Humourless Laughter and Classical Architecture

In February 1944, as allied troops struggled to repel a German counter-attack on their beachhead at Anzio, Bruno Zevi, a young Italian architect commissioned into the US military as a member of the United States Information Service (USIS), completed *Verso un'architettura organica: saggio sullo sviluppo del pensiero architettonico negli ultimi cinquant'anni* (*Towards an organic architecture: a study of the development of architectural thought in the last fifty years*).[1] This, Zevi's first book, was in many ways a manifesto for the urban and architectural reconstruction that a liberated Italy would require. Newly returned from the USA and stationed in London, he finished the manuscript in five short months, making use of the library of the Royal Institute of British Architects (RIBA). In July of that year, he obtained an agreement from Faber & Faber to publish an English translation. However, by the end of the month Zevi was already back in Rome.[2] There he agreed a contract for an Italian version with Einaudi, a publisher headquartered in the occupied city of Turin but maintaining a small office in the recently liberated capital. *Verso un'architettura organica* was thus published for the first time in 1945, printed in Rome on thin, wartime paper. The English translation, already prepared in 1944, would finally see the light of day in 1950.[3]

In the book, Zevi argued strenuously that the Modern Movement continued to represent the only possible future for architecture. However, he acknowledged that Modernism had essentially stalled in all of the European countries in which it had first flourished. Even before the Second World War dramatically curtailed new building activity across the continent, the regimes of Germany, Italy, and the Soviet Union had either crushed or abandoned the Modernisms that had sprung from their own soils.[4] In France, he suggested, the situation was more alarming still. There, the downfall of the Modern Movement came not from above but from within; a result of inherent weaknesses and contradictions that could no longer be ignored. Over-insistence upon functionalism, Zevi charged, had led to the creation of a rigid dogma that now impeded rather than encouraged innovative design. As a result, notions that had once done important polemical work in the battle against traditionalist architecture, such as the Corbusian "machine for living in," had ossified into little more than inflexible mantras that actively hampered progress.

Indeed, Le Corbusier, Zevi argued, presented a particular problem because two of the chief tendencies within his work – his functionalism and his purist formalism – were inherently

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[1] Regarding Zevi's other activities in these years, and his involvement in the war effort, ROBERTO DULIO, *Introduzione a Bruno Zevi*, Bari, Laterza, 2008, p. 133, notes that from July to October 1943, Zevi made a series of radio programmes for the anti-fascist Giustizia e Libertà party in London, intended for broadcast into Italy. From February to June 1944, he was employed at the Headquarters of the European Theatre of Operations of the United States, at the office of the Chief Engineer Gordon Bunschaft. PAOLO SCRIVANO, *Building Transatlantic Italy: Architectural Dialogues with Postwar America*, Farnham, Ashgate, 2013, p. 86, observes that in February 1944 Zevi made a note that he had started receiving payments from the "Architectural Department" of the US Army.

[2] P. SCRIVANO, *Building Transatlantic Italy…*, cit., p. 86, notes that Zevi returned to Italy with the rank of Lieutenant in the US Army.

[3] For Zevi's early life, including the periods spent in the UK and the USA, and the genesis of his first book, see R. DULIO, *Introduzione a Bruno Zevi*, cit., pp. 3-42; Andrea Oppenheimer Dean, *Bruno Zevi on Modern Architecture*, New York, Rizzoli, 1983, pp. 17-34; and P. SCRIVANO, *Building Transatlantic* Italy…, cit., especially pp. 83-129.

[4] BRUNO ZEVI, *Verso un'architettura organica. Saggio sullo sviluppo del pensiero architettonico negli ultimi cinquant'anni*, Turin, Einaudi, 1945, pp. 29-49.

incompatible with each other.[5] The resulting tension was a useful spur to creativity in the hands of a «genius», but it was a liability when handled by Le Corbusier's disciples, who continually changed their position, justifying their buildings at one moment according to one criterion, and at the next according to the other. The public, Zevi claimed, was left exhausted.[6] Meanwhile, both formalism and functionalism encouraged a tendency to regard abstract geometry as the basis of all planning, and this had sapped the vitality from architecture and separated it off from life. Thus, while the totalitarian renunciation of Modernism in favour of various species of Classicism was, and always remained, anathema to Zevi's thinking, he was in no doubt that, if modern architecture were to be wrested away from the desiccated rationalism and functionalism that threatened it, reform was required.[7]

His proposed remedy was "organic architecture," a concept that he characterised as having been developed in America and brought to an advanced form in the buildings of Frank Lloyd Wright. Zevi was a Jewish man, and had left Italy in 1939 when the racial laws had forced him to interrupt his training at the Facoltà di Architettura in Rome. He had continued his studies abroad, briefly in England at the Architectural Association (AA), and then at Harvard's Graduate School of Design (GSD) in the USA, where he had engaged intensely with both the writings and

[5] As has sometimes been observed (e.g. R. DULIO, *Introduzione a Bruno Zevi*, cit., pp. 32-33) the title of Zevi's book makes unmistakable reference to Le Corbusier's *Vers une architecture*, perhaps signalling his desire to engage the Corbusian movement in debate. On the other hand, the title may also relate to the essay published by Aldo Garosci in the anti-Fascist journal «Quaderni Italiani» in 1944, titled *Verso una società liberalsocialista*. Zevi, who was an editor of «Quaderni Italiani» considered himself to be a liberal socialist and it may be that he saw his book as promoting the type of architecture that would befit a liberal socialist society; a society which, according to Garosci, would aim at decentralisation and a mixed-socialist economy. Cf. ALDO GAROSCI, *Verso una società liberalsocialista*, «Quaderni Italiani», IV, 1944; republished in «Quaderni del Partito d'Azione», XV, 1944, pp. 2-47. Certainly Zevi did see organic architecture as a political force. The *Associazione per l'architettura organica* (APAO), which he formed shortly after returning to Italy, initially fielded candidates, including Zevi, for local elections in Rome. See BRUNO ZEVI, *Zevi su Zevi: architettura come profezia*, Venice, Marsilio, 1993, p. 53; and R. DULIO, *Introduzione a Bruno Zevi*, cit., pp. 52-59. The constitution for APAO, which was published in 1945 in *Metron*, a journal co-founded by Zevi, declares: «Inseparable from our belief in architecture is our belief in some general principles of a political and social order». This included the view that «Alongside democratic and individual liberties, the constitution must guarantee social liberties to the whole of its citizenry. We therefore believe in socialisation of the industrial, financial, and agrarian complexes whose monopolies are contrary to the interests of the collectivity. We believe in the liberation of the labour forces and in the end of the exploitation of labour for selfish ends». Cf. *La costituzione dell'Associazione per l'Architettura Organica a Roma*, in «Metron», II, September 1945, pp. 75-76 – tr. Engl. as *Constitution of the Association for Organic Architecture in Rome APAO*, in *Architecture culture 1943-1968. A documentary anthology*, Edited by Joan Ockman with Edward Eigen, New York, Columbia Books of Architecture/Rizzoli, 1993, pp. 68-69.

[6] B. ZEVI, *Verso un'architettura organica*…, cit., pp. 42-46. Zevi identifies five aspects of modern architecture that he says were routinely criticised (with varying degrees of justification, in his view) by the French public: its reductive functionalism, its Corbusian purist formalism, its excessively abstract and theoretical approach, its debasement (at the hands of developers) into simply one more style to be applied as an exterior dressing to buildings that are otherwise in no sense modern, and its frequent failure to be truly functional in spite of its claims.

[7] Zevi uses "rationalism" quite broadly throughout his writings. Certainly, the term takes in "Rationalism", as employed to denote the architectural movement that was especially prominent in Italy in the 1920s and 1930s, but it also seems to signify any form of modern architecture guided by a strongly rational approach or favouring *a priori* postulates. While Zevi often criticised functionalism, he was only against its more dogmatic manifestations. Taken in its broader sense, he accepted that functionalism was the basis of all modern architecture, including organic architecture. Cf. B. ZEVI, *Constitution of the Association for Organic Architecture*…, cit., p. 69.

the buildings of Wright. Impressed by Wright's formal brilliance and his commitment to individual liberty, Zevi largely accepted Wright's claim that his 'organic' architecture was the true architecture of democracy; an architecture freed from oppressive dogmatism and directed solely towards the practical and spiritual needs of human beings. As such, Wright's example indicated the way forward for the new, democratic Europe – and above all the new Italy – that Zevi hoped to see. In the second half of his book, he therefore expounded Wright's principles, quoting extensively from the texts of the celebrated lectures that Wright had delivered at the RIBA in London in 1939.[8]

Alberti: Humourless Classicist

Before he considered Wright himself, however, Zevi felt it necessary to investigate other accounts of architectural organicism, and it is at this point that Leon Battista Alberti makes a crucial appearance in his text. Noting that Walter Curt Behrendt had observed that it was Burckhardt who first applied the term "organic" to architecture, and that Vasari had spoken of the Villa Farnesina as a building that was born and not made, Zevi adds in parentheses:

> Si può aggiungere che prima del Vasari, Leon Battista Alberti, un classico molto spesso privo di *sense of humour*, aveva affermato che un edificio è «quasi come un animale», cioè la forma vi si agisce dall'interno all'esterno.[9]

In the later English edition, this becomes:

> Incidentally we may add that a similar allusion occurs in the ninth book of *Architectura* by Leon Battista Alberti, a somewhat humourless classicist who was earlier than Vasari: a building, he says, is «quasi come un animale» – almost like an animal, that is to say, its form acts from within outwards.[10]

Zevi's judgment on Alberti is brief and rather harsh. Alberti, he says, was a classicist; «somewhat humourless» according to the English text, and lacking a «sense of humour» according to the Italian. In fact, it is a little surprising that Zevi's translators decided, seemingly with the author's blessing, to eliminate from the English text the phrase «sense of humour»; a common English idiom that, in his original Italian book, Zevi had pointedly left in English (the italic script serving to emphasise the foreign status of the phrase).[11] Indeed, one wonders what the purpose of this Anglocism was in the 1944 book. Perhaps it was a phrase that Zevi had heard frequently in Britain and the US, for which he felt there was no exact Italian translation. "Senso di umorismo," after all, might not always be considered exactly coextensive with "sense of humour." While the former mostly denotes a comedic tendency, the latter can also indicate a

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[8] Wright must have enjoyed a high profile among London architects following his visit in May 1939 (by which time Zevi was already in the city). The texts of the lectures that he delivered at the RIBA can be found in FRANK LLOYD WRIGHT, *An Organic Architecture*, Lund, Humphries and Co Ltd., 1939 [= 1970, 2017]. In the third lecture (p. 14) Wright says that he had visited the Architectural Association that day and spoken with a group of more than 250 young people. One can thus imagine that the AA would have been abuzz with talk of Wright when Zevi began his studies there in October of the same year.

[9] B. ZEVI, *Verso un'architettura organica*…, cit., p. 66.

[10] BRUNO ZEVI, *Verso un'architettura organica. Saggio sullo sviluppo del pensiero architettonico negli ultimi cinquant'anni*, Turin, Einaudi, 1945 – tr. Engl.: *Towards an organic architecture*, London, Faber and Faber, 1950, pp. 68-69.

[11] Zevi reviewed the English manuscript closely, making changes by hand and adding a new preface. He made no substantial modifications to the translator's rendering of this passage. Cf. Archivio Bruno Zevi (ABZ) 23, 06.03/03.

more general attitude to life, although any differences between the two idioms are hard to pin down with exactitude. In any case, it is notable that Zevi uses the English rather than the American orthography here, spelling 'humour' with a u. This might have been his publisher's choice but it might also have been his own (he did, after all, write the book in London), and it is certainly true that the British like to feel that a *sense* of humour, as distinct from humour per se, is something in which they have a particular specialism.

The hypothesis that Zevi was thinking of an attitude that he considered to be particularly British is supported elsewhere in his written work. Having used the phrase in his first book, Zevi would refer sporadically to «sense of humour» throughout his long literary career. Always, the phrase is left in the English and often the context is British.[12] It thus constitutes a *topos* that occurs in Zevi's writings of all periods. Furthermore, he seems not only to have considered a «sense of humour» to be especially British, but also to be to distinctly *un*-Italian; hence the fact that the phrase is always left in English, with the implication that it is fundamentally untranslatable. Indeed, reviewing the XIII Triennale di Milano of 1964, Zevi lamented that «gli Italiani non sono rinomati per il loro "sense of humour"; qui l'hanno forzato, cadendo naturalmente nel moralismo» (the Italians are not renowned for their "sense of humour"; here they have forced it, falling inevitably into moralism).[13] The first outing of this *topos* in *Verso un'architettura organica*, then, might be considered revealing of Zevi's broader operation in the book. It signals his intention to bring his recent, Anglo-American experience – something that he possessed and that most of his fellow countrymen did not – to bear directly on the Italian situation. As such, he performed a kind of mirroring of the many architects who, from Inigo Jones to Robert Venturi and Richard Rogers, have sought to bring their Italian experience to bear on Britain and the USA.

Certainly, Zevi considered that a sense of humour, the very thing that Alberti lacked, was central to the organic architecture that he wished to promote. The conclusion to the English version of the book differs slightly from that of the Italian, which is more focused on the task of post war reconstruction. In the Italian text, Zevi argues that «il fine di architettura è la felicità umana, con i suoi attributi di sicurezza, di stabilità, di gioia, di armonia, e di riso», (the aim of architecture is human happiness, with its attributes of safety, of stability, of joy, of harmony, and of laughter), which sounds like a kind of Wrightian updating of Vitruvius.[14] However, in the

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[12] In his bi-weekly column for «L'Espresso», Zevi accused Sir Basil Spence of having forgotten «il tradizionale "sense of humour" degli inglesi» (the traditional "sense of humour" of the English) when responding to criticisms of his plans for the British Embassy in Rome; conversely, he commended Sir James Stirling's Florey Building in Oxford as brutalism with a «sense of humour». Cf. BRUNO ZEVI, Porta Pia e l'ambasciata Britannica: *Michelangelo non parla inglese*, in *Cronache di architettura,* Roma-Bari, Laterza, vol. 8, 1973, p. 271 (originally published in «L'Espresso», 887, 26 September 1971); and ID., James Stirling ad Oxford: *delizia della «brutezza coltivata»,* in *Cronache di architettura,* Roma-Bari, Laterza, vol. 17, 1975 [=1979], p. 10 (originally published in «L'Espresso», 953, 7 January 1973). Commenting, in 1992, on the famous excoriation of modern architecture delivered by the Prince of Wales at the RIBA in 1984, Zevi noted that British architects responded to the Prince's denunciations «con il consueto "sense of humour"» (with their usual "sense of humour"). Cf. ID., *Sterzate architettoniche: conflitti e polemiche degli anni settanta-novanta*, Bari, Edizioni Dedalo, 1992, pp. 60-61. Nonetheless, «sense of humour» does not belong exclusively to the British. In ID., *Storia dell'architettura moderna*, Turin, Einaudi, 1950, p. 310, Zevi praises modern Swedish architects for their «sense of humour». In ID., *Zevi su Bruno Zevi*, cit., p. 74, he ascribes the same quality to the Austrian art historian Franz Wickhoff.

[13] ID., Baitia per milionari alla Triennale: *cinque pittori e Quattro piastrelle*, in *Cronache di architettura*, Roma-Bari, Laterza, vol. 10, 1971 (1979), p. 376 (originally published in «L'Espresso», 538, 30 August 1964).

[14] ID., *Verso un'architettura organica*…, cit., p. 151.

English edition he ends the book with an expanded paragraph in which the idea of humour features more specifically:

> The best contemporary architects both in Europe and America have made a long step forward. Their work shows an almost total absence of preconceived styles – the modernist style included – and an increased ability to conceive in terms of space three-dimensionally – or indeed in the various dimensions that a building may suggest – together with a knowledge that the space within is the real protagonist of architecture. It shows a freedom from the T-square and from geometric composition which has opened up the road to the most imaginative developments in the organisation of living space. It shows an understanding that the structural ingenuity of an architect is the contrary to the textbook mentality of many engineers. Finally, it shows a good deal of humour and a sense of human playfulness within a coherent method. It shows that man's happiness is the aim of architecture today.[15]

What might the significance of «humour» be in this context? There seems to be some elision between buildings and architects here and it is not clear in which of them humour is presumed chiefly to reside. The work reveals humour but the work is seen as evidence of the quality of the architect. Undeniably, it is true that Zevi's great hero, Frank Lloyd Wright – one of the few non-British persons to be credited directly with a «sense of humour» in all of Zevi's writings – had a talent for witty one-liners. For example, having been called to testify as a witness in court, Wright was asked to state his profession and said «world's greatest architect». Chided afterwards by his wife Olgivanna for this boastful display, he replied: «You forget, Olgivanna, I was under oath».[16] There is certainly a kind of humourousness here; one that relates to what we might call the "doubleness" of mental life and the ability to see and to take pleasure in that doubleness. Wright here gives free reign to his megalomania while simultaneously reflecting on it with an amusement that suggests detachment. This would to some degree correspond with the account of humour given by Sigmund Freud, another exile who, like Zevi, had left continental Europe as the 1930s drew to a close and travelled eventually to London. Freud's book of 1905, *Der Witz und seine Beziehung zum Unbewussten* (usually translated as *Jokes and Their Relation to the Unconscious*), remained 40 years on, when Zevi was writing, one of the most authoritative treatments of the subject of humour. Zevi had been

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[15] ID., *Towards an Organic Architecture*…, cit., p. 145.

[16] Cf. FRANKLIN TOKER, *Fallingwater rising: Frank Lloyd Wright, E. J. Kaufmann, and America's most extraordinary house*, New York, Knopf, 2003, p. 102. Nonetheless, Wright's humour may have been rather limited. One sometimes has the impression that this joke (or half-joke), in which Wright claims to be the greatest architect in the world, might have been the only one he knew. In BRUNO ZEVI, L'ultimo libro di Wright: *Testamento o sermone da Taliesin*, in *Cronache di architettura,* Roma-Bari, Laterza, vol. 5, 1978, p. 8 (originally published in «L'Espresso», 191, 5 January 1958) Zevi quotes Wright, reminiscing about his life and saying: "Fortunatamente possedevo un innato sense of humour […] perché altrimenti, essendo il più grande architetto della storia antica e moderna, e sapendolo, sarei diventato superbo» (Fortunately I possessed an innate sense of humour […] because otherwise, being the greatest architect in all history, ancient and modern, and knowing it, I might have become big-headed). In ID., *Zevi su Zevi*…, cit., pp. 211-212, Zevi recalls a meal in Italy at which Wright apparently said: «Ecco, molte persone pensano che io sia il più grande architetto di tutti i tempi. E, poiché io sono davvero il più grande architetto della storia, che succederebbe se non avessi sense of humour?» (Look, many people say that I am the greatest architect of all time. And, since I really am the greatest architect in history, what would happen if I didn't have a sense of humour?). In fact, Wright's lectures to the RIBA do reveal a degree of humour, although it is often drowned out by his combative and megalomaniacal tone.

interested in Freud's work at least from the time that he left Italy, and it might therefore be instructive briefly to consider Freud's position.[17]

Freud on Humour

According to Freud, humour, as distinct from jokes and comedy, involves a kind of personal overcoming that demonstrates a high degree of psychic potency.[18] Where circumstances would normally produce a particular, negative affect in an individual, the humorous person is able to effect a transformation so that a different kind of affect (a humorous one) is produced instead. This gives rise to pleasure, much of which is found in the act of transformation itself. As the most basic example, Freud points to the gallows humour of a «rogue» who, being led out to execution on a Monday morning, remarks to himself, «well, this week's beginning nicely!»[19] Here the expected affect – fear, despair, and so forth – is not banished altogether (the situation, after all, is acknowledged) but it is largely transformed in a way that represents a kind of victory for the rogue, who is thereby able partially to free himself from the grip of even this most fearful event. For Freud, humour is thus a «defensive process» of the mind: in fact, it is the *highest* form of all such defensive processes. As he says, «it scorns to withdraw the ideational content bearing the distressing affect from conscious attention as repression does, and thus surmounts the automatism of defence. It brings this about by finding a means of withdrawing the energy from the release of unpleasure that is already in preparation and of transforming it, by discharge, into pleasure».[20]

One might plausibly argue that by this definition (only one of many and hardly the most up to date) Alberti does sometimes lack humour, even as he possesses comedy.[21] There is perhaps an excess of raw affect in Alberti's writing, a surfeit of hurt and anger that is left untransformed, even in many of his most comic moments. At times, this might be seen to erode his humour from within, although it also perhaps renders it all the more effective when it comes off successfully. Alberti was of course interested in every kind of self-knowing and self-overcoming; his moral dialogues such as the *Theogenius* and the *Profugiorum* are devoted

[17] In later years, Zevi claimed that he had been interested in psychoanalysis since his student days. Cf. ANDREA OPPENHEIMER DEAN, *Bruno Zevi on Modern Architecture*, cit., p. 20. Zevi owned several of Freud's works. Annotations to his copy of SIGMUND FREUD, *Civilization, War and Death: Selections from Three Works by Sigmund Freud*, ed. John Rickman, London, The Hogarth Press, 1939, supplying basic vocabulary, suggest that he must have read parts of the book early on, before his English rapidly improved in the USA. Zevi considered Freud to be a seminal figure in modern culture and included the publication of *The Interpretation of Dreams* as a key event in the chronology at the back of his *Storia dell'architetura moderna*, cit., p. 706. In BRUNO ZEVI, *Architettura e storiografia*, Milan, Libreria Editrice Politecnica Tamburini, 1950, pp. 94-95, Zevi brought Freud to bear on his discussion of prehistoric architecture and emphasised the importance of psychological questions for architecture in general.

[18] See SIGMUND FREUD, *The standard edition of the complete psychological works of Sigmund Freud*, translated into English and edited by James Strachey *et alii*, London, Hogarth Press and the Institute of Psychoanalysis, vol. VIII: *Jokes and their relation to the unconscious*, 1960 [= 1995], pp. 228-235.

[19] *Ibid*., p. 229.

[20] *Ibid*., p. 233.

[21] Freud argues that comedy arises when we observe the difference between the level of mental exertion that it would require for us to complete and action, and the far greater level that is required by the person we are observing. The «surplus» exertion is released as comic pleasure. Cf. *ibid*., pp. 181-228. For a concise summary of Freud's account of jokes, comedy, and humour, and also a discussion of the problems inherent in Freud's positions, see JOHN MORREALL, *Comic Relief: A Comprehensive Philosophy of Humor*, Chichester, Wiley-Backwell, 2009, pp. 17-23.

precisely to this topic and many of his works might be said to address psychoanalytical themes *ante litteram*.[22] But it is questionable whether in all of Alberti's strategies, which include such things as reading the comic writers of antiquity, humour, in this sense, does occur.[23]

It is doubtful, however, that this is what Zevi had in mind. There is no indication of engagement with, or awareness of, Alberti's moral writings or comic works in Zevi's text. Rather, it seems clear that it is Alberti's *Classicism* that is at the root of his alleged humourlessness. And here we might discern a different kind of failure to detect and to delight in "doubleness." For Freud, humour, comedy, and jokes, all function through a kind of doubling – a "looking both ways" in which contraction, substitution, displacement, and inversion are key operations – just as they are in dreamwork, which, in this way, humour closely resembles. The fruits of these actions are various forms of psychic economy (a saving on inhibition in the case of jokes, on ideation in the case of comedy, and on feeling in the case of humour) which results in surplus "energy" being released as laughter or humorous pleasure.[24]

Humour, according to this view, can only function in the context of fluidity, ambivalence, and a distanced appreciation of the non-absolute qualities of whatever systems and structures it engages with. And this would be quite at odds with Classicism as Zevi understood it. A vehement and lifelong anticlassicist (a position that he shared with many Italian modernists of his generation), Classicism was for Zevi precisely the architecture of rigidity and inflexibility, of given norms, a priori geometries, and canons that will brook no challenge.[25] It was the architecture that looks only in one direction, never two simultaneously, and that prizes immutability above change, distaining transformation and growth.[26] In that sense, Alberti's

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[22] The theme of self-knowledge is addressed in *Momus*. In one of the most significant passages in all of Alberti's writings, the fable of the masks, Charon tells Gelastus that he will teach him «to know thyself» (*ipsum te nosse*). Cf., LEON BATTISTA ALBERTI, *Momus*, ed., Virginia Brown and Sarah Knight, tr. Engl. by Sarah Knight, Cambridge, Mass., Harvard University Press, 2003, IV, 42, pp. 306-307. Self-overcoming is a central theme of the *Vita*, with Alberti detailing how he surmounted his own physical and mental limitations in a number of different ways. Cf., RICCARDO FUBINI – ANNA MENCI GALLORINI, *L'autobiografia di Leon Battista Alberti: Studio e edizione*, in «Rinascimento», s. II, XII, 1972, pp. 21-78.

[23] In the *Theogenius*, Teogenio reports that Genipatro (a model of self-mastery) extolled the life of solitude, saying that he had the company of excellent ancient authors: «ché se forse mi dilettanto e' iocosi e festivi, tutti e' comici, Plauto, Terrenzio, e gli altri ridicoli, Apulegio, Luciano, Marziale e simili facetissimi eccitano in me quanto io voglio riso" (if perhaps I take pleasure in the playful and cheerful ones, all the comics – Plautus, Terrence, and the other funny ones, Apuleius, Lucian, Martial, and similar witty writers – will make me laugh as much as I want). Cf. LEON BATTISTA ALBERTI, *Opere volgari*, ed. by Cecil Grayson, Bari, Laterza, vol. II: *Rime e trattati morali*, 1966, p. 74

[24] S. FREUD, *The standard edition of the complete psychological works…*, cit., vol. VIII, p. 236, states that: «The pleasure in jokes has seemed to us to arise from an economy in expenditure upon inhibition, the pleasure in the comic from an economy of expenditure upon ideation (upon cathexis) and the pleasure in humour from an economy of expenditure upon feeling».

[25] ROMY GOLAN, *The critical moment: Lionello Venturi in America*, in *Artists, intellectuals, and World War II. The Pontigny Encounters at Mount Holyoke College, 1942-1944*, edited by Christopher Benfey and Karen Remmler, Amherst and Boston, University of Massachusetts Press, 2006, p. 126, observes that «anti-classicism had become almost a prerequisite for early-twentieth-century modernists» in Italy. While, as discussed below, it might sometimes be associated with anti-fascist politics, it was not confined to anti-fascists «and indeed was shared by one of the most prominent fascist artists at the time, Mario Sironi».

[26] In later years, Zevi would enlist psychoanalytical theories to attack central principles of Classicism such as symmetry. These efforts sometimes took a crude and reductive form. For example, in BRUNO ZEVI, *Il linguaggio moderno dell'architettura. Guida al codice anticlassico*, Turin, Einaudi, 1973, pp. 21-22, we read that «La simmetria è un'invariante del classicismo. Dunque l'asimmetria lo è del linguaggio moderno. Estirpare il

maxim that a beautiful building is one in which nothing may be added or removed except for the worse might seem to encapsulate the essence of classicism just as it disallows any of the operations of doubling, substitution and displacement that are essential, at least according to the Freudian account, for the operation of humour.[27] A passage in *Saper vedere l'architettura* (1948), Zevi's most popular and widely translated work, is illuminating in this regard. Considering English Gothic architecture, Zevi writes:

> L'achitettura gotica inglese … presenta una qualità assolutamente moderna, cui diamo il nome di organica: quella dell'espansione, della possibilità di crescita, dell'articolazione degli edifici … le cattedrali inglesi si congiungono ad una serie di altri fabbricati, si prolungano in essi e li dominano. Lo stesso carattere si presenta in altri temi, nei monasteri, nei castelli, nelle case. È il carattere narrativo dell'architettura e del''urbanistica medievale in cui il metodo di un discorso continuato nel tempo, attraverso persone e generazioni diverse, accomunate solo da una profonda coerenza linguistica, profonda ma varia, libera, episodica, si oppone alla sentenza univoca delle concezioni classiche, agli assi minori e agli assi maggiori che squadrano le città, e a tutti gli edifice, di qualunque epoca essi siano, in cui vive un solo valore, una sola bellezza – quella dell'insieme; in cui nulla s può sottrarre, nulla aggiungere; in cui, mentre brilla l'idea e le personalità, manca l'espressione del processo vitale con la descrizione della sua progressiva ricchezza storica.
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> (English Gothic architecture … had an entirely modern quality, which we might call *organic*: that of expansion, of the possibility of growth, of the joining of buildings … the English cathedrals are often integrally connected with a series of buildings, are extended in them and in turn dominate them. The same characteristic is also seen in other types of buildings, such as monasteries, castles and houses. This reflected the narrative character of medieval architecture and town planning, which was like a continuous tale told by individuals of

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feticcio della simmetria significa percorrere un lungo tratto della strada che conduce all'architettura contemporanea» (Symmetry is an invariable part of Classicism. Thus, asymmetry is an invariable part of the modern language. To eradicate the fetish of symmetry, therefore, is to travel a long way down the road that leads to contemporary architecture). Among the criticisms levelled at symmetry, Zevi asserts that «Simmetria = bisogno spasmodico di sicurezza, paura della flessibilità, dell'indeterminazione, della relatività, della crescita, insomma del tempo vissuto. Lo schizofrenico non tollera il tempo vissuto; per controllare l'angoscia, esige l'immobilità. Il classicismo è l'architettura della schizophrenia conformista. Simmetria = passività o, in termini freudiani, omosessualità. Lo spiega uno psicanalista in un "argomento" di questo libro. Parti *omo*loghe, non *etero*nome. Terrore infantile del padre – l'accademia è una figura paterna, protettrice del piccolo vile – che ti castrerà se aggredisci una figura eteronoma, la donna, la madre. Nel momento in cui ci si passivizza accettando la simmetria, l'angoscia sembra attenuarsi perché il padre non ti minaccia piú, ti possiede» (Symmetry = spasmodic need for security, fear of flexibility, of indeterminacy, of relativity, of growth, and ultimately of lived time. The schizophrenic cannot tolerate lived time; to control his anguish, he requires immobility. Classicism is the architecture of conformist schizophrenia. Symmetry = passivity or, in Freudian terms, homosexuality. A psychoanalyst explains it in a discussion in this book. Parts that are *homo*logous, not *hetero*nymous. Infantile terror of the father – the academy is a paternal figure, protector of the cowardly and small – which will castrate you if you assail a heteronymous figure, the woman, the mother. In the moment in which we pacify ourselves, accepting symmetry, the anguish seems to recede because the father no longer threatens you, he possesses you). These arguments are among the least compelling that Zevi deployed against Classicism in all of his extensive writings.

[27] The classic statement on beauty occurs in Book VI, chapter 2 of *De re aedificatoria*: « […] sit pulchritudo quidem certa cum ratione concinnitas universarum partium in eo, cuius sint, ita ut addi aut diminui aut immutari possit nihil, quin improbabilius reddatur» (Beauty is that reasoned harmony of all the parts within a body, so that nothing may be added, taken away, or altered, but for the worse). Cf. LEON BATTISTA ALBERTI, *L'architettura [De re aedificatoria]*, edited and translated into Italian by Giovanni Orlandi, VI, 2, vol. II, Milan, Polifilo, 1966, p. 447; and LEON BATTISTA ALBERTI, *On the Art of Building in Ten Books*, translated by Joseph Rykwert, Neil Leach, and Robert Tavernor, Cambridge, Mass., the M.I.T. Press, 1988 [= 1997], p. 156.

> successive generations, freely varied and episodic, but unified by a profound linguistic bond. It was in direct opposition to the single, isolated statements of classical conception, to the minor and major axes which divided a city into orthogonal grids, and to all those buildings, regardless of period, whose value lay in only one beauty: that of the ensemble, permitting neither subtraction nor addition. In a word, it was opposed to all those static forms, which, however aglow with ideas and personalities, did not express the rich, vital process of historical progression).[28]

Here, the Albertian maxim that a beautiful building is one that may undergo no change except to its detriment is clearly invoked (although it is not attributed to Alberti) and it is characterised as the opposite of all that is organic. In *Verso un'architettura organica*, Zevi described organic architecture as a movement which, although building upon a number of pre-existing tendencies, was essentially new and linked to the Chicago School of Sullivan and Wright (though also taking in some European architects whose work might seem to be in sympathy with it, such as Alvar Aalto).[29] His willingness to grant the status of «organic» to English gothic thus constitutes high praise indeed. The passage seems almost to re-stage, in more expansive terms, Zevi's position on Alberti in his first book, comparing the lifeless intransigence of immutable "Albertian" Classicism with a dynamic form of English organicism that might perhaps be related to the "English" sense of humour that Zevi had previously invoked.

"Classico" and "Classicista"

This reading contains many things to which we might object: chief among them that "Classicism" may be characterised in such simple, even simplistic, terms; and that it is legitimate or even meaningful to consider Alberti a classicist – a label that might strike us as glaringly anachronistic. These objections occurred also to Zevi. In fact, he seems continually to have vacillated over whether Alberti was a classicist at all. As we have seen, Zevi began, in the first edition of *Verso un'achitettura organica* by calling Alberti «un classico», a word coextensive with both the English "classic" and "classicist" (and the adjective "classical"). The English translator rendered this as «classicist» and Zevi offered no disagreement. Indeed, Zevi's own copy of the 1945 Italian book, which he marked clearly as «la prima copia» (the first copy) displays extensive handwritten corrections, perhaps made for a never realised second edition.[30] These include the frequent replacement of the ambiguous "classico" with the more emphatic "classicista" (classicist), although this substitution does not occur in the passage on Alberti. This suggests an overall hardening of the anti-classicist position. It is notable, however, that the

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[28] BRUNO ZEVI, *Saper vedere l'architettura. Saggio sull'interpretazione spaziale dell'architettura*, Turin, Einaudi, 1948 [1956], pp. 80-81 – tr. Engl. by Milton Gendel: *Architecture as Space: How to Look at Architecture*, edited by Joseph A. Barry, New York, Horizon Press, 1957 [1974], pp. 110-111. I have slightly modified the translation so that it reflects more closely the sense of the original Italian in the crucial penultimate sentence.

[29] B. ZEVI, *Towards an organic architecture*…, cit., pp. 10-11. In general, Zevi seeks to avoid dogmatic definitions of organic architecture. Whether or not a building is organic is, for him, a question of degree rather than hard and fast rules. Most important is that the building should primarily be conceived of spatially and that it should address the physical, psychological, and spiritual needs of its occupants. Zevi stressed the flexible nature of the category in his speech to the *I Congresso Nazionale delle APAO* in 1947. Cf. B. ZEVI, *Zevi su Zevi*…, cit., 55-63.

[30] In B. ZEVI, *Storia dell'architettura moderna*, cit., pp. 13-15, Zevi explains that it would have made no sense to publish a second edition of *Verso un'architettura organica*, since the book was so bound up with the particular context of the last years of the war. Instead, the germ of the historical project that is present in Zevi's first book is taken up and expanded in *Storia dell'architettura moderna*, which includes some extensive passages taken more or less verbatim from the earlier publication. For the relationship between the two texts, and their place in Zevi's broader historical project, cf. R. DULIO, *Introduzione a Bruno Zevi*, cit., p. 82f.

section of *Saper vedere l'architettura* quoted above immediately precedes a discussion of quattrocento architecture in which Zevi appears to go out of his way to absolve Alberti of the charge of Classicism. Here, he offers high praise for the buildings of both Brunelleschi and Alberti, which he regards as authentic expressions of the spatial conceptions of their day. Despite having condemned Alberti's definition of beauty only a few pages previously (albeit without mentioning Alberti) Zevi concludes his discussion of Sant'Andrea in Mantua with the words: «un solo percorso, una sola idea, una sola legge, una sola unità di misura: questa è la volontà, umana ed umanistica, classica e non mai classicista, dell'architettura del Rinascimento» (a single path, a single idea, a single law, a single unit of measure – this was the human and humanistic, the classic, but never classicist, will of Renaissance architecture).[31]

In differentiating the "classico" from the "classicista," Zevi availed himself of a fundamental distinction in the aesthetics of Benedetto Croce; one that was also important for Crocean art historians such as Zevi's friend Lionello Venturi.[32] However, just two years later, Zevi seemed to lean once more in the opposite direction when he re-published lengthy extracts of *Verso un'architettura organica* as part of his *Storia dell'architettura moderna*, including the passage on Alberti. Introducing some small but significant changes that render his judgment sharper and more polemical, Zevi wrote:

> si potrebbe aggiungere che, prima del Vasari, Leon Battista Alberti, pur assertore del classicismo e architetto spesso privo di *sense of humour*, aveva affermato che un edificio e "quasi come un anmale," cioè la forma vi si sviluppa dall'interno verso l'esterno.[33]
>
> (one could add that, before Vasari, Leon Battista Alberti, despite being a promoter of Classicism, and an architect often lacking a sense of humour, had asserted that a building is "almost like an animal," that is to say that the form develops from the inside outwards).

Alberti is here described not as «un classico» but as a promoter of Classicism; something that is seen to be at odds with his organicism, since he is said to have expounded his proto-organic doctrine despite (*pur*) his classicising tendencies.

This adds up to a confusing picture, with Zevi himself seeming undecided about Alberti's true character. At the root of this appears to be a fairly sharp distinction between Alberti as an architect and as a theorist. In *Saper vedere l'architettura*, it is Alberti the builder who is praised; in *Verso un'architettura organica* and *Storia dell'architettura moderna* it is Alberti the treatise-writer who is condemned. Indeed, Zevi goes on, in *Saper vedere l'architettura*, to associate Alberti with the fruitless search for an absolute standard of beauty, characterising him as helping to inaugurate a scission between theory and practice that would go on to become ever more marked during the sixteenth century.[34] For Zevi, it seems, Alberti did not simply cause

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[31] B. ZEVI, *Saper vedere l'architettura*…, p. 86. I have modified Gendel's English translation. Cf. ID., *Architecture as Space*…, pp. 115-116.

[32] For Croce the "classic" denoted the formal element, and it was present in the good poetry of all ages. Classicism, on the other hand, as an imitation of the manner of the Greeks and Romans, was associated with excessive formalism, rigidity, and dogmatism. For a summary of this position see GIAN N. G. ORSINI, *Benedetto Croce: philosopher of art and literary critic*, Carbondale, Southern Illinois University Press, 1961, pp. 192-193. See also LIONELLO VENTURI, *Il gusto dei primitivi*, Bologna, Zanichelli, 1926, pp. 5-6; and R. GOLAN, *The critical moment: Lionello Venturi in America*…, cit., p. 126.

[33] B. ZEVI, *Storia dell'architettura moderna*, cit., p. 332.

[34] Commenting on the treatise-writers of the cinquecento, Zevi observes that, if we were to take them literally, they might almost appear like the pedantic Neo-Classicists of later centuries. However they are saved, in his

such a scission; it was in fact something that he harboured in his innermost being. This divide is perhaps reflected in Zevi's own use of materials relating to Alberti. He carefully assembled photographs of Alberti's buildings as part of an album of quattrocento architecture, sometimes cutting the images directly out of books [FIG. 1]. This suggests a process of intense visual and architectural thinking about Alberti's works. On the other hand, his copies of *De re aedificatoria* show little sign of having been read.

eyes, by a genial hypocrisy that allowed them to display a healthy disregard for antiquity in their buildings even as they revered it in their writings. Zevi's positions to some extent echo those of Wright, who in his Kahn lectures observed that Palladio, Vitruvius, and Vignola all seem very dead, while Brunelleschi, Bramante, and Sansovino appear less so. Notably, the first three are all the authors of treatises. Cf. Frank Lloyd Wright, *Modern architecture. Being the Kahn lectures for 1930*, Princeton, Princeton University Press, 1931 [=2008], p. 38.

Humour and Incongruity

Insofar as he was the author of an architectural treatise, then, Zevi did consider Alberti to be a classicist, and it seems clear that he also considered Classicism and humourlessness to go hand in hand. The Freudian account of humour might throw some light on this position. However, other accounts might prove more helpful still. Indeed, it is notable that the most widely accepted understandings of humour revolve not around the notion of "release" (in Freud's case the release of psychic energy) but around incongruity. "Incongruity theories" argue that humour arises when our expectations are confounded, when we are confronted by something that "does not fit" our usual mental patterns, or when we encounter conjunctions and juxtapositions that seem to fly in the face of reason (although clearly humour does not arise in *all* such cases). Such accounts were first formally articulated in the eighteenth century and are widely expounded today, but their roots stretch back to Antiquity.[35] Sometimes cited in this regard is the well-known passage of Horace's *Ars poetica* in which the poet asks:

> If a painter chose to join a human head to the neck of a horse, and to spread feathers of many a hue over limbs picked up now here now there, so that what at the top is a lovely woman ends below in a black and ugly fish, could you, my friends, if favoured with a private view, refrain from laughing?[36]

This passage was popular with Renaissance theorists of art and architecture. It is evoked by Alberti in both *De re aedificatoria* and *De pictura*; and in the former it is closely connected to the section of the treatise that Zevi refers to in his remarks on Alberti.[37]

The quotation that Zevi uses, which says that a building is «quasi come un'animale», comes from Book IX, chapter 5 of Cosimo Bartoli's translation of *De re aedificatoria*.[38] It is a pivotal passage of the treatise, in which Alberti addresses the topic of beauty – something that he had put aside after brief consideration in Book 6 and promised to return to later on. Having introduced the simile between buildings and animals (which he attributes to ancient experts) Alberti observes that judgments on beauty depend upon a reasoning faculty that is innate in the mind:

> Est enim in formis profecto et figuris aedificorium aliquid excellens perfectumque natura[e], quod animum excitat evestigioque sentiatur. Credo equidem formam dignitatem venustatem et quaevis similia in his consistere, quae si ademeris aut immutaris, illico vitientur et

[35] MORREALL, *Comic Relief…*, cit., pp. 9-15, provides a concise discussion of incongruity theories and their development throughout the history of philosophy. He cites James Beattie (*An Essay on Laughter and Ludicrous Composition*), Immanuel Kant (*Critique of Judgment*), Arthur Schopenhauer (*The World as Will and Representation*), and Søren Kierkegaard (*Concluding Unscientific Postscript to Philosophical Fragments*) as important early developers of these arguments. Forerunners in Antiquity include Aristotle (*Rhetoric* 3.2), Cicero (*Orator* II, 63), and Horace (*Ars poetica* l. 1-5). Morreall discusses a number of more recent versions of incongruity theories and partly incorporates incongruity into his own account of humour.

[36] Horace, *Ars poetica*, in *Satires, Epistles and Ars poetica*, translated into English by H. Rushton Fairclough, pp. 451-451, l. 1-5: «Humano capiti cervicem pictor equinam iungere si velit, et varias inducere plumas undique conlatis membris, ut turpiter atrum desinat in piscem mulier formosa superne, spectatum admissi risum teneatis, amici?»

[37] Cf. LEON BATTISTA ALBERTI, *On painting and on sculpture. The Latin texts of De pictura and De statua*, translated by Cecil Grayson, London, Phaidon, 1972, pp. 72f.

[38] LEON BATTISTA ALBERTI, *L'architettura di Leon Battista Alberti. Tradotta in lingua Fiorentina da Cosimo Bartoli, Gentilhuomo, & Academico Fiorentino. Con la aggiunta de' disegni*, Venice, Francesco Franceschi, 1565, IX, 5, p. 336.

> pereant. Hoc si persuadetur, haud erit quidem prolixum ea recensere, quae adimi augeri mutarive praesertim in formis atque figuris possint. Constat enim corpus omne partibus certis atque suis, ex quibus nimirum si quam ademeris aut maiorem minoremve redegeris aut locis transposueris non decentibus, fiet ut, quod isto in corpore ad formae decentiam congruebat, vitietur.
>
> (For within the form and figure of a building there resides some natural excellence and perfection that excites the mind and is immediately recognised by it. I myself believe that form, dignity, grace, and other such qualities depend on it, and as soon as anything is removed or altered, these qualities are themselves weakened and perish. Once we are convinced of this, it will not take long to discuss what may be removed, enlarged, or altered, in the form and figure. For every body consists entirely of parts that are fixed and individual; if these are removed, enlarged, reduced, or transferred somewhere inappropriate, the very composition will be spoiled that gives the body its seemly appearance.)[39]

Alberti thus reasserts his view that a beautiful building is one in which determined relationships exist that cannot be altered but for the worse. And there can be no doubt that his overriding concern here is with congruity (as is emphasised in the final sentence by his use of the verb *congruo* itself). After making these remarks, Alberti discusses how determined relationships might be established through attention to *numerus*, *finitio* and *colocatio*, resulting, in the best case scenario, in *concinnitas*: «the absolute and fundamental rule in nature», and «the main object of the art of building, and the source of her dignity, charm, authority, and worth.»[40] For Alberti, congruity thus stands at the very heart of the *res aedificatoria*.

That said, congruity comes in many different forms, and it must therefore be asked with what species of congruity Alberti is concerned. The answer becomes clear in the seventh chapter of Book 9, where Alberti summons the spirit of Horace to warn of practices that ought to be avoided:

> Suo quidem positae loco partes etiam minimae, quae per opus sint, aspectu venustatem afferunt; alieno autem atque non se digno et condecenti loco positae vilescunt, si elegantes sunt, sin autem minus, vituperantur. Eccum et in operibus naturae illa quidem; et si forte catello asini auriculam fronti adpegerit, aut si pede prodibit quispiam praegrandi aut manu altera vastiore altera vero perpusilla, is quidem informis sit. Et oculo spectari altero cesio altero nigranti ipsis etiam iumentis non probatur: tam ex natura est, ut dextera sinistris omni parilitate correspondeant.
>
> When even the smallest parts of a building are set in their proper place, they add charm; but when positioned somewhere strange, ignoble, or inappropriate, they will be devalued if elegant, ruined if they are anything else. Look at nature's own works: for if a puppy had an ass's ear on its forehead, or if someone had one huge foot, or one hand vast and the other tiny, he would look deformed. Even cattle are not liked if they have one blue eye and the other black: so natural is it that right should match left exactly.[41]

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[39] L. B. ALBERTI, *L'architettura*…, cit., IX, 5, vol. 2, pp. p. 813; and L. B. ALBERTI, *On the art of building in ten books*, cit., p. 302.

[40] ID., *On the art of building in ten books*, cit., IX, 5, pp. 302-303; cf. ID., *L'architettura*…, cit., p. 817: «[…] concinnitas, hoc est absoluta primariaque ratio naturae […] Hanc ipsam maiorem in modum res aedificatoria sectatur; hac sibi dignitatem gratiam auctoritatem vendicat atque in precio est.»

[41] ID., *L'architettura*…, cit., IX, 7, pp. 837, 839 ; and ID., *On the art of building in ten books*, cit., p. 310.

Like Horace, Alberti provides examples of absurd and incongruous mixtures here, although he also warns that even cattle with different coloured eyes will not be favoured. As the chapter progresses, however, it becomes clear that it is not mixtures *per se* that Alberti has in mind but rather formal properties arising from the arrangement of parts within a work. That is to say, Alberti is not concerned with canons that cannot be breached and typologies that must remain separate. Rather, he is thinking of composition, urging the architect to ensure that «even the minutest elements are so arranged in their level, alignment, number, shape, and appearance, that right matches left, top matches bottom, adjacent matches adjacent, and equal matches equal».[42]

If humour is considered to arise from incongruity then one might well posit that such a conception of architecture – which abhors incongruity as the worst of all things – is indeed humourless. In fact, this passage, which so clearly recalls Vitruvian *decor*, might rather be identified with what Zevi seems to have considered humour's opposing vice: moralism.[43] This is not to argue that Zevi made his remarks with a formalised position in mind, judging Alberti according a worked-out theory of humour based on incongruity. It is not even to suggest a deep or extensive reading of Alberti's architectural treatise on Zevi's part.[44] Instead, it is to suggest that Zevi had some acquaintance with these passages and that he found within them an

[42] ID., *On the art of building in ten books*, cit., p. 310.; cf. ID., *L'architettura*…, cit., p. 839: «Quare in primis observabimus, ut ad libellam et lineam et numeros et formam et faciem etiam minutissima quaeque disponantur, ita ut mutuo dextera sinistris, summa infimis, proxima proximis, aequalia aequalibus». ALINA A. PAYNE, *The architectural treatise in the Italian Renaissance: architectural invention, ornament, and literary culture*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1999, pp. 70-87, offers a thorough analysis of the issue of *decorum* and licence in Alberti's treatise, including Alberti's use of Horace's *Ars poetica*. She observes (p. 78) that Alberti shuns the notion of fixed canons and is enthusiastic about new inventions and unprecedented mixtures. His *decorum* relates more closely to that of rhetoric, «as concerned with the external conditions of the speech» than to that of poetics, as «concerned with the *verosimile* and the internal coherence of the poem». Commenting (pp. 81-82) on another passage of *De re aedificatoria* (I, 9) in which Alberti evokes Horace's injunction against incongruous mixtures, Payne notes that Alberti's «reference to monsters is not ultimately prompted by a concern with the integrity of the species (as it is for Horace), but by a concern with measureable placement – that is, with building syntax. Although he mentions monsters, they are of scale and bilateral symmetry, not of kind; Alberti talks more of fronts and backs, left and right, siting and scale, judicious manipulation of ratios in the manner of music, than of an assemblage governed by a form of internal coherence. No equivalents of fishtails added to human torsos are at issue here».

[43] A. PAYNE, *The architectural treatise*…, cit., p. 77, notes that although Alberti does not utilise the Vitruvian category of *decor*, the term does nonetheless find some resonance in his treatise.

[44] The various editions of *De re aedificatoria* that remain at the Fondazione Bruno Zevi, including Bartoli's translation, show little sign of extensive consultation (although Zevi may have possessed other copies that are no longer there). It is possible that Zevi's reading of Alberti was guided by his reading of Lionello Venturi, who quotes exactly the same lines regarding a building being «quasi come un'animale» and who argues that this ultimately leads Alberti into a discussion of beauty as a form of consonance between parts. Venturi, who saw Alberti as a divided thinker, argued for the superiority of the *De pictura* over the *De re aedificatoria*. In his view, the latter was less original and more deferential to the authority of ancient writers and ancient buildings. Thus, Venturi asserted, where Alberti had granted full autonomy to modern art in *De pictura*, he withheld it from architecture (and also by extension criticism) in *De re aedificatoria*, and in so doing he encapsulated «tutto il dramma del gusto italiano». Cf. L. VENTURI, *Il gusto dei primitivi*, cit., pp. 87-88. Many years later, Zevi summarised these arguments and quoted Venturi's views regarding the superiority of *De pictura* over *De re aedificatoria* as they are set out in *The History of Art Criticism*. Cf. BRUNO ZEVI, *Profilo della critica architettonica*, Rome, Newton and Compton, 2003, p. 13; and LIONELLO VENTURI, *Storia della critica dell'arte* – tr. Engl. by Charles Marriott: *History of art criticism*, New York, E. P. Dutton and Company, 1936, p. 90.

overriding concern with congruity; something that he associated with the classical and the inorganic, and that he intuitively considered to exclude the possibility of humour.[45]

Zevi was also conscious, however, that these passages contained the observation that a building is like an animal, which he understood to mean that its form must be conceived spatially, from the inside outwards. He regarded this maxim as pointing towards a true form of organicism (as opposed to what he called the «naturalistic» and «biological» fallacies, often found in Renaissance writings on architecture, in which architects are urged either to imitate nature or to base their designs in a very literal way on human or animal anatomy).[46] This provides some insight into the confusing picture of Alberti that emerges from Zevi's early texts. As an architect, Alberti was to be applauded as classic but not classicistic. As a treatise-writer he was to be condemned as a classicist; an exponent of a humourless doctrine that was in opposition to organicism. Yet even within his treatise, indeed in the most classicising section of it, where the importance of congruity is most fully asserted, proto-organic elements could nonetheless be found. Hence, perhaps, Zevi's constant shifts of emphasis regarding Alberti in these years.

Life and Death

Zevi engages here with a discussion regarding modern architecture and its relationship to the Renaissance that was current at the time he was writing. This debate, to which figures such as Sigfried Geidion had already contributed from the perspective of contemporary architecture, would find perhaps its most significant moment with the publication of a work of architectural history in 1949: Rudolf Wittkower's *Architectural principles in the age of humanism*, which, as has been demonstrated, was eagerly adopted by a number of modernist thinkers.[47] Zevi in some senses opposes the kinds of positions articulated by Wittkower, who

[45] Zevi's own view might itself be considered rather humourless in this regard. His reading of Alberti is a peculiarly literalist one. What he takes to be hard and fast rules are, arguably, nothing of the sort. After all, Alberti's maxim that a beautiful building is one that will suffer no change except for the worse simply defers the crucial question of what is better and what is worse. On this see CASPAR PEARSON, *Humanism and the urban world: Leon Battista Alberti and the Renaissance city*, University Park, Penn State University Press, 2011, p. 166. Moreover, since Alberti states that perfection is rarely achieved, even by nature herself, it is logical to assume that most buildings can always undergo change for the better. A. PAYNE, *The architectural treatise…*, cit., pp. 77, 82, observes that Alberti's categories «give no real guidance for artistic judgment whose definition remains abstract» and that «nowhere does he describe a unitary logic that ties the ornamental screen of a building with all its parts into a single system even if he intimates that such a logic existed; and even if he admonishes that assemblages not be "incongruous," he does not state what makes them "congruous" instead, nor wherein resides "congruity"».

[46] B. ZEVI, *Verso un'architettura organica…*, cit., pp. 71-75. In the latter case he cites a tradition running from Michelangelo all the way to Geoffrey Scott (a writer whom he otherwise much admired).

[47] See SIGFRIED GIEDION, *Space, time and architecture: the growth of a new tradition*, Cambridge, Harvard University Press, 1941, pp. 30-67; and RUDOLF WITTKOWER, *Architectural principles in the age of humanism*, London, Warburg Institute, 1949. On Wittkower's characterisation of Renaissance architecture and on the interest of modern architects in his book see ALINA A. PAYNE, *Rudolf Wittkower and Architectural Principles in the Age of Modernism*, in «The Journal of the Society of Architectural Historians», LIII, n° 3, September 1994, pp. 322-342; and FRANCESCO BENELLI, *Rudolf Wittkower versus Le Corbusier: a matter of proportion*, in «Architectural Histories», III (1), n°8, pp. 1-11. Zevi owned a copy of Wittkower's *Principles* in which, as underlining and marginalia demonstrate, he read the chapters on Alberti very closely. B. ZEVI, *L'architettura e storiografia*, cit., pp. 48-58, published in 1950, contains a rich and engaging discussion of the relationship between International Style Modernism and the Italian Renaissance. The question of proportion was prominent in architectural discourse at the time, encouraged by, among other things, Le Corbusier's *Modulor*,

places proportion at the centre of what he characterises as an overwhelmingly "geometrical," Pythagorean-Platonic architectural Renaissance. Or rather, one might say that Zevi to some extent accepts similar views of the Renaissance but attaches a different value to them. In doing so, he demonstrates a sharp intuition, for the notion that proportion and humour are not natural bedfellows has a considerable pedigree. In an essay of 1710, the Earl of Shaftesbury, a committed Neo-Platonist, had argued in relation to nature, morality and the arts (including architecture) that it was quite wrong to think that «the Measure or Rule of HARMONY was Caprice or Will, Humour or Fashion».[48] In the same passage, Shaftesbury connects harmony with proportion, symmetry, and number, and, while he seems to use humour here essentially to signify "mood," it may also have something of its modern sense. After all, Shaftesbury was himself a key figure in establishing the modern notion of humour as funniness, and had written extensively on the subject in the previous year. In other words, no sooner had the modern concept of humour been introduced than it had been explicitly distanced from the aesthetic principles of Classicism.[49]

In any case, the opposition between the classical and the organic would remain a constant in Zevi's thinking for the rest of his life. To some extent it develops attitudes that could already be found within European Modernism. On the other hand, it derives partly from Frank Lloyd Wright, who sometimes presents the classical/organic distinction in near apocalyptic terms as the very mirror of the opposition between life and death. Histrionic as this may sound, there is a certain (albeit ultimately faulty) logic to it, for if organic architecture is to be considered living then it might seem reasonable to suppose that its opposite must be dead. Indeed, Wright, in his speeches and written work, repeatedly associates his own architecture with life, while connecting classical architecture, and the Renaissance in particular, with death.[50] Zevi did not share Wright's hostility to the Renaissance but he was certainly sympathetic to his

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and the 1951 IX Triennale of Milan entitled «Divina Proporzione», in which both Zevi and Wittkower participated. See Anna Chiara Cimoli and Fulvio Irace, *La divina proporzione. Triennale 1951*, Milan, Electa, 2007.

[48] ANTHONY ASHLEY COOPER THIRD EARL OF SHAFTESBURY, *Soliloquy: or advice to an author*, in *Characteristicks of Men, Manners, Opinions, Times*, London, I, 1711 [=1732], p. 353. Part of this passage (although not the part quoted here) is reproduced by R. WITTKOWER, *Architectural principles*…, cit., [=London, Academy Editions, 1973], p. 142. For a discussion of Wittkower, Shaftesbury, and this passage in particular, in the broader context of classical architecture, see CAROL WILLIAM WESTFALL, *Architecture, liberty, and civic order. Architectural theories from Vitrtuvius to Jefferson and beyond*, London and New York, Routledge, 2015, pp. 101f.

[49] On humour, see Anthony Ashley Cooper Third Earl of Shaftesbury, *Sensus communis: an essay on the freedom of wit and humour*, in *Characteristicks*…, cit., I, pp. 57-150. J. MOREALL, *Comic relief*…, cit., p. 16, identifies Shaftesbury's essay as «the first published work to use "humour" with its modern meaning of funniness».

[50] Wright has frequent recourse to this trope. A good example is *The Passing of the Cornice*, the text of the third Kahn lecture delivered at Princeton in 1930. Wright opens by declaring: «Instinctively, I think, I hated the empty, pretentious shapes of the Renaissance». Further on, he argues: «if the "pseudo-classic" forms of the Renaissance had more life in them they would have died sooner and long ago have been decently buried – this in accord with Goethe's dictum that "Death is nature's ruse in order that she may have more life." Renaissance architecture, being but the dry bones of a life lived and dead, centuries before, the bones were left to bleach». In the first lecture, *Materials, Machinery, and Men*, he asserts that: «The word "organic" too, if taken too biologically, is a stumbling block. The word applies to "living" structure – a structure or concept wherein features or parts are so organised in form and substance as to be, applied to purpose, integral. Everything that "lives" is therefore organic. The inorganic – the "unorganised" – cannot live». Cf. F. L. WRIGHT, *Modern architecture*, cit., pp. 47, 49, 27.

broader critique of Classicism.[51] And Wright's distinction between the living and the dead might point us towards a further resonance of Zevi's use of the term humour. After all, both the English 'humour' and the Italian 'umorismo' derive from the same source, referring back to the humours (from the Latin *umor*, signifying a liquid or bodily fluid). These liquid substances of blood, yellow bile, black bile, and phlegm had, since Greek antiquity, been thought to determine the moods and dispositions, as well as the bodily health of humans and animals.[52] Perhaps if a building is to be thought of as organic then it too might be considered (metaphorically, and mindful of the dangers of falling into the biological fallacy) to have its own humours.[53] The organic architect would then indeed require a sense of humour; a kind of humanistic attention to the building, to the life that it develops from the inside out, to its temperament, its caprices and its shifting moods. It is striking in this regard that the building that graced the cover of the Italian version of Zevi's book was Fallingwater – perhaps Wright's best-known masterpiece but also a building through which liquids course, varying their flow according to the seasons, rainfall, ambient temperature, and so forth.[54] It is perhaps also this sense of humour – the kind that regards the building as a living, changing organism – that Alberti the treatise-writer, caught in the dead embrace of Classicism, seemed to Zevi to lack.

Ultimately, this notion of Classicism's deathly rigidity can be connected to the political positions that Zevi adhered to throughout his life. Having observed Classicism's embrace by totalitarians of the left and right, Zevi was in no doubt that Classicism was predisposed to adhere to such regimes. With its rules and canons, its universalising *a priori* postulates and its disregard for the lived realities of human beings, Classicism was, Zevi believed, inherently authoritarian and absolutist; not only favoured by the Fascists but itself fascistic in its

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[51] B. ZEVI, *Architecture as space*…, cit., p. 17, criticises Wright for disparaging the Renaissance. In ID., *Storia dell'architettura moderna*…, cit., pp. 407, he acknowledges the ferocity of Wright's discourse, which he attributes to a longstanding American inferiority complex regarding European culture. He further acknowledges that Wright confuses the «classico» (classic) with «classicismo meccanico» (mechanical Classicism) and frequently produces judgments that are, critically speaking, absurd (criticamente assurde). However, these positions, he asserts, enable Wright to assume the radical freedom that sustains his poetic vision. Moreover, Zevi argues that whereas in Europe architects must necessarily develop a historical consciousness as a result of the continual confrontation between past and present, the same requirements do not pertain to American architects, for whom the battle with arbitrary European "revival" styles is a more pressing issue. Thus Wright «can hate the Renaissance» (può odiare il Rinascimento) and «can detest Michelangelo» (può detestare Michelangelo) on the flimsiest of pretexts, since his purposes, priorities, and poetics, are altogether different to those of European architects.

[52] This might point to another implication of Alberti's alleged humourlessness. Given that a long tradition, consolidated in the Renaissance itself, associated artists with the melancholy caused by an excess of black bile, attributing a lack of "humour" to Alberti might suggest that he was not, at least when writing treatises, an inspired artist; that he was not, in other words, born under Saturn. See MARGOT and RUDOLF WITTKOWER, *Born under Saturn: the character and conduct of artists. A documented history from Antiquity to the French Revolution*, New York, New York Review Books, 1963 [=2007], pp. 102f.

[53] Nonetheless, it must be acknowledged that Zevi specifically ruled out the idea that we ought primarily to relate to architecture through analogy with our own bodily states. Although he does occasionally flirt with the notion of *Einfühlung* in his writings, he takes a firm stance against empathy-based approaches in *Verso un'architettura organica*, pp. 72-75. On the notion of *Einfühlung* see Rainer Schützeichel, *Architecture as bodily and spatial art: the ideal of Einfühlung in early theoretical contributions by Heinrich Wölfflin and August Schmarsow*, in «Architectural theory review», XVIII, n°3, pp. 293-309.

[54] Zevi discussed Fallingwater in a number of his books. He also devoted a special edition of his journal to the the building. Cf., *L'architettura – cronache e storia*, 82, August 1962; subsequently reprinted as a standalone publication as BRUNO ZEVI, *La Casa sulla Cascata di F. Ll. Wright / F. Lloyd Wright's Fallingwater*, Milan: Etas Kompass, 1965.

innermost structures. Zevi was hardly unusual in rejecting a style that many saw as irredeemably sullied by its associations with the Fascist, Nazi, and Soviet regimes. More unusual perhaps was the consistency with which he maintained his stance for the remainder of his life (although he would often articulate it in different ways). In *Verso un'architettura organica*, Zevi warns against reductive accounts of Classicism's triumph in Nazi Germany, Fascist Italy, and Communist Russia, arguing that in each case the style was embraced in different ways and for different reasons. In later years, however, he would sometimes adopt a more polemical, deliberately provocative, and even crude tone, proposing that the architecture of all periods could be viewed through the lens of an ahistorical, binary opposition between Fascism and democracy:

> There are fascist trends in prehistoric architecture. In Egypt, for example, where the pyramids were built by Jewish slaves; or in Greece where temples seem to embody an impersonal, superhuman conception of aristocratic life. There is also, of course, much more Fascism in Roman architecture. No wonder that we find fascist trends in the Renaissance, in the Baroque, and especially in the Neoclassic period. The Modern Movement was born to fight Fascism: its origin, with William Morris and the Arts and Crafts movement was definitely antifascist. Later on, fascist elements corrupted the Modern Movement, although in a limited measure if we compare it with the past. The International Style tried to impose a dictatorship, and this is why, since the very beginning of my historical and critical activity, I have been against many aspects of it.[55]

He goes on to explain that he has always instead promoted the organic, democratic architecture espoused by Wright and others. Arguing that all architects must necessarily adhere to *some* principles, he states bluntly that there is really only one choice: «You can adopt fascist (= Illuministic, Classicistic) principles or democratic principles».[56]

Statements such as these were intended to provoke. Indeed, Zevi confessed in the same essay that his position was «purposely overstated».[57] He explained that he wanted above all to stimulate debate in the face of a 1970s architectural discourse that he felt had become intolerably agnostic. This strategy of deliberate overstatement (overstatement that is admitted to even as it is made) was one to which he had long had recourse. In *Verso un'architettura organica* Zevi acknowledges that his promotion of Wright and modern American architecture might appear overly-forceful but seems to accept such forcefulness as the necessary price for the effective communication of his argument.[58] In like fashion, we might consider that his later essay on fascist architecture, although simplifying and reductive, did point to one of the central positions of his life's work: that two core tendencies exist in architecture and that those tendencies correspond, however approximately, to two core tendencies in politics; Classicsim belonged to the tendency that was ideological, oppressive, and fascistic, and the International Style had sometimes strayed into the same territory too.

Zevi's essay on fascist architecture also highlights, in an exaggerated manner, another important aspect of his thinking; his tendency to move fluidly between the present and the past. Like many intellectuals of his generation, Zevi was profoundly affected by the writings of Benedetto Croce. He possessed a sound grasp of Croce's main positions, and was able to

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[55] BRUNO ZEVI, *On architectural criticism and its diseases*, in «Dichotomy», III, n°. 1, autumn 1979, pp. 7-9.
[56] *Ibid*., p. 9.
[57] *Ibid*.
[58] B. Zevi, *Towards an organic architecture*, cit., p. 132.

articulate clearly and precisely where he did and did not agree with the Neapolitan philosopher.[59] That is not to say that one encounters in Zevi's work any systematic effort to apply Croce's ideas to the study of architecture. However, a broad and unformalised Croceanism nonetheless seems to be at work throughout many of his texts. Most noticeable in this regard is Zevi's commitment to the idea of historical architecture's contemporaneity. Croce's oft-cited claim that all history is contemporary history, and that the past must continually be revitalised as living history, rather than left to languish as dead chronicle, finds many echoes in Zevi's writings.[60] Similarly, he often takes up Croce's warnings regarding the limitations of archaeological and philological approaches to history.[61] This Crocean belief in the contemporaneity of history – and in the necessity of actively *making* history contemporary – at times causes Zevi to engage with historical questions as though they were burning questions of the here and now.[62] Moreover, Croce's belief in the inseparability of art history and criticism served as an encouragement to make strong critical judgments regarding historical architects and buildings.[63] In this context, we might understand better how a book concerning post war reconstruction could include an admonition of Alberti; and indeed how aspects of Alberti's thinking might, in Zevi's eyes, have appeared tainted by association with ideologies that were only developed in the twentieth century.

Conclusion

Zevi's remark on Alberti in *Verso un'architettura organica* was a passing one, made by a recently graduated architect in a book that was addressed to an urgent contemporary situation.[64] Looking back, five years after the book's first publication, Zevi emphasised the

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[59] See A. OPPENHEIMER DEAN, *Bruno Zevi on modern architecture*, p. 20. In B. ZEVI, *Storia dell'architettura moderna*, cit., pp. 211-213, the author is critical of Crocean detachment regarding architectural styles during the fascist period. However, in ID., *Zevi su Zevi*…, cit., pp, 26-27, he praises Croce's insistence on art's autonomy as a form of resistance against fascist instrumentalisation.

[60] See BENEDETTO CROCE, *Filosofia come scienza dello spirito*, Bari, Laterza, vol. IV: *Teoria e storia della storiografia*, 1917 – tr. Engl. by Douglas Ainslie: *Philosophy of the Spirit*, London, George G. Harrap, vol. IV: *Theory and history of historiography*, 1921. This publication is itself a collection of earlier writings. The philosophy of history remained central to Croce's work. A later major statement of his views can be found in ID., *La storia come pensiero e come azione*, Bari, Laterza, 1938. For a detailed analysis of Croce's positions, see DAVID D. ROBERTS, *Benedetto Croce and the uses of historicism*, Berkeley, University of California Press, 1987. The title of Zevi's journal, *L'architettura – cronache e storia*, as well as signifying the publication's concern with both historical analysis and the reporting of contemporary developments, perhaps also points deliberately towards the two key terms in Croce's discussion of how history must be made contemporary and how all knowledge is historical knowledge.

[61] This may have been of particular importance for Zevi's understanding of *De re aedificatoria*. As A. PAYNE, *The architectural treatise*…, cit., p. 73, points out, Cosimo Bartoli's illustrations to his translation of the treatise (which Zevi seems to have used) give the book an archaeological feel that is quite alien to Alberti's original.

[62] Conversely, Zevi argued equally forcefully that contemporary architecture could not be understood without a firm grasp of architectural history. B. ZEVI, *Architettura e storiografia*, cit., pp. 9-14, opens with a bravura attempt to show how the works of the two foremost architects of the day – Le Corbusier and Frank Lloyd Wright – were closely connected to the entirety of architectural history.

[63] See for example BENEDETTO CROCE, *The essence of aesthetic*, translated by Douglas Ainslie, London, William Heinemannm 1921, pp. 83-104. LIONELLO VENTURI, *History of art criticism*, cit., argues extensively for the interdependence of art history and criticism.

[64] The war was intensely felt in London while Zevi was writing his book. In A. OPPENHEIMER DEAN, *Bruno Zevi on modern architecture*, cit., p. 17, Zevi recalls the German V1 rocket attacks that caused him to weigh, each day, the risks of leaving his lodgings to visit the library. Correspondence between Zevi and his editors and translators at Faber and Faber in 1944 testifies to the constant, oppressive presence of the bombardment in

importance of the context in which he wrote, acknowledging both the speed with which he produced the manuscript and the instrumental nature of his enterprise.[65] Rather than being an unhurried meditation on architectural history, his book was directed towards action at the very moment in which it was produced. Furthermore, the Alberti that Zevi knew was not the Alberti that we know today. Alberti's comic masterpiece *Momus* had been published in a new Italian translation in 1942 but Zevi had not been present to read it, even if he had been so inclined.[66] His Alberti was, as it were, pre-Grayson, pre-Garin, pre-Cardini, pre-Furlan, and pre-Marsh: an Alberti less analysed, less translated, and altogether less known. In fact, Zevi would go on to write a lengthy encyclopaedia article about Alberti in 1958, in which he gave a sensitive appraisal of Alberti as an architect, and considered his reception in historiography.[67] In his essay, he noted the seemingly unbridgeable schism between those who revered Alberti as one of the great architectural minds of the early Renaissance and those who, following Julius von Schlosser, regarded him as a non-artist whose reputation was based not on history but on a Burckhardtian myth.[68]

Zevi's views would continue to evolve as new scholarship emerged. In editorials relating to the conference at the Accademia dei Lincei of 1972, which marked the fifth centenary of Alberti's death, Zevi wrote with excitement of the "new" Alberti revealed by Eugenio Garin. It was in the field of literary studies, rather than the history of art, he noted, that a more complex and interesting Alberti had arisen. Whether a humourless classicist who nonetheless displayed organic tendencies, or a figure who polarised historians, Zevi's Alberti had always been a divided one. Now, he saw an Alberti who was practically split in two; and once again, it was the issue of Classicism that most clearly revealed the fault line. For Albertian architectural Classicism, Zevi now realised, was never more than a halfway house. Rather, it mirrored Alberti's approach to writing, in which Latinity existed alongside an equally strong feeling for the vernacular. Indeed, Zevi now found in Alberti two tendencies that he considered to be irreconcilable: a Renaissance mentality and a deep affinity for the Middle Ages. Nowhere was the conflict more clear than when Alberti wrote about, and built within, the city, revealing an attraction to both the isolated and immutable visual statements of Classicism, and the pre-existing urban fabric in all its historical specificity. This tension pulled Alberti in two different directions and led to a strange equivocation. Preoccupied, as ever, by the significance of the past for the present, Zevi noted that:

> Durante l'ultimo secolo noi abbiamo assistito allo stesso equivoco perpetrato infinite volte e in modo assai piú grossolano: cioè all'assurdo tentativo di rivestire un'idea moderna con l'apparato retorico classicisitico, invece di porla a confronto diretto, francamente dissonante, con la storia.

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daily life. Zevi's editor twice apologises for delays in contacting him, first because his house had been blown up, and second because the offices of Faber and Faber had been badly damaged by a «flying bomb». Cf. ABZ, 58, 06.04/05.

[65] B. Zevi, *Towards an organic architecture*…, cit., pp. 11-12; and ID., *Storia dell'architettura moderna*, cit., pp. 13-16.

[66] LEON BATTISTA ALBERTI, *Momus o Del principe*, edited by Giuseppe Martini, Bologna, Zanichelli, 1942.

[67] BRUNO ZEVI, *Alberti, Leon Battista*, in *Enciclopedia universale dell'arte*, Venice-Rome-Florence, Istituto per la collaborazione culturale-Sansoni, 1958 – tr. Eng.: *Encyclopedia of World Art*, New York-Toronto-London, McGraw Hill, vol. I: *Aalato - Asia Minor, Western*, 1959, col. 191-211.

[68] See JULIUS VON SCHLOSSER, *De Kunstliteratur*, ed. O. Kurz, Vienna, A Schroll, 1924; and ID. *Ein Kunstlerproblem der Renaissance: L. B. Alberti*, in «Akademie der Wissenschaft in Wien, Sitzungsberichte», n° 210, 1929, p. 2.

> During the last century we have witnessed the same equivocation, perpetrated countless times and in a much cruder way: that is, the absurd effort to dress up a modern idea in a classicistical, rhetorical apparatus instead of placing it in a direct, frankly dissonant, confrontation with history.[69]

Zevi now marvelled at Alberti's «costante incisività provocatoria» (constant provocatory incisiveness) and speculated that contemporary discussions regarding modern architecture's integration into the historical city were all derived from his thought. He perceived something thoroughly modern within Alberti, but still felt that this modernity cohabited alongside an equally vigorous tendency towards renunciation and reaction. Alberti thus emerged as a deeply enigmatic figure: «never contemporary» but always «present and disconcerting».[70]

[69] BRUNO ZEVI, *L. B. Alberti: perennemente inattuale*, in *Editoriali di architettura: Architetti e linguaggio; Critici e linguistica; Paesaggi e città; Avanguardia e restaurazione; Design come ragione civile; Not quite architecture*, Turin, Einaudi, 1979, pp. 23-27 (originally published as *L'operazione linguistica di Leon Battista Alberti*, in «L'architettura – cronache e storia», n° 201, July 1972), here p. 27.

[70] BRUNO ZEVI, L. B. Alberti nel V centenario della morte: *Falsario da giovane, sempre inattuale*, in *Cronache di architettura,* Roma-Bari, Laterza, vol. VIII, 1973, p. 920 (originally published in «L'Espresso», 920, 14 May 1972): «Per questo, pur non essendo mai attuale, Alberti è sempre presente e sconcerta».