Palladio's Publics:
and the sociabilité of architecture[1]

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Looking at the long lasting reception of Palladio's work, both built and in print, across geographical and chronological boundaries allows us to examine the potential of "classical style" as a visual language that "speaks" to, or convenes, a public, the sum of which amounts to more than shared taste, and has the potential political agency of a public.[2]

According to Richard Sennett, "public" can be defined as "bonds of association and mutual commitment which exist between people who are not joined together by ties of family or intimate association; it is the bond of a 'crowd,' of a people."[3] Beginning with his patrons, Palladio was extraordinarily successful in appealing to diverse groups. From the commissions he received, he would design programs intended to meet the needs of his clients. As the intended audience of the architect and author, these initial groups may not yet be considered to constitute a public *per se*, but the reception of his work ultimately would shape allegiances among those who supported or rejected his interpretation of the classical style, partakers and makers both.[4] In Palladio's Venice such cultural strategies were crucial in the identity formation and recognition of unofficial sets in a society that frowned upon factionalism and was pre- party politics;[5] that subtlety would inflect later adoption of his work by more overtly political groups—an example such as the Whigs of 18th c. England has been proposed.[6]

Perceptions of the transience of textual signification from author to reader have been evocatively framed by Roger Chartier quoting Michel de Certeau's *The Practice of Everyday Life*: "Far from being writers—founders of their own place, heirs to the peasants of earlier ages now working on the soil of language, diggers of wells and builders of houses—readers are voyagers: they move across lands belonging to someone else, like nomads poaching their way across fields they did not write."[7] This distinction, between originator and object, object and user, reflects the dynamic character of the object—in this case books—even their malleability. The protean vehicle of the book would ensure the adaptability of Palladio's architecture and ideas in the transformation of text and image in order to shape and serve new desires and functions.

Palladio's *I quattro libri di architettura* (first published Venice 1570) is the critical element in the longevity and widespread transmission of his program for classical architecture: print provided a mobility and reach that extended far beyond its originating culture—both in place and time.[8] But what is it about Palladio's treatise and architectural monuments, theory and practice, that gained him such currency and elevated the impact of his ideas and work even beyond the norm as it traveled to British shores? As Colen Campbell in his 1715 *Vitruvius Britannicus* would claim: "But above all, the great Palladio, who has exceeded all that were gone before him, and surpass'd his Contemporaries, whose ingenious Labours will eclipse many, and rival most of the Ancients. And indeed this excellent Architect seems to have arrived at a *Ne plus ultra* of his Art."[9]

It is both in the adaptability of Palladio's design process, largely communicated through print, and in the particular character of the man himself—elusive as it may be—that some of the answers are to be found. Furthermore, it is that the social range of publics he was able to address in his works, forming and reflecting the expectations of new audiences, is directly reflected in their agency. Indeed, Palladio's works are still generating publics today as the celebrations of his 500th birthday attest.

It is useful to apply ideas associated with the cultural history of the book, such as those of Roger Chartier, to this task of understanding the impact and longevity of his work.[10] Book history is concerned with process: the dynamics of author-text-book-reader—'image' is another key variable. Palladio's treatise provides ideal fodder for a history of the book, for which it is necessary to consult architectural history, and move beyond textual criticism and bibliography, to incorporate cultural history.[11] The architectural treatise (and other related illustrated works such as anatomical texts, or genres of scientific knowledge) demonstrates how the text/image dichotomy produces different effects depending on which element is fixed, and which is unstable.

In this respect, Andrea Palladio's 16th c. *Quattro libri* can be usefully juxtaposed with some of its 18th c. English translated editions. What was it, for example, about the social space of the original—its "sociabilité"—sociability, to use Roger Chartier's notion—referring to how the circulation of print transforms social interaction—that lent it what Chartier calls "applicability": which is when a certain text lends itself better than others to being inscribed in a cultural matrix not its original destination, and, what does it produce—that is, how does its reception then constitute a new public?[12]

Palladio himself argues that it is about visual cognition: "I have devoted, after long hours of immense effort, to organizing the remaining fragments of ancient buildings into a form that will (I hope) delight those interested in antiquities and which devotees of architecture will find extremely useful: in fact, one learns much more rapidly from well-chosen examples, when measuring and observing whole buildings and all their details on a sheet of paper, than one does from written descriptions, when reliable and precise information can only be extracted slowly and with a considerable mental effort by the reader from what he is reading and can only be put into practice with great difficulty."[13] He thus identified future publics as "**those interested in antiquities**" and "**devotees of architecture**." These formed the "bonds of association and mutual commitment" (Sennett) that would be constituted by these shared passions.

Multiple translated editions indeed suggest that diverse representations could be constituted out of these practices of production and consumption, reflecting the expectations of new audiences—or publics—or what Stanley Fish calls "interpretive communities."[14] In the 17th c. the *Quattro libri* was translated into Spanish, French and English, and into Russian in the 18th c.; the 20th c. saw Swedish, Polish, Romanian, and Czech translations.[15] Moreover, we can see this continued in our own time—evidence of a persistent market for Palladio's work: with symposium authors Vaughn Hart and Peter Hicks's translations of Palladio's earliest publications, on the antiquities and churches of Rome; as well as the recent MIT edition of *The Four Books* that now pairs a modern English translation by Robert Tavernor and Richard Schofield (1997) with reproductions of the woodcut images from the 1570 *Quattro libri*, in an approximation of their original visual impression.[16]
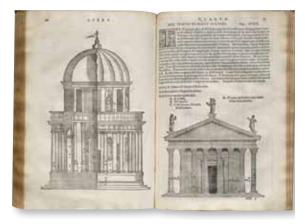

Fig. 1, http://www.rarebookroom.org/Control/pldarc/index.html?page=138

Merely considered on a graphic level, leaving aside issues of the relation of translated text to image and page layout to represented work, the effects of these different reproductive techniques both produce and reflect diverse aesthetics. The firm incisions of the woodcuts stand in contrast to the late baroque re-worked and "improved" images of Giacomo (James) Leoni's translation (in four volumes published between 1715-20) or the later refined neo-Classical flavor of the popular 1738 Isaac Ware engravings, the last time a translation in English had been undertaken—at the height of neo-Palladianism (available since 1965 in a Dover edition[17]). You can see this by comparing representations of the famed Tempietto by Roman Renaissance architect Donato Bramante, the only "modern" to be so honored by Palladio, in the various editions to the 1570 original (Figure 1). The perception of such differences was significant, as Isaac Ware in his edition directly criticized the earlier Giacomo Leoni edition, claiming as a virtue that his was truer to Palladio, a consideration highly relevant to the public for his work, notably Richard Boyle, Lord Burlington, and his circle.[18]

The visual strategies of the Palladio and Ware editions differ greatly even beyond the effects of the original medium of woodcut to that of the later engraving, as seen in a comparison

of the plates, particularly when individual copies are examined—and these are what would constitute public perception, not the imagined consistency of an edition, but object by object, whether original or translated edition. For example, the desire to retain the accuracy of the original, so critical to Ware's procedure and intellectual rationale, led him to use Palladio's images as a literal guide, traced on the engraving plates, and ironically this meant the images ended up reversed in the process.

Fig. 2, http://www.rarebookroom.org/Control/pldarc/index.html?page=7

As noted, this in turn led to the inevitable disruption of the pictorial sequence, not to mention affecting visual understanding of the actual buildings if known—or imagined—only through the printed page. Another wild-card factor was the book's production while assembling the folios and gathers to be bound into signatures, whether in original or subsequent editions or translated editions. A good test case for the sequential perception of a building is the Pantheon. In the 1570 first edition of *I quattro libri*, Book IV, chapter 20, Palladio devoted a high number of illustrations (ten) to (as he put it) the most celebrated temple in Rome (pp. 73-84). Careful attention had been paid to the layout and order of the designs and their relation to each other. The accidental nature of the object, subject to the physical manipulation of mechanical and human processes, however, intervened to confound expectations of author-reader-viewer, as in a variant copy in quarto of the 1570 *I quattro libri* from the Rosenwald Collection in the Rare Book Room of the Library of Congress (available as an Octavo digital edition) (Figure 2). In this volume a bifolio (four-page signature) was misbound upside down, rotated 180° counter-clockwise, putting four plates out of order (pp. 83-86), two of which belong to the Pantheon series (pp. 83-84).[19]

Fig. 3, http://www.rarebookroom.org/Control/pldarc/index.html?page=141

The text of the Pantheon begins on page 73 on the right-hand (recto) side of a double-page spread (Figure 3); the text continues on page 74, and the first illustration is on the recto of the spread opposite (p. 75) showing the plan of the Pantheon (Figure 4); this is followed by a double-page spread (pp. 76-77) with two interpretations of the elevation—external façade and portico façade (Figure 5); next then is a double-page spread (pp. 78-[79]) with two folios showing respectively the exterior and section of the portico from the side (Figure 6); this in turn is followed by a double-page spread (pp. [80]-81) with a folio including details of the ornament of the portico facing one of the elevation of the interior (Figure 7); then what should be another a double-page spread of related images—one folio a detail of a tabernacle
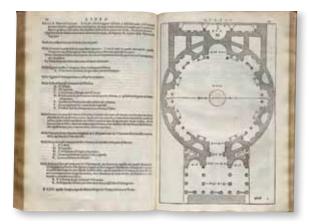
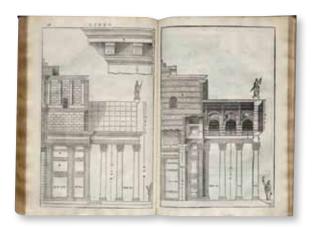Fig. 4, http://www.rarebookroom.org/Control/pldarc/index.html?page=142

Fig. 5, http://www.rarebookroom.org/Control/pldarc/index.html?page=143
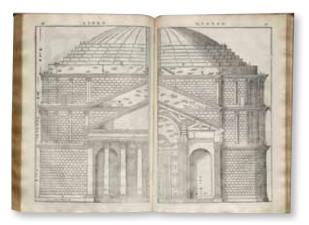

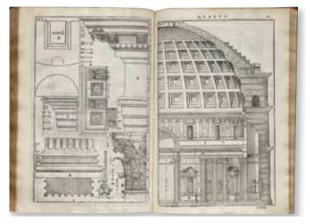Fig. 6, http://www.rarebookroom.org/Control/pldarc/index.html?page=144

Fig. 7, http://www.rarebookroom.org/Control/pldarc/index.html?page=145

bay (p. [82]), and one of the order of the columns (p. 83)—is interrupted by the misbound bifolio in the signature turned upside down which upsets the sequence, interpolating another monument (the upside down so-called "Temple of Bacchus" partial text and elevation) on the folio facing page [82], and which is actually page 86 (Figure 8); and so on the following pages 85-[84], in place of what should be the concluding image of the Pantheon (a folio with the order of the tabernacle on page [84]), is instead the out-of-order opening of capitolo 21 (the upside down initial text and plan of the "Temple of Bacchus" on p. 85) (Figure 9); this is followed by pages [83]-87 (Figure 10), in which the correct orientation of folios is resumed on the latter. Perhaps surprisingly, the necessity of rotating the volume and figuring out the images associated with the legends (given that several of the pages are not numbered) has the effect of further concentrating the viewer's attention on the individual plates, although the "filmic" sequence, and visual presentation of pairs of images, have been altered.

Regardless of this interesting variant copy, it had been intended that in the 1570 edition, the folio (recto and verso) with the beginning of the text on the Pantheon would immediately precede its first illustration: the plan. Four double-page spreads of illustration then followed, and the final woodcut verso illustration effectively bookended the section. To achieve similar visual effects in a translation, the problem of parity from Italian to English text affecting the size of the text block would need to be considered, but the Ware translation, ironically despite claims to fidelity in its illustrations, rather decisively disrupts the original text-image relationship.
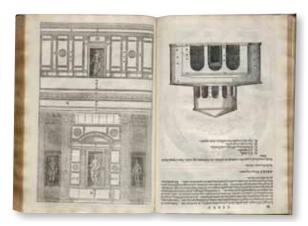
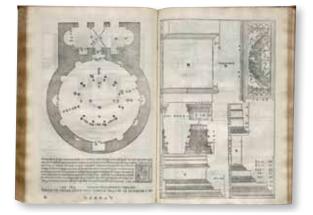Fig. 8, http://www.rarebookroom.org/Control/pldarc/index.html?page=146

Fig. 9, http://www.rarebookroom.org/Control/pldarc/index.html?page=147
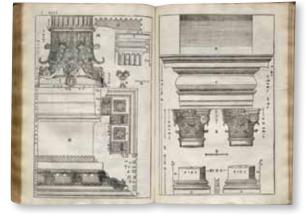

Fig. 10, http://www.rarebookroom.org/Control/pldarc/index.html?page=148

In addition to the reversal of images mentioned above as a result of his exacting process, the order of the sequence of images and double-page spread relationships was abandoned. In the Ware edition, between the text on the Pantheon and its first image, the plan, were included the remaining images from the previous temple that had been discussed; after that the first double-page spread on the Pantheon appeared—although reversed; this was followed by only one of the images of the side view; then more text; then another of the views from the side; then another double-page spread, also reversed; finally, a sequence of double-page spreads ensued including other temples, sufficient to note that the visual impression was quite changed.[20] To look at an example more closely: the Rosenwald 1570 *I quattro libri* spread on pp. [80]-81 including details of the ornament of the portico facing one of the elevation of the interior (Figure 7), and the same images reversed on their bifolio in the Ware 1738 edition (pls. LVI-LVII), produces a very different experience of reading, as the direction of the images is turned outwards towards the edges of the pages, rather than inward to the fold as in the original. This in turn changes succeeding and following visual relationships, how the mind mentally constructs the image from the elements presented on the page. To consider another bifolio in the 1570 edition, the external façade and portico façade (Figure 5) relate to each other like portraits, so their reversal in the Ware edition (pls. LII-LIII) is something like a strained couple staring in opposite directions.

Roger Chartier reminds us that: "authors…write texts which become objects," quoting Roger Stoddard's assertion: "Whatsoever they may do, authors do not write books. Books are not written at all. They are manufactured."[21] A facet of the book trade that testifies to the instability of the object is that not only a producer but a public could conceivably construct their own, something that authors desired to control and producers tried to predict and adapt to. One type of evidence for the latter in the case of Palladio (and others as well) is the frequent publication of only a single book from the four, as was the case for its very first appearance subsequent to the first edition: this was a translation of Book One on the orders into Latin published in Bordeaux in 1580.[22] The investigation of booksellers and their practices supposes responses to a buying public, and one imagines the Libreria Perin in Vicenza not only eager to provide an expensive luxury binding for their Palladio *folio*, but happy to oblige their customer by modifying the object in other ways; in an inventory of this bookseller a preponderance of the architectural titles were unbound (including an Alberti and Serlio in *quarto*), testifying to the materiality of cinquecento Italian book production.[23]

The appendage of other works to *I quattro libri* is another practice that testifies to a public taste that shaped the production of the object. For Palladio it would most often be his early work on the antiquities of Rome (a work with an astonishing afterlife to its original 1554 publication, which was endlessly reproduced in the ever popular pilgrim's guidebooks to Rome as Vaughn Hart and Peter Hicks have illustrated in the article accompanying this symposium). Such transformations would be especially acute with the act of translation.

The social practices inscribed in the *Four Books of Architecture* also influenced its adoption as they communicated a new model for interaction: Palladio aligned social status, "qualità," and spatial design, "compartimento."[24] But it was Palladio's commitment to educating his audience—nobility and worker alike—that made him an enduring bestseller with the *Four Books of Architecture*. Typically, for contemporary literature on Palladio, most writers continue to focus on his domestic architecture, notably his justly admired villas on the *terra ferma*: whose measurements confirm an amazing precision on the part of Palladio, achieved with his largely unlettered workforce, a tribute to both his design methods and the education of his workers. This suggests the formation of his publics came through identity construction in the private sphere along with the means to actualize it and thus participated in shaping the shared phenomenon of Palladianism in a public sphere.

In conclusion, for all that we know about Palladio, his actual image remains elusive. Contemporaries praised his amiability, that he brought pleasure to his patrons, and to his workmen alike. However, it is in Palladio's intellectual legacy that a true portrait of the architect emerges, a conscious construction of identity—of myth-making—as he staked a claim for the basis of architecture as a science, founded on classical principles, proposed to assume the role of the expert, set up new patterns of collaboration with his patrons, and defined the status of an emerging profession in the conservative environment of the Venetian republic.

This may be where the *sociabilité* of Palladio's project would have its greatest effect. The social range of publics able to be successfully created through the medium of his buildings, his books, and its successors over time seems as well to support Roger Chartier's main argument for object agency against an a *priori* assumption of class.

The theoretical model of the public is one of agency as against the passivity of the construct of an audience, and in this the book medium was remarkably productive in assisting the construction of a new Palladio for new times and places.

Endnotes

1 I would like to extend my appreciation to the the co-curators of the splendid Homewood exhibition and to the organizers and supporters of this symposium for the invitation to participate, in particular, Judith Proffitt, for her generous assistance.

2 An earlier version of this paper was first given in the Printing and its Publics in Early Modern Italy Conference held at Villa Spelman, Florence, Italy, in May 2007, under the aegis of the Making Publics (MaPs) project at the kind invitation of Bronwen Wilson. I have continued to develop the theme and would like to thank Christy Anderson and the graduate students at the University of Toronto, T. Barton Thurber and the Hood Museum of Dartmouth College, and the Southern California chapter of the Institute of Classical Architecture & Classical America.

3 Richard Sennett, *The Fall of Public Man* (1974), New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 1992, 3, which I use as a formulation that succeeds the influential work of Juergen Habermas in *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere: an Inquiry into a Category of Bourgeois Society* (1962), trans. Thomas Burger with Frederick Lawrence, Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1989.

4 For the conceptual emphasis on "partakers and makers" as a form of agency, see the introduction by the editors of the forthcoming book, Bronwen Wilson and Paul Yachnin, *Making Publics in Early Modern Europe: People, Things, Forms of Knowledge*, New York: Routledge, 2009.

5 This is a major theme in Tracy Cooper, *Palladio's Venice: Architecture and Society in a Renaissance Republic*, New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2005, see 27-48 for an introduction.

6 For example, Robert Tavernor, *Palladio and Palladianism*, New York: Thames and Hudson, 1991, 152-53.

7 Roger Chartier, "Labourers and Voyagers: From the Text to the Reader," *Diacritics* 22 (1992): 49-61, rprt. in *The Book History Reader*, ed. David Finkelstein and Alistair McCleery, New York: Routledge, 2002, 47-58, see p. 47, quoting Michel de Certeau, *The Practice of Everyday Life* (1980), trans. Steven Rendall, Berkeley: University of California Press, 1984, 170-71.

8 Cooper, *Palladio's Venice*, 10-24, for further history and scholarship; as well see the recent Pierre de la Ruffinière Du Prey, *Palladio in Print*, Kingston, Ont.: Allan Graphics Ltd., 2008; and the catalogs accompanying the 2008-2009 exhibitions in Vicenza and London.

9 Colen Campbell, "The Introduction," *Vitruvius Britannicus: the classic of eighteenth-century British architecture*, Mineola, NY.: Dover Publications, 2007, 1.

10 As in Chartier, "Labourers"; see also his *The Cultural Uses of Print in Early Modern France*, trans. Lydia Cochrane, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1987; idem, *Cultural History: Between Practices and Representations*, trans. Lydia Cochrane, Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1988; idem, *The Order of Books: Readers, Authors, and Libraries in Europe from the Fourteenth to Eighteenth Centuries*, trans. Lydia Cochrane, Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1994; idem, *Forms and Meanings:*

Text, Performance, and Audience from Codex to Computer, Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1995; and many influential edited publications. For an applied example, see Patricia Rubin on the vexing problem of art publication, at: http://www.courtauld.ac.uk/researchforum/news/RubinTheAestheticsofPublishing.pdf (now published as "Pictures, Privileges, and the Public Good," *Visual Resources* 24-1 (2008).

11   There is, certainly, a tradition in Britain of important book history on architectural treatises, inspired by Rudolf Wittkower, the admirable Eileen Harris, *British Architectural Books and Writers 1556-1785*, assisted by Nicholas Savage, Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 1990, is an exemplary source; the incorporation of a social history of architecture is aptly demonstrated in Christy Anderson, *Inigo Jones and the Classical Tradition*, Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 2007.

12   Chartier, "Labourers," 48, 54, respectively.

13   Andrea Palladio, "Foreword," Bk. III, 5, from *The Four Books*, trans. Robert Tavernor and Richard Schofield, Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1997, 163. Cooper, *Palladio's Venice*, 19.

14   Chartier, "Labourers," 57; for its employment, see Stanley Fish, *Is there a text in this class? The authority of interpretive communities*, Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1980.

15   Palladio, *The Four Books*, 1997, xxi-xxiii; Harris, *British Architectural Books*, 352-65, for early English editions.

16   See the associated on-line article from the symposium by Vaughn Hart and Peter Hicks. Palladio, *The Four Books*, 1997, passim.

17   Andrea Palladio, *The Four Books of Architecture*, intro. Adolf K. Placzek, New York: Dover Editions, 1965, "Unabridged and unaltered republication of the work first published by Isaac Ware in 1738." Until the advent of the recent MIT edition, this inexpensive volume made Palladio accessible to many English readers.

18   Palladio, *The Four Books*, 1965, A, "Advertisement."

19   This digital version is also available via the Library of Congress website: http://lcweb2.loc.gov/service/rbc/rbc0001/2008/2008rosen0873/2008rosen0873.pdf

20   Many translated editions of illustrated architectural books group images together and text together for the obvious economy of the production process.

21   Chartier, "Labourers," 51, quoting Roger Stoddard, "Morphology and the Book from an American Perspective," *Printing History* 9-1 (1987) 2-14, see p. 4.

22   Palladio, *The Four Books*, 1997, xvi; Harris, British Architectural Books, 23-31, 382-85, for early English editions.

23   Giovanni Mantese, I mille libri che si leggevano e vendevano a Vicenza alla fine del secolo XVI, Vicenza: Accademia Olimpica, [1968], 47.

24   Discussed in multiple places, both terms may be found in Book II, chapter 1, 3, in Palladio, *The Four Books*, 1997, 77.