal from fascist public life. Both are autobiographical works, giving physical form to their literary production.[87] Yet they could not look more different. From the outside the Vittoriale follows the additive logic of the (pre-modern) city: as D'Annunzio grew older, more and more extensions and outbuildings mushroomed across the plot. By contrast, Casa Malaparte follows the modern, or Palladian, logic of the pavilion: it is a self-contained, autonomous object – at a glance you know where it begins and where it ends. While it is difficult to capture the Vittoriale in its entirety, Casa Malaparte is immediately comprehended in its finiteness, and this makes it a more felicitous architectural motto – the irony here being that D'Annunzio enjoyed a more successful side career as a copywriter, but his Garda property lacks the immediacy of his slogans. The interiors also embody antithetical visual regimes. In the inward-looking Vittoriale the eye is always constrained in cramped, dark interiors cluttered with an insane amount of weird objects (more than 10,000 scattered across the property). While in the outward-looking Casa Malaparte the gaze flits between isolated geometries, large blank surfaces and the bright world outside. If D'Annunzio's domestic surplus numbs the senses, Malaparte's asceticism starves them.

These differences are entirely justified by the fact that the buildings at Lake Garda and Capri represent two dissimilar, yet complementary sets of core values. With its delirious eclecticism, the Vittoriale displays many of the maladies affecting Italy before the First World War – a morbid love for the body of the nation, excitement with military and colonial strength, a fascination with the machine – all amplifications and distortions of European cultural themes of the same period. For its part, Casa Malaparte is about the interwar withdrawal from modern Europe into pre-modernity, a specific trope in fascist cosmology. A thin line then connects the two estates: at Lake Garda you see the toxic cultural premises of fascism, at Capri a reaction to the regime's 20-year long binge on phantasmagorias of imperial Rome. But if the Vittoriale is essentially an affirmative gesture, an alternative community with D'Annunzio at its helm, Casa Malaparte arises out of rejection, as a retreat for Malaparte to shine in his loneliness.

Malaparte furthermore stands out among his colleagues by virtue of the fact that he built his estate from scratch – writers rarely experiment that far with architecture. In the exchange between disciplines, architects are generally the more daring, as their fortunes often depend on the translation into built form of ideas previously expressed with words. By writing *and then* building, one could say that Malaparte followed a classic trope in modern architecture. However, as a wordsmith and not by education a designer, Malaparte took care to give phenomenal expression not only to the general content of his written work – his life and his anti-modernism – but also to the form of his writing.

If it is true that you know what one thing *is* by looking at what it *is not*, then a comparison of *The Skin* (1949), Malaparte's account of wartime Naples, with *Naples 1944* (1978), a deadpan report of the same events by British writer Norman Lewis, makes clear the Italian writer's compulsion to bend reality to his will. This vocation for the *unnatural*, already noticeable in Malaparte's juvenile production, became predominant during the fascist regime, whose rhetoric ratified and even encouraged non-objectivity.[88] For many Italian journalists active during the *ventennio*, the idea that you should stick to the facts epitomised everything that was wrong with (Northern European) positivism and the 'standard man' it promoted. As an Italian studies scholar put it, the common feeling was that 'by making the writer a mere reporter of events, the doctrine of impersonality [had] deprived the literary work of an individual imprint and stripped the writer of an active role in shaping new values'[89] – the subtext being that you could transfigure reality but not interpret it (knowledge being impossible in fascism). Fuelled by his peculiar distrust of rationalism, Malaparte took this 'transfiguration' to an extreme, and consistently distorted or manufactured facts with the aim of stupefying his readership. Eventually he would embrace surrealism because it legitimised irrationality and artifice and thus served his pursuit of *the sensational*.[90]

But how is all of this expressed on Capri? Take the living room, the most representative space of the house. Here we have a fireplace that looks like a glob of crude matter extended from the ceiling and then stretched horizontally; a glass panel at the rear creating a dazzling juxtaposition of the flames with the blue of the sea outside; windows with moulding frames which literally make paintings out of the world outside; long and curvaceous wooden tops to be used as benches standing on Doric column-shaped water closets; a small dark door at one end of the room leading to a corridor terminated by the ominous presence of two identical doors. Taken together, these individual objects present a Daliesque quality, and the ensemble plays with unconscious associations in the typical surrealist fashion.[91] In addition, we find figures of speech that are rife in Malaparte's writing: the oxymoron (the fire-and-water fireplace) and the twofold interpretation (the pair of doors) – both of which address the theme of doubleness so dear to the Tuscan writer. Indeed, Malaparte went to great lengths to achieve consistency between his literary and his architectural production, because

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he considered each one of his works a means to publicise his public persona. But since most of his work was autobiographical and semi-fictional – 'a writer is always depicting himself'[92] – throughout his life he basically used his idealised self-image to promote his public self,[93] or even – akin to Oscar Wilde's *Picture of Dorian Gray* – using his architectural double to age and transform instead of his physical self: 'the braid around the windows will look great, especially when the colour has turned old, stained, faded or, as they say in Naples, "rotten".'[94]

We see this in Capri, where Malaparte praised the honesty of his 'portrait in stone': the house features 'none of those hybrid marriages between Moorish, romanesque, gothic and secessionist styles that some Germans brought to Capri 30 or 40 years ago, thus contaminating the purity and simplicity of the Capri house'.[95] But his is *not* a 'simple' Capri house. One can hardly imagine any sensible islander building on the remote and exposed Cape Massullo, and with a house whose layout was so at odds with Capri's building culture. Also, Malaparte claimed to have used 'no bricks, no concrete, but stone of the local kind, from which the cliff is made',[96] when in actual fact the building is made of many non-local materials – cement, wood, steel, stone, tiles and textiles from every corner of Italy. Even the seemingly natural distribution of the greenery shrouding the front and sides of the house is contrived – 'I want the pine trees planted in picturesque disorder as if it were a wood born spontaneously... I want a forest, not a garden, around me, is that clear?'[97] Casa Malaparte therefore seems less about naturalness, more about *artifice*.

A consideration of Malaparte's intellectual background provides further support for this hypothesis: even if he consistently denied it – claiming, for instance, in *The Skin*, to be 'nauseated' by a group of learned young men he labels 'inverts' and 'Des Esseintes'[98] – decadent sophistication was his true passion. 'Malaparte's writing was a mix of D'Annunzio and Papini', was how Alberto Moravia put it in a 1989 interview.[99] And taking a step back, we can see how the Capri building addresses a number of themes of decadent fiction: the punitive introspection, the self-imposed exile in the prison-like house, the critique of modernisation, the nostalgia for a bygone past, the incompatibility with prevailing social norms, the figure of the hero as a marginalised other.[100] These obsessions certainly played a part in the estrangement of writer and architect. Adalberto Libera's memoir, *My Experience as an Architect* (1960), gets back at his client by branding both him and Gabriele D'Annunzio as 'romantic' writers unwilling to 'accept reality'.[101] Artifice and transmogrification, *these* were the cherished themes in Malaparte's value system, as the writer himself confirmed in the 1937 cinema issue of his *Prospettive* magazine: 'Cinema turned reality into artifice ... this is an act of culture and civilisation'.[102] Malaparte appears to have really meant these words, since his chameleonic biography is a treatise on a specific artificiality, that of identity in the modern age, and on the struggle that comes with constructing one – 'I continuously try to be (not to seem) an Italian like all the others, and I cannot do it.'[103]

Born in Catholic Italy to a Protestant German father, and by turns a republican, war veteran, fascist, writer, journalist, editor, amateur architect, film director and even revue host, Malaparte spent his entire life constructing and reconstructing himself to not only survive but profit from events that pushed millions of Europeans to their limits – and beyond. The positioning of the house, defiantly placed immediately above sea level to challenge the fury of the waves, is a good allegory for this heroic quest to survive the 'tempest' of modernity, a reading also suggested by the closing scene of *Le Mépris*, in which Ulysses, the archetypal mythological hero, looks onto the pacified sea from the roof terrace, arms raised in a gesture of victory.

Yet while Malaparte thrived in the turmoil of European high modernity, he found himself increasingly out of step with American-influenced and consensus-driven late modernity. As journalist Luigi Barzini Jr put it, in the postwar years his writing was 'too good to succeed with the masses, and too insincere to succeed with critical and thoughtful readers',[104] who could not forgive him for his blatant fascist past (even though many had themselves been supporters of fascism) and sneered at his attempts to join the communist party. This hostility cornered Malaparte into an even more contradictory, elusive and quarrelsome stance. He publicly accounted for his flagging popularity as a shared predicament in the new era – 'literary language is no longer enough to express the moral and social needs of the modern world',[105] and, desperate to remain in the limelight, experimented with other media – with mixed results. In 1951 Malaparte directed *Strange Deception*, a drama about a Russian POW camp survivor heavily larded with Catholic rhetoric to appease the Christian Democrats and the Vatican, which had just placed *The Skin* on its index of prohibited books. The film was critically well received, but flopped at the box office because the public could not make sense of its 'high and noble poetry'[106]. His 1954 theatre show, *The Women Lost the War Too*, got tepid reviews, whereas the improbably named *Sexophone* of 1955 – a revue that he not only produced and directed but also acted in – was an all-out critical and financial disaster.

That same summer Malaparte even announced a US coast-to-coast bicycle ride sponsored by Coca Cola – there are publicity shots of him posing on a bike on the rooftop terrace of his Capri house, but the ride was cancelled for undisclosed reasons.[107] His last adventure was a 1956 reporting trip behind the closed doors of Mao's China. This was when modernity, which he thought he had vanquished, presented him its final reckoning. He fell sick while in China, and on his return to Italy a few months later died of a lung cancer caused by a modern atmospheric weapon, the mustard gas he had been exposed to in France during the First World War.[108]

Interior views, Casa Malaparte, Capri
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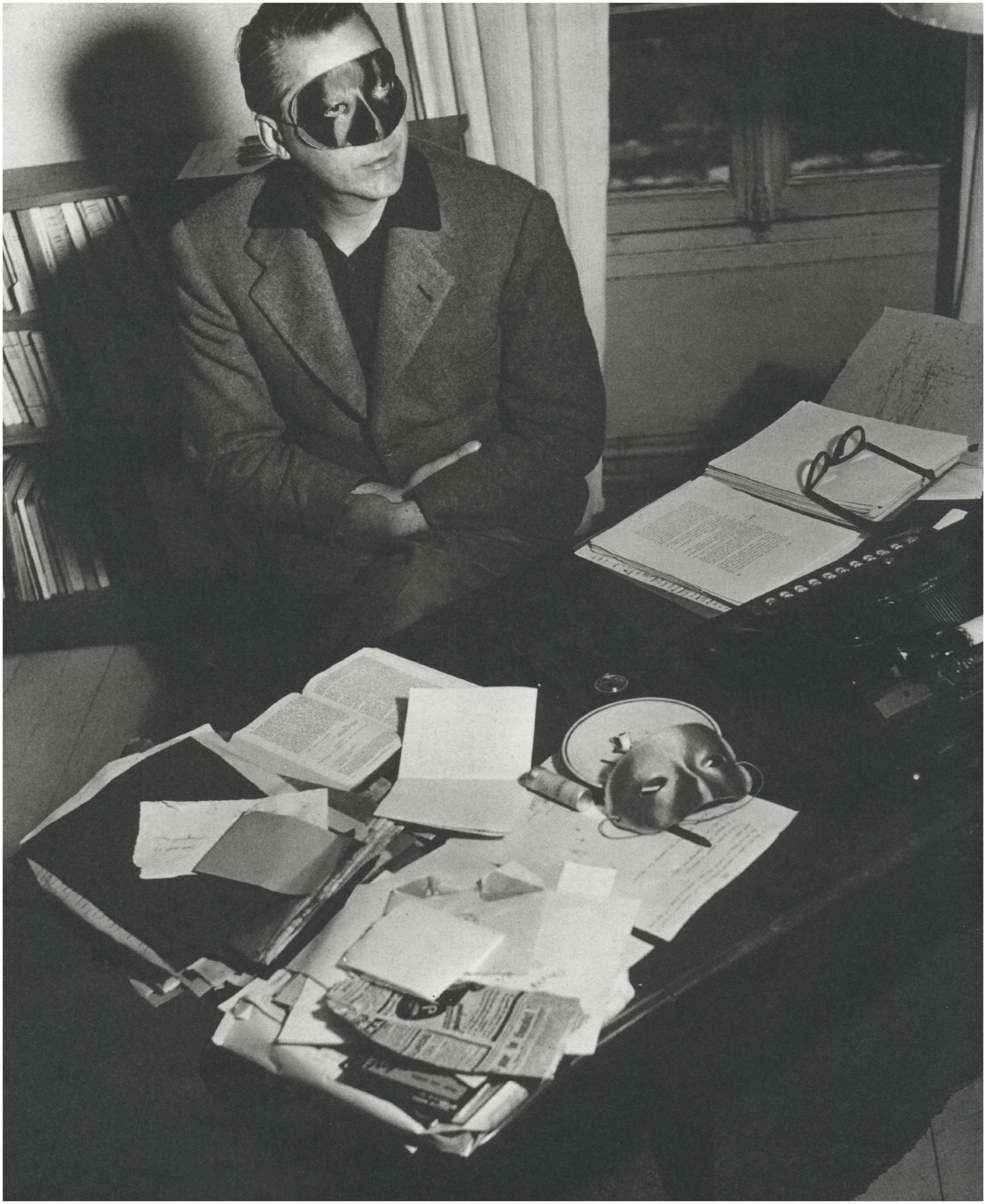

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After his death, both Malaparte as a person and his 'portrait in stone' quickly sunk into oblivion. In his last will, incorrigible contrarian to the end, the writer had bequeathed his house on Capri to the government of the People's Republic of China. Until his heirs successfully contested the document, the house was left in limbo, abandoned to the full force of the elements and occasionally vandalised despite the efforts of the loyal custodian Ciro Amitrano. Over the following years the Suckerts kept the building hidden from view, except for the odd appearance on the cinema screen, and without doubt this absence fuelled the myth surrounding it.[109] In a 1979 poll organised by Andrea Branzi in *Modo* magazine, Casa Malaparte was voted the best work of Italian architecture of the century – ironic for a building not authored by an architect, though this fact was not widely known at the time.[110]

Casa Malaparte had been attributed to Adalberto Libera up to the late 1980s, when Marida Talamona's research proved otherwise.[111] 'This is good architecture, therefore it is Libera's' was the logic that spawned a number of studies that glorified the modernist architect,[112] of which the prime example is the formalist review that Franco Purini wrote of the book in which Talamona presented her findings.[113] According to the former member of *La Tendenza*, 'an architecture forming such an accomplished single entity and born out of a single creative stroke' could only have been built with 'a plan, now lost' – a plan that 'must have been drafted' by Libera, but that Malaparte deliberately kept hidden. And to prove the argument, he superimposed a grid on the plan and cross-section of the house, pointing out 'traces of proportions, proof of a skilful control of space ... superior to both Amitrano's and Malaparte's ability to organise three-dimensional shapes'. Purini concluded by denoucning Talamona's 'dangerous' evidence-based study, which in his view 'denies the necessity of the project ... and the autonomy of the language of architecture'. The tirade – based solely on assumptions and inferences derived from sketches – reveals how the attribution of the celebrated building to a neophyte was seen as a threat to the already precarious status of the profession in Italy. Purini's knee-jerk reaction encapsulates a discourse that was averse to acknowledging contributions by individuals outside its realm – especially if the individual in question was anathema to the public, as Malaparte still was in the early 1990s.

Yet, after decades of critical neglect, Malaparte's controversial work and figure have begun to attract more interest in recent years. While new editions of his books signal his rehabilitation as a writer, his agency in the design of the house on Capri has also been brought to the fore,[114] partly through the efforts of the Suckerts, who run a law firm specialising in copyright law, and look after both the image and the physical fabric of the building. Given its location, the Capri house requires constant upkeep, and Amitrano knew this well – 'remember the house must be inhabited, if abandoned it becomes dried fruit'.[115] The Suckerts not only keep the house in good shape, but true to their forebear's go-it-alone spirit, refuse all assistance from the Italian state, seeing this as interference in private affairs. Reliant solely on their own resources to cover the huge maintenance costs, they occasionally rent the house out as a location for high-profile art events or fashion shoots – a fate that would probably not have displeased its original owner, a man who was very selective in his enjoyment of luxury.[116]

The manager of Casa Malaparte, Alessia Rositani-Suckert, says that 'it cannot be understood without seeing it in person',[117] a Banhamesque comment that gets straight to the heart of the matter. Only first-hand experience gives an idea of the extent to which the building sustains the cult of Malaparte – a cult the man himself started the moment he penned his first work. Vigilantly guarded all year round and accessible only by invitation, Casa Malaparte still functions today as a sanctuary of its first owner, whose presence permeates the property so strongly that you expect him to walk in at any moment (the house is not only a portrait, as Malaparte proffered, but also a frame, and as such needs the figure of its owner to fill its voids). This care in preservation, however, has not stopped the building from developing a life of its own. Casa Malaparte remains widely defined by its fictionalisation – as 'the house featured in *Le Mépris*' – and is popular for its hard-to-pin-down design, which has elicited a large number of interpretations based on similes or metaphors. These are mainly divided into two groups. The first group (among them John Hejduk, Peter Eisenman and Manfredo Tafuri) associates the building with *objects*: a coffin, a submarine, a shipwreck, a fossil of a prehistoric monster, a strange geode, a brick fallen on the rocks.[118] The second (which includes Wiel Arets and Bruce Chatwin) defines it in terms of *building types*: as a mix of palace, temple and prison; a museum; a mausoleum; an altar; a tomb.[119] This allegorical profusion is revealing of the building's capacity to play with categories and spark the imagination. It also shows how architecture means more to people when they see in it something other than mere building.

In more general terms, architecture's enduring liaison with the allegorical is most obvious in the practice of giving nicknames to buildings, although this is conditioned, of course, by *who* is doing the naming. When the owner christens the building, as with Casa Malaparte, it is usually to brand it and steer the critical discourse in a particular direction. When the public comes up with a moniker, it is usually to mark an extraordinary or tasteless building – Gherkin, Walkie-Talkie, Cheesgrater, etc. In the case of the Casa Malaparte, the building's popularity among a much narrower segment of the population, namely architects, may have attributed not only to its volumetric and iconographic qualities, but also to the way it lends itself to the eye. As you walk along the cliffside path, all of a sudden the vegetation clears and you get a view of the house. From that angle – the most common angle for photographs – the building looks like an axonometric drawing. And as Bruno Reichlin has pointed out, the axonometric holds a special place in modernism, as *the* instrument of representation that 'constitutes in the two dimensions of the drawing paper the *mental* viewpoint of the architect-demiurge'.[120] Therefore Casa Malaparte, already a forceful presence by virtue of its location and design, also conveys a feeling of power through the way it is visually understood – something that has not gone unnoticed among architects. Just browse a 1999 book celebrating the building and you will see that half of the celebrities featured in the publication (Michael Graves, Mario Botta, Steven Holl and Arata Isozaki) sent the editor a freehand drawing made from that very spot.[121]

In the end, Casa Malaparte did not provide an appropriate framework for the production of literature – though perhaps Malaparte never really expected it to, as he enjoyed writing about things from the thick of the action. The house did, however, prove to be an excellent device for extending the reach of his creative production, for perpetuating his legacy and creating a myth around his persona. Most significantly, perhaps it elicits that abandonment of rational thinking that Malaparte advocated in his political writings.

Curzio Malaparte, Paris, 1949
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In helping to realise Malaparte's desire for adoration, the building made him the 'object of a secret-type cult, but also an anti-cult', to borrow Reyner Banham's famous description of another guru, Colin Rowe of Ithaca.[122] Today Malaparte's combative spirit still lives on in his finest piece of artifice, constantly battling against the forces of nature and its inevitable petrification. Viewing the house from the cliff, isolated against the deep blue of the sea, one would hardly think that it holds a multitude of other meanings, beyond those attributable to the figure of its owner. But as a three-dimensional essay against modernity, a physical platform for the self-promotional efforts of a literary celebrity discredited by his affiliation with fascism, the object of contested authorship and a battleground for debates around the autonomy of architecture, Casa Malaparte is a sore reminder of truths few Italians are willing to hear.

For in large part Italy remains resolutely hostile to the modern paradigm, fascist in its moral code, provincial in its outlook and afflicted with an undiminished sense of its own national self-importance in spite of its now blatantly marginal position in global affairs. All of these conditions are manifestly in evidence on this remote Mediterranean promontory, and so Casa Malaparte is perhaps not so much a dot on the edge of a fresco depicting the Italian peninsula, as the vanishing point at its centre, a beacon irradiating multiple lines of thought, many of which are at the root of the various ills affecting the country. Ultimately, then, when we look at the house from the nearest public viewing point, what we are really seeing is the body of a country laid out for dissection – the clifftop path doubling as the gallery of a kind of anatomical theatre. It is disconcerting to discover that such a beautiful building conceals a tainted core, but in its own way this is also a measure of its success, at least in terms of that marriage of goodness and badness which the 'arch Italian' Curzio Malaparte steadfastly pursued in his life and his work, and which find their fullest expression in his house at Capri.

1. Bruce Chatwin, 'Self-Love Among the Ruins', *Vanity Fair*, April 1984, pp 46–55.
2. For more on the difficulty in placing Malaparte in only one literary genre see Robert G Walker, 'Malaparte and Literary Strangeness: A Critical Preface to *Kaputt*', *Sewanee Review*, vol 118, no 2, 2010, pp 270–82.
3. Curzio Malaparte, *Autobiografia* (a 1944 typewritten memorial posthumously published in August 1957 in *Rinascita*, a magazine run by the Italian Communist Party).
4. Kurt Erich Suckert, 'Cos' é l'Oceanismo', *Oceanica*, 15 January 1921, self-published magazine. Excerpt in Matteo Noja, '"Curtino" Torna dove si Fece Uomo ed Esteta', *Mensile della Biblioteca di Via Senato,* no 9, October 2010, p 28.
5. Curzio Malaparte, *Viva Caporetto! La Rivolta dei Santi Maledetti* (Florence: Vallecchi, 1995) [1921], pp 106–07.
6. Antonio Gramsci, *Letteratura e Vita Nazionale* (Turin: Einaudi, 1950) [1934], p 170.
7. Curzio Malaparte, letter to Piero Gobetti, 1923, in Piero Gobetti, *Scritti Politici* (Turin: Einaudi, 1960), p 566.
8. For more on this see Norberto Bobbio, *Ideological Profile of Twentieth-Century Italy* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1995), pp 122–32.
9. Curzio Malaparte, letter to Giuseppe Prezzolini, in Marcello Staglieno, 'Le Cento e una Maschere del Santo Maledetto', *Il Settimanale*, 24 June 1980. Malaparte's unpublished letters to Prezzolini are stored in the town library of Lugano, Switzerland.
10. Curzio Malaparte, *Europa Vivente* (Florence: La Voce, 1923), p 342.
11. Published in France under the thundering title *L'Italie Contre l'Europe* ('Italy Against Europe') (Paris: Felix Alcan, 1927).
12. Curzio Malaparte reporting Mussolini's instructions, letter to the Minister of Popular Culture, 14 September 1938, in Archivio Centrale dello Stato, Min Cul Pop, Reports 1922–1944, b 7, n 65, *Malaparte-Curzio – Prospettive 1935–1943*; and Maurizio Serra, *Malaparte: Vite e Leggende* (Venice: Marsilio, 2012), p 109.
13. Curzio Malaparte, letter to Leo Longanesi, 4 January 1926, in *Malaparte I*, p 776; Maurizio Serra, *ibid*, p 110.
14. *Ibid.*
15. Maurizio Serra, *op cit*, p 108.
16. Antonio Gramsci, *op cit*, p 170.
17. Curzio Malaparte, 'La Maschera della Rivoluzione' (The Mask of the Revolution), *Impero*, 6 April 1923.
18. The most famous one is 'Spunta il sole e canta il gallo / O Mussolini monta a cavallo' ('The sun rises and the cock crows / Oh! Mussolini mount your horse'), an ironic jeer at Mussolini's 'bourgeois' habit of riding his horse before going to work. Curzio Malaparte, 'La Cantata dell' Arcimussolini' (1928), in Enrico Falqui (ed), *L'Arcitaliano* (Florence: Vallecchi, 1963), pp 13–15.
19. Lev Trotsky, speech on occasion of the fifteenth anniversary of the October revolution. Copenhagen, 7 November 1932. Author's translation from French. Excerpt in Maurizio Serra, *op cit*, pp 182–83. Full text on www.marxiste.org.
20. Curzio Malaparte, 19 November 1931, in Edda Ronchi-Suckert, *Malaparte II*, pp 844–45; Maurizio Serra, *op cit*, p 188.
21. Curzio Malaparte, letter to Aldo Borelli, 12 May 1933, *ibid*, p 193.
22. Curzio Malaparte, letter to Nello Quilici, 3 October 1932, in Edda Ronchi-Suckert, *Malaparte III,* p 76 and Maurizio Serra, *ibid,* p 198.
23. *Ibid*.
24. Curzio Malaparte, letter to Nello Quilici, 3 October 1932, in Giordano Bruno Guerri, *op cit*, p 143.
25. Italo Balbo, letter to Mussolini, 7 June 1933, in Archivio Centrale dello Stato, *Segreteria Particolare del Duce, Carteggio Riservato,* folder 'Italo Balbo'. Full text in Giordano Bruno Guerri, *L'Arcitaliano* (Milan: Bompiani, 2008) [1980], p 150.
26. Benito Mussolini, *Prefazione Borelli*, in Edda Ronchi-Suckert, *Malaparte III*, p 153; and Maurizio Serra, *op cit*, p 207.
27. Curzio Malaparte, letter to Armando Meoni, in Manfredo Tafuri, 'L'Ascesi e il Gioco', *Gran Bazar*, no 15, 1981, p 96.
28. For an analysis of the relations between Malaparte's exile and his Capri house see Alexandra Brown-Hejazi, *The Awful Beauty of Exile: A Renaissance Reading of Casa Malaparte* (doc file on academia.edu).
29. Curzio Malaparte, *Malaparte: Arcitaliano nel Mondo* (Milan: Biblioteca di Via Senato Edizioni, 2010), p 38.
30. Curzio Malaparte, letter to his French publisher Daniel Halevy, 23 May 1936, in Edda Ronchi-Suckert, *Malaparte III*, p 705; Maurizio Serra, *op cit*, p 231.
31. Curzio Malaparte, excerpt from the press release for the launch of the magazine, 5 July 1937, in Luigi Martellini, *Le Prospettive di Malaparte* (Naples: Edizioni Scientifiche Italiane, 2014), p 13.
32. Curzio Malaparte, letter to Aldo Borelli, 6 February 1937, in Edda Ronchi-Suckert, *Malaparte IV*, p 1992; Luigi Martellini, *ibid*, p 12.
33. Curzio Malaparte, *Kaputt* (Milan: Adelphi, 2009) [1944], p 22.
34. Members of Gruppo 7 included Ubaldo Castagnoli, Luigi Figini, Guido Frette, Sebastiano Larco, Adalberto Libera, Giuseppe Pagano, Gino Pollini, Carlo Enrico Rava and Giuseppe Terragni. For a discussion on the influence of vernacular architecture on modernist architecture see Michelangelo Sabatino, *Pride and Modesty: Modernist Architecture and the Vernacular Tradition in Italy* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2010); Jean-François Lejeune and Michelangelo Sabatino (eds), *Modern Architecture and the Mediterranean* (London: Routledge, 2010).
35. Officer Conte, 'Relazione Conte', in *Malaparte IV*, p 489; Maurizio Serra, *op cit,* p 516.
36. Curzio Malaparte, 'Portrait in Stone' (1940), text in Marida Talamona, *Casa Malaparte* (New York, NY: Princeton Architectural Press, 1996), pp 84–85, first published in Italian as 'Una Casa tra Greco e Scirocco' in *Il Mattino del Sabato,* 20 June 1987.
37. Marida Talamona, 'Nuovi Documenti', *Casabella,* September 1997, pp 22–27.
38. Curzio Malaparte, letter to Libera, 24 Apr 1938, MART Archive, Fondo Casa Malaparte.
39. Curzio Malaparte, letter to Adolfo Amitrano, 9 April 1938, *ibid*.
40. Curzio Malaparte, undated letter to Adolfo Amitrano (Talamona believes it was sent 12 June 1938).
41. Manfredo Tafuri, 'L'Ascesi e il Gioco', *Gran Bazar,* 15, 1981, pp 92–99.
42. Daniele Rulli, son of Guglielmo Rulli, Malaparte's neighbour on Capo Massullo, speaks of 'so many changes to Libera's design that the finished building can be considered almost a different project', interview with Maurizio Serra, in Maurizio Serra, *op cit*, p 517.
43. Curzio Malaparte, letter to Adolfo Amitrano 10 October 1938, MART Archive, Fondo Casa Malaparte.
44. Curzio Malaparte, letter to Adolfo Amitrano, 11 January 1939, *ibid*.
45. Curzio Malaparte, letter to Adolfo Amitrano, 10 May 1939, *ibid*.
46. Uberto Bonetti, letter to Curzio Malaparte, 3 June 1939, Rositani-Suckert Archive, Florence.
47. Orfeo Tamburi, *Calepini* (Bari: Adriatica, 1968), p 34.
48. Orfeo Tamburi, interview with Marida Talamona, Paris, 10 July 1987, in Marida Talamona, *op cit*, p 50.
49. Carlo Talamona, letter to Curzio Malaparte, 5 May 1943, *ibid*, p 112.
50. Curzio Malaparte, letter to 'Anne', 4 September 1945, *ibid*, p 115.
51. Curzio Malaparte, letter to Adolfo Amitrano, 19 December 1940, MART Archive, Fondo Casa Malaparte.
52. In addition, from August 1950 to February 1955, Malaparte never set foot on Capri due to arguments with a number of the locals – arguments that even escalated into a trial, that Malaparte lost. See Maurizio Serra, *op cit*, p 457, and 'Rentrée di Malaparte a Capri', *La Voce di Napoli*, 12 February 1955, in Edda Ronchi-Suckert, *Malaparte XI*, pp 184–85.
53. Curzio Malaparte, letter to Ciro Amitrano, 9 January 1948, *ibid*.
54. Curzio Malaparte, letter to Ciro Amitrano, 3 September 1947, *ibid*.
55. Ciro Amitrano, letter to Curzio Malaparte, 8 September 1947, *ibid*.
56. Ciro Amitrano, letter to Curzio Malaparte, 2 August 1949, *ibid*.
57. Kurt Forster, 'The Autobiographical House: Around a Haunted Hearth', in Emmanuel Petit (ed), *Philip Johnson: The Constancy of Change* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2009), p 57. In this passage Forster discusses a piece by O Karl Werckmeister on Malaparte, Alberto Moravia, Jean-Luc Godard and

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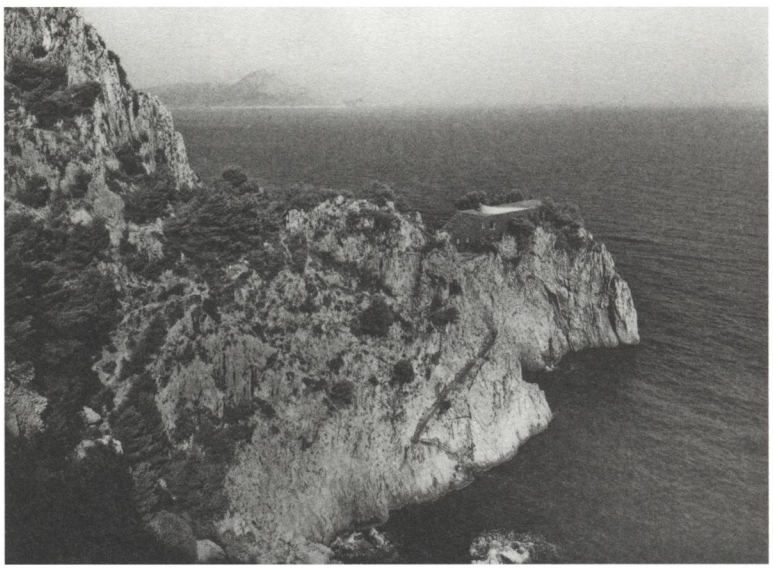
Fritz Lang: 'Casa Malaparte: Eine Topographie maennlicher Kreativitaet', *Merkur*, 598, January 1999, pp 28–39.
58. Curzio Malaparte, letter to an unknown woman, 1946, in Giordano Bruno Guerri, *op cit*, p 100.
59. Curzio Malaparte, letter to young writer Nantas Salvalaggio, 1952, *ibid*, p 101.
60. Lamberti Sorrentino and Arturo Tofanelli, interview with Giordano Bruno Guerri, *ibid*, p 100.
61. Curzio Malaparte, *The Skin* (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 1997) [1949], p 204.
62. *Ibid*, p 75.
63. Curzio Malaparte, letter to Ciro Amitrano, 23 July 1948, MART Archive, Fondo Casa Malaparte.
64. Curzio Malaparte, letter to Ciro Amitrano, 3 September 1947, *ibid*.
65. Michael McDonough, *Malaparte: A House Like Me* (New York, NY: Clarkson Potter, 1999), p 68.
66. Michael Z Wise, 'Part Palace, Part Temple, Part Prison: On the Casa Malaparte', *LA Review of Books*, 17 January 2013.
67. René Novella, *Du Rocher aux Sept Collines* (Monaco: Editions Gérard Comman, 1992), p 145. Also 'he can only offer us the vegetables of the garden, and the *totani*, caught by the gardener in the early morning' (*ibid*, p 144). English text in Michael McDonough, *ibid,* p 69.
68. Claude Nabokoff Joxe, in conversation with Maurizio Serra, in Maurizio Serra, *op cit*, p 414.
69. Curzio Malaparte, letter to Carlo Talamona, 2 May 1943, in Marida Talamona, *op cit*, p 110.
70. Curzio Malaparte, *Kaputt*, *op cit*, p 15.
71. Fascism is an 'intellectual revolution', said Gentilian thinker and fascist hierarch Giuseppe Bottai, see Giuseppe Bottai, *Pagine di Critica Fascista 1919–1926* (Florence: Le Monnier, 1941), p 332. Philosopher Benedetto Croce objected that 'intellectuals cling to the counter-reformation thesis to hide an ideological emptiness' in 'Controriforma', *La Critica*, vol 20, 1924, p 333. Excerpt in Giuseppe Pardini, *Malaparte. Biografia Politica* (Milan: Luni, 1998), p 120.
72. Alberto Moravia, interviewed by Marc Lambron for French weekly *Le Point*, April 1989. An excerpt of the interview is in Maurizio Serra, *op cit*, p 275.
73. Curzio Malaparte, *Du Coté de Chez Proust* (Rome-Milan: Aria d'Italia, 1951), pp 91–92, in Maurizio Serra, *op cit*, p 427.
74. Oswald Spengler, *The Decline of the West* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1991) [1918].
75. Curzio Malaparte, 'Anche gli Italiani Proclamano e Difendono il Nostro Integralismo', *Conquista dello Stato*, 8 February 1925.
76. Curzio Malaparte, *Europa Vivente e altri Saggi Politici, 1921–1931* (Florence: Vallecchi, 1961), p 365.
77. Curzio Malaparte, 'Le Origini Rurali del Fascismo', *Conquista dello Stato*, 10 August 1924.
78. Curzio Malaparte, 'Mussolini Accetta la Tesi del Fascismo Integrale', *Conquista dello Stato*, 4 January 1925.
79. Curzio Malaparte, 'Il Fascismo contro Mussolini?', *Conquista dello Stato,* 21 December 1924.
80. The preface of the first issue of *L'Italiano* (The Italian), a magazine edited by Malaparte's friend Gherardo Casini, states: 'what still is Italian in this country is found outside these cities breeding concrete buildings and standard men and women, out there in the countryside, where the road-roller of international civilisation has not arrived yet'. Gherardo Casini, 'Preface', *L'Italiano*, 14 January 1926. Text in Giuseppe Pardini, *Malaparte*, *op cit*, p 178.
81. For a compelling study on this topic see Pierpaolo Antonello, 'Politics of (Dis)Engagement: Italian and British Intellectuals', in Eugenio Bolongaro, Mark Epstein and Rita Gagliano (eds), *Creative Interventions: The Role of Intellectuals in Contemporary Italy* (Cambridge: Cambridge Scholars Press, 2009), pp 338–62.
82. Curzio Malaparte, letter to Piero Gobetti, 18 August 1925, in Edda Ronchi-Suckert, *Malaparte 1*, p 593. Full text in Giuseppe Pardini, *op cit*, p 170.



Casa Malaparte, Capri
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83. Etta Comito, 'Cocktail in Casa come Lui', *Corriere di Napoli,* 2 June 1947.
84. Curzio Malaparte, *Kaputt*, *op cit*, p 352.
85. For a discussion on writers' houses see Harald Hendrix, 'Writers' Houses as Media of Expression and Remembrance', in Harald Hendrix (ed), *Writers' Houses and the Making of Memory* (London: Routledge, 2008), pp 1–15.
86. For an analysis of Il Vittoriale see Lucia Re, 'Gabriele D'Annunzio's Theatre of Memory: Il Vittoriale degli Italiani', *The Journal of Decorative and Propaganda Arts*, vol 3, Italian Theme Issue (Winter 1987), pp 6–51.
87. 'Everything here was created and transmogrified by me. Everything bears the imprint of my style and the meaning I intend to give to my style' – Gabriele D'Annunzio, excerpt of the donation act of Il Vittoriale to the Italian state (1923).
88. For more on the role of artifice in Italian fascist culture see Ruth Ben-Ghiat, 'Italian Fascism and the Aesthetics of the Third Way', *Journal of Contemporary History*, vol 31, no 2, Special Issue: The Aesthetics of Fascism (April 1996), pp 293–316.
89. *Ibid*, p 301.
90. Malaparte gives his take on surrealism in Curzio Malaparte, 'Il Surrealismo e L'Italia', *Prospettive,* monographic issue on surrealism, no 1 (IV), 15 January 1940, pp 3–7.
91. For a study of Casa Malaparte's surrealist quality see Jacqueline Gargus, 'The Tangency of the World to Itself: The Casa Malaparte and the Metaphysical Tradition', in Thomas Mical (ed), *Surrealism and Architecture* (London: Routledge, 2005).
92. Curzio Malaparte, *Portrait in Stone* (1940), text in Marida Talamona, *op cit*, pp 84–85, first published in Italian as 'Una Casa tra Greco e Scirocco' in *Il Mattino del Sabato,* 20 June 1987.
93. For a study of Malaparte's use of literature as a means for constructing self-identity see William Hope, *Curzio Malaparte: The Narrative Contract Strained* (Leicester: Troubadour, 2001).
94. Curzio Malaparte, letter to Carlo Talamona, 2 May 1943, in Marida Talamona, *op cit*, p 110.
95. Curzio Malaparte, *Portrait in Stone*, *op cit*, p 85.
96. *Ibid*, p 84.
97. Curzio Malaparte, letter to Adolfo Amitrano, 19 December 1938, MART Archive, Fondo Casa Malaparte.
98. Curzio Malaparte, *The Skin*, *op cit*, p 130.
99. Alberto Moravia, *ibid*.
100. For a study on the social function of decadent fiction see Moira Di Mauro-Jackson, 'Decadence as a Social Critique in Huysmans, D'Annunzio and Wilde', PhD Thesis, The University of Texas at Austin, 2008.
101. Adalberto Libera, *La Mia Esperienza di Architetto* (Lavis: La Finestra, 2008), p 82.
102. Curzio Malaparte, 'La Verità sul Cinema', *Prospettive,* no 2 (August 1937), p 8.
103. Curzio Malaparte, letter to Giancarlo Vigorelli, *Il Tesoretto: Almanacco dello Specchio* (Milan: Mondadori, 1941), p 66, and Giordano Bruno Guerri, *op cit*, p 115.
104. Luigi Barzini Jr, *From Caesar to the Mafia: Persons, Places and Problems in Italian Life* (Piscataway, NJ: Transactions, 2001) [1971], p 54.
105. Curzio Malaparte, interview in Italian newspaper *Il Giornale*, 2 August 1950.
106. Curzio Malaparte, letter to Ciro Amitrano, 6 December 1950, MART Archive, Fondo Malaparte.
107. Malaparte invested the bicycle with a mythical aura: 'As a boy, I fantasised about the feats of Gerbi, Petit-Breton and Ganna. Early cycle racing was my Iliad', Curzio Malaparte, 'L'Agonia della Bicicletta' (The Agony of the Bicycle), *Battibecco* 1953–1957 (Florence: Vallecchi, 1967), p 186.
108. In a general comment, Alberto Moravia said that 'Malaparte was caught by surprise by the modern world', *op cit*.
109. Casa Malaparte appears in *Le Mépris* (Jean-Luc Godard, 1963) and *The Skin* (Liliana Cavani, 1981).
110. Andrea Branzi, 'Referendum popolare: Cento progetti da ricordare', *Modo*, no 20 (June 1979), pp 47–54.
111. Marida Talamona, 'Adalberto Libera and Villa Malaparte', *AA Files* 18, 1989, pp 4–8.
112. Vieri Quilici, 'Adalberto Libera', *Lotus International* 16, 1977, pp 55–87; Bruno Zevi, 'La Scomparsa di Adalberto Libera', *Cronache d'Architettura,* vol IX, no 464, 1971; Enrico Mantero, *Il Razionalismo Italiano* (Bologna: Zanichelli, 1984), p 34.
113. Marida Talamona, *Casa Malaparte* (Milan: Clup, 1990); Franco Purini, 'Architettura senza Architetto?', *Casabella*, no 582, 1991, pp 40–42.
114. Crucial to this was the English-language publication of Marida Talamona's book in 1992.
115. Ciro Amitrano, letter to Curzio Malaparte, 2 August 1949, MART Archive, Fondo Casa Malaparte.
116. The fascination that Casa Malaparte has been capable of exerting over global brands like Gagosian, Louis Vuitton, Hugo Boss, Persol, Zegna and Fendi is yet more proof of the interest that the fashion industry has recently shown towards Italian architecture of the 1930s. Fendi's creative director, Karl Lagerfeld, even published a book of his Polaroids of the building: Karl Lagerfeld, *Casa Malaparte* (Göttingen: Steidl, 1998). This trend was analysed by Owen Hatherley in 'Fendi Vidi Vici: When Fashion Flirts with Fascism', *The Architectural Review*, 3 March 2015.
117. Alessia Rositani-Suckert, interview with the author, Florence, November 2014.
118. Respectively by Malaparte's French translator René Novella, John Hejduk, Manfredo Tafuri, Francesco Venezia, Peter Eisenman and Malaparte's biographer Giordano Bruno Guerri.
119. Respectively by journalist Michael Z Wise, Wiel Arets, Giorgio Ciucci, Bruce Chatwin and John Hejduk.
120. Bruno Reichlin, 'The Axonometric as a Project', *Lotus International*, no 22, 1979, p 87.
121. Michael McDonough, *Malaparte*, pp 40, 75, 91, 123. Tellingly, Mario Botta's drawing is called *From the Gate.*
122. Reyner Banham, *New Society*, 17 March 1966.

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