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978-1-107-00312-5 — Author and Audience in Vitruvius' De architectura
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# *Introduction*

Midway through *De architectura*'s eighth book, Vitruvius recalls a conversation he once had with a certain Gaius Julius, the son of Masinissa.[1] Their chat (*sermo*) about the city of Zama, near Carthage, provides a font of information for Vitruvius' discussion of the waters and peoples of North Africa (8.3.24–25).[2] Rarely does the author make such an explicit reference to the moment and method in which he acquired material for *De architectura*.[3] This anecdote not only puts the mechanics of Vitruvian authorship on display, but also paints a picture of friendship. Vitruvius explains that he often extended hospitality (*hospitium*) to this Numidian; on such occasions, they delved into intellectual matters (*de philologia disputare*, 8.3.25). Such an image evokes the Roman elite fusion of social and intellectual worlds underlying Trimalchio's pompous admonishment to his own guests, nearly a hundred years hence, that 'one must, even while dining, pay attention to *philologia*' (Petr. 39).[4]

The vignette also provides the sole allusion within *De architectura* to Vitruvius' social life or to any personal relationship beyond his vaunted connections to his parents, teachers and the imperial family. This Gaius

[1] *Is hospitio meo est usus. Ita cotidiano convictu necesse fuerat de philologia disputare* ('He sometimes stayed with me. In our daily intercourse, it was often necessary to discuss learned matters', 8.3.25). We do not know what relation, if any, this Gaius Julius, otherwise unknown from the historical record, bore to the famous Massinissae, although his Roman name suggests he was granted citizenship.

[2] See Gros, Corso and Romano 1997: 1102–1103 on the possibility that the writings of Juba II may have provided the source material for this section of the treatise. Roller 2003: 195 attributes similarity between Vitr. 8.2.6–7 and Str. 17.3.4 to this common source. Cf. the appearance of *fontes* as a metaphor for literary source material in the seventh preface and at 3.3.9. See discussion in Chapter 1.

[3] Vitruvius specifies that '[Zama] has, however, another more wondrous quality, which [he] has heard about in the following way' (*aliam mirabiliorem virtutem ea habet terra, quam ego sic accepi*, 8.3.24).

[4] *Philologia* is a marked term within Vitruvius' conception of his authorial practice; elsewhere in the treatise, he uses it when commenting on his literary strategies and implicitly equating his own enterprise with that of Aristophanes of Byzantium. On the development of the expansive concepts of the φιλόλογος and φιλολογία in the Hellenistic period, cf. Pfeiffer 1968: 156–160. On *philologia* in *De architectura*, see König 2016: 170–171. See further discussion in Chapter 1.



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Julius, so Vitruvius tells us, held sway over the North African city of Ismuc, and fought alongside Julius Caesar.[5] With the latter piece of information, Vitruvius harks back to the dedication of the treatise; there, the first insight he shares into his own background is that he, too, assisted Caesar's war effort, as a military engineer (1.praef.2).

This episode neatly captures the two major themes of this book: the development of Vitruvius' authorial persona and his evocation of the contemporary Roman scene. It also illustrates some of the challenges inherent to my enterprise. Gaius Julius and his descriptions of the springs near Zama have left no other trace on the historical or literary record. Where and when should the reader (then or now) imagine this tête-à-tête to have taken place? In his gesture of *hospitium* towards the son of Masinissa, is Vitruvius affecting to cultivate his own African expert, just like Julius Caesar (and later Octavian) would rear Juba II at Rome to become one of the most learned men of his day?[6] Or is some other dynamic in play? Lack of any secure biographical information about the author of *De architectura* compounds the issue. In the manuscript tradition, the name 'Vitruvius' consistently appears. But no ancient author before the first century CE alludes to either a Roman treatise on architecture or an author by this name. Compelling evidence that *De architectura* altered the course of contemporary architectural practice is likewise scant. His *nomen* alone, which survives without either *praenomen* or *cognomen*,[7] indicates little about Vitruvius' origins: the Vitruvii had a wide temporal and geographic range.[8] The author may

[5] For possible prosopographies of this Gaius Julius, see Callebat 1973: 127–128; Baldwin 1989: 12; Gros, Corso and Romano 1997: 1177–1178.

[6] On Juba II's early years in Rome, which he spent at the households of Caesar's heirs, see Roller 2003: 59–75. I am grateful to Josiah Osgood for this suggestion.

[7] The oldest manuscript of *De architectura* (Harleianus 2767), as well as the works of Pliny, Frontinus, Servius and Sidonius Apollinarius, name him simply 'Vitruvius'. A possible *cognomen*, Pollio (appended by e.g. Rawson 1985: 87 n. 14; Masterson 2004: 390), derives from the opening of Cetius Faventinus' epitome, *De architectonica*: *de artis architectonicae peritia multa oratione Vitruvius Polio aliique auctores scientissime scripsere*, with dubious support from a fragmentary inscription from Baiae: VITRUVIO [POLL] IONI ARCH[ITECTO] (*CIL* 10.3393). However, Choisy 1909: 259 n. 2 suggested almost a century ago that the introduction of a comma between the *nomen* and *cognomen* in Faventinus' account would render Polio 'un personnage distinct' (in other words, the author of a similar treatise). Granger 1999: xvii–xviii subsequently identified Faventinus' Polio as the Asinius Pollio (or Polio) mentioned in Suet. *Aug.* 29.5 and Plin. *Nat.* 35.10 as an Augustan administrator responsible for the erection of the first public library in Rome, the Atrium Libertatis. Baldwin 1990: 430 adds that 'it might be thought more idiomatic Latin to precede *aliique* by two individuals rather than one'.

[8] Ruffel and Soubiran 1962: 132 provides an extensive survey of the around forty Vitruvii attested in both the literary and epigraphical records, who are dotted across the social spectrum and a range of dates. Fleury 2011: 11 notes concentrations in Latium (8 inscriptions), Campania (10 inscriptions), and North Africa (19 inscriptions). Cf. also Thielscher 1961 and Tabarroni 1971–1972.

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have been researching his material and drafting the treatise as early as the 40s or 30s BCE, but references within the text suggest that the circulation and dedication to Augustus likely occurred between 27 and 22 BCE.[9] Pliny the Elder and Frontinus, the earliest to mention Vitruvius, merely record his name among their bibliographical references.[10] They reveal nothing of his life.

What we do know about Vitruvius is this: as the Roman Republic fell and a new Augustan regime arose in its place, he composed a ten-volume work that would change the course of Western architecture. Vitruvius' *De architectura* is the only text dedicated to the subject that survives from classical antiquity, and its impact on Renaissance masters including Andrea Palladio and Leonardo da Vinci has spawned a field of enquiry in itself.[11] But what was the purpose of *De architectura* in its own time (ca. 20s BCE)? The seeming inaccuracy of many of his architectural rules, when compared with surviving ancient buildings, has made Vitruvius a vexed source for archaeologists. This book argues, however, that Vitruvius never intended to provide an accurate and objective view of the contemporary built environment. Instead, Vitruvius crafted his authorial persona and his remarks on architecture to appeal to elites (and would-be elites) eager to secure their positions within an expanding empire. The pages that follow explore how Vitruvius pitched a treatise on architecture, hitherto primarily the literary domain of Greek authors, to his elite Roman readers, most of whom were undoubtedly laymen.

*De architectura* appeared at a watershed moment in the composition of Latin works that engaged deeply with Greek traditions. The formative influence of Greek scientific thought on Roman technical literature can be seen as early as the oldest surviving work of Latin prose, Cato the Elder's

[9] On the date of *De architectura*, see Baldwin 1990; Gros 1997: xxvii–xxxii. Mention of *pronai aedis Augusti* in Fano, the same settlement on the Adriatic coast of Italy where Vitruvius claims to have built a basilica, confirms that Augustus had already adopted his honorific title (5.1.6–7). References to this temple and to other mid-first-century constructions, such as the Porticus of Pompey (5.9.1), provide additional *termini post quem*. Internal evidence for a *terminus ante quem* is less convincing. Cf., e.g., the allusion to Cottius' kingdom in the Alps (8.3.17), which became a Roman province under Nero (Suet. *Nero* 18). On the circulation of the treatise, see discussion and references in Rowland 2014b: 416–417. Cf. also Novara 2005: 164, which argues that the prefaces were delivered to Augustus as a *recitatio* in 24 BCE.

[10] Pliny the Elder names Vitruvius as one of his sources for Books 16, 35 and 36 in *Nat.* 1; Frontinus mentions him in *Aq.* 25.1 and 25.2. On Vitruvius' influence on the later authors of building manuals Faventinus and Palladius, see Plommer 1973.

[11] On Vitruvius in the Renaissance, see Ciapponi 1960; Wittkower 1971; Pagliara 1986; Onians 1988; Callebat 1994a; Payne 1999; Wulfram 2001; Ciotta 2003; McEwen 2011; D'Evelyn 2012; Rowland 2014b; Sanvito 2015, among others.

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*De agri cultura*.[12] Yet, late Republican and early imperial authors brought new urgency to the project of creating a Latin body of technical and scientific writing to stand beside the Greek.[13] This burgeoning literary production was tied to pedagogical shifts. Vitruvius had grown up in a Roman world in which some elements of Greek *paideia*, including rhetoric and dialectic, lay at the centre of elite education, while others, such as geometry and music, were excluded.[14] The curriculum, however, was far from fixed. *De architectura* represents a foray into an intense debate over the definition of certain disciplines as *artes*, subjects worthy of a gentleman, and others as merely trades.

Vitruvius makes a strong case for the intellectual merit of *architectura* by documenting Greek authors' centuries-long engagement with architectural topics and by adopting conventions of Hellenistic technical and scientific prose.[15] Yet what is most fascinating about the text from the perspective of cultural history is the way in which *De architectura* threads together Greek knowledge and Roman mores. In this book, I examine Vitruvius' representation of the Roman culture of display. By this I mean the unwritten rules of social performance governing those with enough wealth and power to worry about how best to inhabit (and exhibit) their positions. One of Vitruvius' central claims is that *De architectura* will be useful to any reader – otherwise harried by the frantic pace of Rome's private and public affairs – who might pick up the ten scrolls (5.praef.3). Depicting characteristic features of Roman elite culture, such as the behaviours of patrons and clients or the vibrant decoration of domestic walls, is one way in which Vitruvius makes good on this assertion.

Classical scholarship on *De architectura* has long consisted of two parallel traditions, one literary and the other scientific and archaeological in focus. This division echoes the incongruence within Vitruvius' prose. Considerable differences of content and style set the florid and explicitly self-referential prefaces apart from much of the drier technical instruction in the architectural commentary within each book.[16] As a consequence,

[12] *De agri cultura* is indebted to Greek agricultural science and makes use of Greek words. Cf. Boscherini 1970; Diederich 2007: 15–22.

[13] The Latin translation of the medical texts in Mithridates' library commissioned by Pompey the Great may have been the first of a Greek scientific or medical work. Cf. Feeney 2016: 42–43.

[14] Feeney 2016: 134. On Roman adaptation of Greek *paideia*, see also Rawson 1985; Wallace-Hadrill 1988a.

[15] Cf. Fögen 2009: 128–136.

[16] This is hardly unique to Vitruvius. On prefaces in technical and other prose literature, see Janson 1964; Santini and Scivoletto 1990. See Bodel 2012 for recent discussion of how such discrepancies between the preface and the ensuing prose shape our interpretation of Cato the Elder's *De agri*

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studies of Vitruvian self-representation often focus on the prefaces and seldom address the role of practical, architectural instruction in developing the portrait of the author. The social, moral and aesthetic concerns that define the Vitruvius glimpsed in the pages of his book, however, also shape his representation of building. Likewise, Vitruvius' statements on architecture are integral to the formulation of his authorial persona. In the pages that follow, I analyse passages across the ten books that reflect the ways in which Vitruvius crafts his material as a Roman author addressing a Roman audience. More specifically, I examine Vitruvius' claims about his own background within Roman literary and cultural contexts, demonstrating how he infuses a book of Hellenistic learning with material that reflects Roman traditions.

Throughout *De architectura*, outlines of this authorial figure emerge from passing references to relationships, events and circumstances. Vitruvius' persona truly takes shape, however, through contrast with the character foils depicted in brief narratives throughout the text: in Book 10, Callias temporarily unseats the *architectus* Diognetus from his rightful position at Rhodes by showcasing a design for a (functionally unsound) war machine on a grand scale (10.16.3–8); in Book 7, the painter Apaturius of Alabanda beguiles the populace of Tralles with flashy, yet flawed, paintings, before a mathematician, Lykinos, intervenes (7.5.5–7); and, in the preface to Book 2, the *architectus* Dinocrates approaches Alexander the Great with the spectacular idea of transforming Mt. Athos into the statue of a man; the ruler rejects it as impractical (2.praef.1–4).[17] In some instances, Vitruvius compares himself to his flawed double; in others, he leaves the analogy implicit. Located in faraway places and buried in the past, these straw men allow Vitruvius to define himself and his professional activity in the abstract. Instead of directly confronting rivals within an immediate environment, he shadowboxes.[18]

Studies of authorial self-representation, once couched in terms of 'persona-theory' and 'masks', and now more frequently discussed in terms of 'self-fashioning', have been a popular line of inquiry in Latin scholarship

*cultura*. In the case of Vitruvius, the differences between the lofty, rhetorical style of the prefaces and the less-crafted presentation of the chapters beyond are sometimes over-emphasised. Cf. Callebat 1994b. On Vitruvius' prefaces, see André 1985; André 1987; Novara 2005. The combination of a portentous preface with a geographical description on the Artemidorus papyrus (if the papyrus itself is not a forgery) may seem parallel, but recent research suggests that the two texts did not belong to the same work. Cf. D'Alessio 2009.

[17] I discuss these stories further in Chapters 1, 4 and 2 (respectively).

[18] Potential motivations for this strategy are addressed in Chapter 1.

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for decades. Interpretation of Vitruvius' self-portrait in this vein, however, has been slow in coming.[19] Awareness of the importance of persuasive authorial personae within ancient technical and scientific works, however, is on the rise.[20] In order to appreciate how developments in Roman culture shaped *De architectura*, my analysis foregrounds the interrelationship of various facets that make up 'Vitruvius' and considers both how his self-fashioning corresponds to that of other Roman authors and what functions these authorial poses may serve. Once removed from the demands of literal interpretation and their isolation from other sources, the rhetoric Vitruvius uses and the aspirations he espouses begin to sound familiar.

Recognition of Vitruvius' engagement with the discourse of his contemporaries reveals the cultural specificity of *De architectura*'s apparent contradictions, factual blunders and other peculiarities. Earlier Greek and Hellenistic civilisations provided Vitruvius with a range of building forms, as well as with his model of the high-status architect.[21] Crucially, however, Vitruvius relies on Roman literary strategies to make both his persona as an architect and his designs for buildings palatable to his imagined readers.

## Roman Author

*De architectura*, so its author tells us, was the first comprehensive treatment of architecture ever composed. Vitruvius explains that the awkwardness of its idiosyncratic (some might say convoluted)[22] vocabulary and grammar results from the difficulty of relating technical matters to a lay audience – a plausible explanation, given his task of compiling, digesting (and, in many cases, translating from the Greek) a number of sources on topics notoriously difficult to put into words (5.praef.1–2).[23] Regardless of the challenges he faced, however, Vitruvius maintained a verbal approach to his task, with very few illustrations to supplement.[24]

[19] But see now, on Vitruvius' authorial persona, Masterson 2004; Fögen 2009: 106–151; A. König 2009; Nichols 2009a; Cuomo 2011; Nichols 2016; Romano 2016.
[20] See König 2011: 180–187 for an eloquent synopsis of characteristic features of authorial self-fashioning in scientific and technical writing.
[21] Cf. Gros 1976; Gros 1983.
[22] Mayer 2005: 196–198 explains the infelicities of Vitruvius' language as a reflection of the limitations of Latin prose, rather than a mark of the architect's particular ineptitude. On the language of *De architectura*, see Morgan 1906; Nylander 1992; Romano 1997; Oksanish forthcoming a.
[23] Vitruvius invokes many of his sources in the course of a heated denunciation of plagiarism in the preface to Book 7. Others are named in the preface to Book 9.
[24] On the illustrations that originally accompanied the text, see Gros 1988; Haselberger 1989; Fleury 1990; Stückelberger 1994; Gros 1996; Haselberger 1999: 36–55; Thomas 2007: 19; Corso 2016.

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Some of *De architectura*'s debts to earlier Greek works are readily identifiable, such as material from Philo's third-century *Belopoeica*, which Vitruvius adapted for his account of *scorpiones* and *ballistae* in Book 10.[25] For much of the text, however, it is impossible to reverse Vitruvius' feat of aggregation: the disappearance of the vast majority of the technical treatises written by scholars of mathematics, astronomy and the arts in the library of Alexandria and elsewhere stymies *Quellenforschung*. Some of Vitruvius' sources are not named,[26] and although Vitruvius makes copious references to Greek sources across many disciplines, he chiefly does so in the prefaces, rather than in proximity to material drawn from them.[27]

Vitruvius looked to the Greek scientific and technical tradition for elements of style and form, as well as for content. Each of the ten books begins with a preface, several of which name *imperator* Caesar [Augustus] as the dedicatee. This format evokes the introductory letters written by Hellenistic authors of works on engineering, astronomy and mathematics.[28] Like many technical and scientific authors, and indeed prose authors of various genres, Vitruvius elaborates his persona more expansively in the prefaces than elsewhere in his text.[29] The author that emerges is one eager to persuade his readers of his great learning, but also to distinguish himself and his definition of the subject from that of his predecessors and rivals.

Vitruvius integrates diffident assertions that he follows in the footsteps (*ingressus,* 8.3.27) of his authorial ancestors with braggadocio concerning the novelty of his enterprise and the *maxima auctoritas* he brings to the work (1.1.18). In this duality, too, he draws on conventions of ancient scientific writing. Within such works, the first person often serves as a mouthpiece for agonistic boasts of originality and innovation, as authors vie against the weight of tradition and the achievements of their peers.[30] Yet ancient scientific authors also betray a conflicting impulse towards modest self-presentation, a self-conscious avoidance of displays of excessive and showy innovation.[31] Vitruvius balances these diverging aims through a focus on the organisation of the ten books, a topic to which he returns

[25] Cf. Fleury 1993. [26] Courrént 2011a: 46–50; Wilson Jones 2015: 44.

[27] Cf. Gros 1997: lxiii–lxxii; Fögen 2009: 128–129. Vitruvius' claims concerning his use of sources are likewise unreliable. Most notably, a description of siege towers in Book 10 that Vitruvius professes to have borrowed from Alexander the Great's engineer, Diades, he almost certainly translated from Agesistratus. See Tomlinson 1989.

[28] See, as examples, those of Biton (addressing King Attalos), Philo (Ariston) and Apollonios of Perga (Ptolemy IV).

[29] On authorial self-assertion in Thucydides' prefaces, for example, see Ober 1998: 52–67; Goldhill 2002: 31–44.

[30] Hine 2009: 13–30. [31] J. König 2009: 36.

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frequently. He reminds the reader that his contribution lies not in the creation of new knowledge, but in the ordering and shaping of diverse material into a complete body of architecture.[32] In this emphasis on accumulation, rearrangement and reactivation of tradition, he anticipates the imperial 'habit of compilation' so conspicuous in Pliny the Elder's *Naturalis Historia* and Athenaeus' *Deipnosophistae*.[33]

The high degree of personalisation that Vitruvius and later authors, such as Galen and Frontinus, would bring to their technical topics was also an extension of Hellenistic traditions.[34] Vitruvius' first preface, for example, can be read productively with an introductory letter written by the second-century BCE mathematician Hypsicles.[35] While Hypsicles credits his dedicatee Protarchus' proficiency in mathematics and acquaintance with his (i.e., the author's) father as the reasons for the topic and the form of '*Elements* 14',[36] Vitruvius credits his dedicatee Augustus' interest in architecture and the author's acquaintance with the dedicatee's father as the reasons for his work. Both authors advance a similar conception of intellectual discourse, and the resultant literary production, as arising from a meeting of like minds and the enjoyment of hospitality. Just as in the Zama anecdote from Vitruvius' Book 8, discussed at the opening of this book, the son of Masinissa is Vitruvius' frequent houseguest, with whom he discusses *philologia*, Hypsicles recounts that Basilides of Tyre, when he came to Alexandria and met Hypsicles' father, spent most of his stay with him, because of their shared interest (συγγένεια) in mathematics. Vitruvius, then, is echoing convention even in those areas of the treatise that seem most personal and dependent on first-hand knowledge.

Given Vitruvius' participation in the late Republican intellectual project of presenting Greek knowledge to Roman readers, it is unsurprising that the Roman writers of the present and recent past whom he singles out for praise are Lucretius, Cicero and Varro (9.praef.17).[37] Each of these authors also had a discernible influence on the text of *De architectura*. Parallels

32 See McEwen 2003 for extensive treatment of corporeal metaphors and the perfect cohesion of the work.
33 J. König 2009. Cf. Callebat 1994b: 31–34 on Vitruvius' relationship to later 'encyclopedic' projects.
34 On the self-fashioning of Galen, see Barton 1994: 49–52; J. König 2009; and of Frontinus, see König 2007.
35 Hypsicles is among the more personal of Hellenistic technical authors. Reviel Netz argues that our preconceptions of technical prose as impersonal are largely derived from Euclid's *Elements*. Cf. Netz 2009: 78–79; 98; 102–103.
36 Cf. Netz 2009: 92–99; Netz 2015.
37 Cf. Gros 1997: xxxii–xl; Wallace-Hadrill 2008: 145–146; Fögen 2009: esp. 140–141; Oksanish 2011: 130–132; Oksanish forthcoming b.

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between Lucretius' and Vitruvius' accounts of the origins of civilisation suggest that Vitruvius was familiar with Book 5 of *De rerum natura*.[38] Likewise, the conception of the well-educated architect in *De architectura*'s Book 1 echoes that of the orator in Cicero's *De oratore*. By adapting this Ciceronian model, Vitruvius suggests that architecture should be esteemed as an intellectual discipline and a critical component of the Roman elite education.[39] The fragmentary state or disappearance of the majority of Varro's oeuvre makes it impossible to appreciate fully Vitruvius' engagement with Varro's outpouring on history, antiquarianism, language, geography and beyond. Vitruvius' debt to *De lingua latina*, however, one of Varro's partially extant works, is clear both in the diction and in the argumentation of many passages in *De architectura*.[40]

This book does not retrace ground covered by other scholars, who have contextualised Vitruvius' self-fashioning within the history of technical and scientific literature more fully.[41] Instead, I consider *De architectura*'s engagement with a literary culture far beyond the treatises named as his source material. Many of *De architectura*'s techniques of persuasion – particularly in passages of personal narrative, advice and criticism – find close parallels in Roman texts across the generic spectrum, including Horace's satires, Catullus' invective and Varro's agricultural writing. These parallels, moreover, are symptomatic of profound similarities of social and cultural milieu. I do not explore all the ways in which Vitruvius draws upon the literary strategies of contemporary and earlier authors, nor all of the ways in which he addresses his Roman audience. Such issues are as vast and wide-ranging as the treatise itself. Instead, I trace Vitruvius' engagement with Roman notions of self-presentation in *De architectura*. I argue that Vitruvius targets both his subject matter and authorial persona to address the pre-occupations and concerns of the upper echelons of Roman society.

[38] Lucr. 5.1011–1047. Cf. Romano 1987: 108–112; Cole 1990; Gros 1997: xxxi–xxxiv and 64–81; Courrént 2011a; Habinek 2016.

[39] Romano 1987: 69–80, in an analysis of *De architectura* and *De oratore*, locates resemblances between Vitruvius' curriculum for architects and Cicero's for orators. Rawson 1985: 86–88, who reads *De architectura* as a contribution to Roman debates over the nature of *ars*, demonstrates the importance of Greek rationalism and dialectic to Vitruvius' educational model. Cf. also Sallman 1984. (Note, however, that Vitruvius does not use the terms *ars* to distinguish art from trade. He refers to *sutrina* (shoe-making) and *fullonica* (fulling) as *artes* in 6.praef.7.) On the importance of Greek rationality to the development of Roman disciplines, see Wallace-Hadrill 1988a. Cf. also Wesenberg 1989.

[40] Cf. Romano 2011: 190–193 on the two authors' complementary approaches to etymology and etiology; on their shared interest in numerical quantities, see Skydsgaard 1968 and McEwen 2003: 40. March 1998 even suggests that Varro and Vitruvius are the same author.

[41] Important recent contributions include Fögen 2009: 106–151; Cuomo 2011; Roby 2016.

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## Roman Audience

Vitruvius' prose treatise appeared during a flourishing of didactic poetry at Rome, and it shares many of that genre's strategies and aims: *De architectura* places its subject matter on display for admiration and wonderment, demonstrates Vitruvius' ability to endow this material with literary pomp, and uses detailed technical knowledge as a means of conveying abstract concepts and values.[42] Like Lucretius, Vitruvius crafts the image of an ideal reader who pursues the topic of the work at hand at his leisure. Vitruvius' emphasis on the *ordo* of his treatise and his persistent signposting of what material has been (or is about to be) covered can be read as a means of keeping such casual readers engaged.[43] *De architectura* is 'not only for those who build, but for all those who are wise' (*non modo aedificantibus, sed etiam omnibus sapientibus*, 1.1.18). Vitruvius addresses this audience again in Book 5: 'None the less, perceiving the state to be overstrained by public and private business (*distentam occupationibus civitatem publicis et privatis negotiis*), I decided that I must write briefly, so that those reading these things might understand quickly in a narrow space of time' (5.praef.3).[44] It is to this imagined reader, albeit amorphously conceived, that the 'Roman audience' of my title refers. I leave aside the reception of the text (whatever it may have been) among historical Romans, as well as the strategies through which Vitruvius addresses both the *princeps* and professionals engaged in architectural design and construction.[45]

The intended audience of *De architectura* was once a highly contested subject, as some scholars argued that the treatise was a handbook for architects and builders (*Fachbuch*), and others considered it more suitable for a lay audience (*Sachbuch*).[46] Such debate is common within scholarship on ancient scientific and technical authors. Philip van der Eijk has called attention to the 'fallacy of audience limitation', whereby ancient audiences are deemed intelligent enough to derive meaning from Pindaric odes, and

[42] For this schema of didactic literature, see Effe 1977. See also discussion of didactic as a genre in Volk 2002: 34–43.
[43] On signposting in ancient technical and scientific writing, see Fögen 2009: 166–168 and 290.
[44] This is also a common claim among Latin prose authors; cf. Janson 1964: 96; 154–155. John Oksanish perceptively interprets this passage as part of a larger authorial strategy both to privilege comprehensiveness over comprehensibility and to increase the author's own *auctoritas* by reserving architectural knowledge 'for himself and himself alone'. Oksanish 2016: 279.
[45] For discussion of the difficulties in ascertaining the readership of ancient technical prose, see Van der Eijk 1997: 86.
[46] Cf. Sallmann 1984: 12 for these terms.

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