AUTHOR AND AUDIENCE IN VITRUVIUS' *DE ARCHITECTURA*

Vitruvius' *De architectura* is the only extant classical text on architecture, and its impact on Renaissance masters including Leonardo da Vinci is well known. But what was the text's purpose in its own time (ca. 20s BCE)? In this book, Marden Fitzpatrick Nichols reveals how Vitruvius pitched the Greek discipline of architecture to his Roman readers, most of whom were undoubtedly laymen. The inaccuracy of Vitruvius' architectural rules, when compared with surviving ancient buildings, has knocked Vitruvius off his pedestal. Nichols argues that the author never intended to provide an accurate view of contemporary buildings. Instead, Vitruvius crafted his authorial persona and remarks on architecture to appeal to elites (and would-be elites) eager to secure their positions within an expanding empire. In this major new analysis of *De architectura* from archaeological and literary perspectives, Vitruvius emerges as a knowing critic of a social landscape in which the house made the man.

MARDEN FITZPATRICK NICHOLS is Assistant Professor of Classics at Georgetown University, Washington, DC. She works primarily on the literature, art and culture of ancient Rome.

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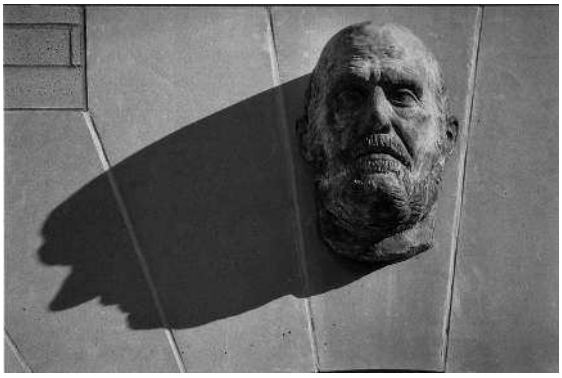

0.1 Bronze bust of Vitruvius by Miklos Simon attached to a keystone on the addition to Bond Hall School of Architecture at the University of Notre Dame, 1996. (photograph: Thomas Gordon Smith)

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For Carey Blackshear Seal

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Preface

Vitruvius' *De architectura* (ca. 20s BCE) is the only treatise on architecture that survives from classical antiquity. A source of inspiration to Michelangelo and Leonardo, and *Urtext* on construction and design for centuries of architects, these ten books of Latin prose have left an indelible mark on Western civilisation. Scholars of post-classical art and architecture are often surprised to hear that, for well over a century, *De architectura* has stood outside the canon of texts studied and taught by scholars of classical Latin literature. Vitruvius has been one of the most widely read and analysed Roman authors from the Renaissance to today, but even Leon Battista Alberti (1404–1472), who devoted much of his career to analysis of *De architectura*, said of Vitruvius that his 'very text is evidence that he wrote neither Latin nor Greek, so that as far as we are concerned, he might just as well not have written at all, rather than write something we cannot understand' (*De re aedificatoria* 6.1). While stylistic issues and deficits dissuade literary analysis, difficulties in reconciling Vitruvius' conception of *architectura* with the material record have dampened archaeological enthusiasm for the text.

The starting point of this book lay in my confusion at the varying attitudes towards *De architectura* that I encountered in secondary literature on Roman art and archaeology. On some occasions, Vitruvius appeared to be a valuable informant, with much to tell us about construction techniques in antiquity; on others, he was an untrustworthy fabulist, whose testimony could be easily dismissed in a footnote. The conviction that has shaped this book is that comparative literary analysis with authors of Vitruvius' own time, including Catullus, Cicero and Horace, writing across the spectrum of genres, can help to resolve some of the thorniest issues in the interpretation of this text in relation to Roman culture. I argue here that Vitruvius enlivened the discipline of architecture, a topic on which he was utterly reliant on Greek sources, for his imagined Roman audience through the inclusion of Roman characters, attitudes and ideas.

At the centre of this stands the author himself. Each of the series of analyses in this book examines a facet of Vitruvius' authorial persona and his depictions of contemporary Romans. Through examination of these particular passages, I reveal some, though by no means all, of the ways that Vitruvius responds to the social and cultural environment of the late Republic and early Empire.

When I first began my work on Vitruvius as a graduate student at the University of Cambridge, in 2005, pursuing this literary and cultural study of *De architectura* raised eyebrows. In the years since, Vitruvius has greatly profited from two parallel surges of scholarly activity: interdisciplinary research on the culture of the Augustan age and literary investigations of ancient 'technical' texts. As a result, *De architectura* is now enthusiastically analysed within the context of both its Augustan dedication (in around 27–22 BCE) and the ordering and structuring approach of Roman authors on such topics as medicine and astronomy. What is more, within the current resurgence of interest in Latin authors such as Vitruvius, Galen, and Columella, the very idea of 'technical literature' has yielded to an appreciation for the various ways in which texts once so classified transgress the boundaries this label implies.

I would like to thank Mary Beard, who supervised the doctoral thesis at Trinity College, Cambridge, on which this book is based, with her trademark combination of insightful criticism and warm support. I am also indebted to Alessandro Barchiesi, Emily Gowers, Robin Osborne and Alessandro Schiesaro, who served as mentors at various stages of my graduate study, and to my examiners Catharine Edwards and Caroline Vout. Guidance and insight from Andrew Wallace-Hadrill and from the series editors, Susan Alcock, Jaś Elsner, Simon Goldhill and Michael Squire, have shaped the direction of this project from thesis to monograph. I am thankful for conversations about the project with Virginia Corless, Kate Elswit, Richard Fletcher, Johanna Hanink, Ian Goh, Myles Lavan, Tom Murgatroyd, Jeanne Pansard-Besson and Carlo Vessella during my time in Cambridge. For engagement with this text in the years since graduate school, I am grateful to Mika Natif, Hérica Valladares, Michelle C. Wang, and Katherine Wasdin. As we have navigated the transformation of dissertations into books together, I could not ask for better interlocutors.

I have benefited significantly from the good company of my colleagues in the Department of Classics at Georgetown University: Sandro La Barbera, Catherine Keesling, Charles McNelis, Josiah Osgood, Victoria Pedrick and Alexander Sens. Charlie and Alex very generously discussed

the book in its entirety with me during the final stages and provided numerous helpful suggestions. It is hard to imagine my first happy years at Georgetown without their mentorship.

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I am thankful for the love and support of my parents Andrew and Loxley, my brother Alexander, and most especially my sister Rachael, whose insights improved the book in many ways. My beloved husband Samuel Charap ensured that I never lost faith or interest in publishing this take on Vitruvius. I will be forever grateful for his enthusiasm and earnest engagement with these ideas.

This book is dedicated to its best reader, Carey Seal, whom I met just as we were learning to form words. Everything I know to be true, about the ancient world and otherwise, has been shaped by decades of conversation with this incomparable friend.

Unless otherwise noted, all Latin quotations are from Vitruvius' *De architectura*. I follow the Budé editions. Translations, unless otherwise indicated, are my own. In general, I favour the more familiar Latin spellings of persons, places and works, though at times I defer to whatever appears in the Budé edition (e.g. Lykinos).

Some of the arguments in Chapter 2 appeared as 'Social Status and the Authorial Personae of Horace and Vitruvius' in Luke Houghton and Maria Wyke, eds., *Perceptions of Horace. A Roman Poet and His Readers*. Cambridge: 109–122. The second-century BCE material in Chapter 3 appeared as 'Contemporary Perspectives on Luxury Building in Second-Century BC Rome' in *Papers of the British School at Rome* 78: 39–61. A version of Chapter 5 appeared as 'Vitruvius on Vermilion: Faberius's

Domestic Decor and the Invective Tradition' in Serafina Cuomo and Marco Formisano, eds., *Vitruvius in the Round*, *Arethusa* 49.2: 317–333. I am indebted to the editors of each of these collections and to Matthew Loar, Carolyn MacDonald and Dan-el Padilla Peralta (editors of the forthcoming *Rome, Empire of Plunder: The Dynamics of Cultural Appropriation*, which includes material adapted from Chapter 1) for their thoughtful responses to this material.

Abbreviations

The abbreviations used for the authors and titles of Latin and Greek works are those of *The Oxford Latin Dictionary* and Liddell, Scott and Jones' *Greek-English Lexicon* respectively, with the following additions:

De orat.	*De oratore* (Cicero)
Eutr.	Eutropius
Helv.	*Ad Helviam* (Seneca)
Mem.	*Facta et dicta memorabilia* (Valerius Maximus)
Ot.	*De otio* (Seneca)

Lexica and compendia are abbreviated in the text as follows:

CIL	*Corpus Inscriptionum Latinarum*
Cugusi	Cugusi, M. T. S. (ed.) (1982) *Cato: Orationum Reliquae*, with comm. Rome.
DNO	Kansteiner, S., K. Hallof, L. Lehmann, B. Seidensticker, and K. Stemmer (eds.) (2014) *Der neue Overbeck (DNO): die antiken Schriftquellen zu den bildenden Künsten der Griechen*. 5 vols. Berlin.
LTUR	Steinby, E.M. (ed.) (1993) *Lexicon topographicum urbis romae*. Rome.
OLD	*The Oxford Latin Dictionary*
ORF^4	Malcovati, E. (ed.) (1976) *Oratorum Romanorum Fragmenta* (4th ed.). Turin.