

The Thin White Line: Palladio, White Cities and the Adriatic Imagination

Alina Payne

Over the course of centuries, artists and architects have employed a variety of means to capture resonant archaeological sites in images, and those images have operated in various ways. Whether recording views, monuments, inscriptions, or measurements so as to pore over them when they came home and to share them with others, these draftsmen filled loose sheets, albums, sketchbooks, and heavily illustrated treatises and disseminated visual information far and wide, from Europe to the margins of the known world, as far as Mexico and Goa. Not all the images they produced were factual and aimed at design and construction. Rather, they ranged from reportage (recording what there is) through nostalgic and even fantastic representations to analytical records that sought to look through the fragmentary appearance of ruined vestiges to the “essence” of the remains and reconstruct a plausible original form.

Although this is a long and varied tradition and has not lacked attention at the hands of generations of scholars,¹ it raises an issue fundamental for the larger questions that are posed in this essay: Were we to look at these images as images rather than architectural or topographical information, might they emerge as more than representations of buildings, details and sites, measured and dissected on the page? Might they also record something else, something more ineffable, such as the physical encounters with and aesthetic experience of these places, elliptical yet powerful for being less overt than the bits of carved stone painstakingly delineated? Furthermore, might in some cases the very material support of these images participate in translating this aesthetic

1 For Italian material the list is long. Despite an accumulation of more recent publications that have exploited the possibilities offered by technology, the following older studies are still fundamental: Arnold Nesselrath, “I libri di disegni di antichità: tentativo di una tipologia,” in *Memoria dell'antico nell'arte italiana*, vol. 3: *Dalla tradizione all'archeologia*, ed. Salvatore Settis. Turin: G. Einaudi, 1986, pp. 87–147 and Hubertus Günther, *Das Studium der Antiken Architektur in den Zeichnungen der Hochrenaissance*. Tübingen: E. Wasmuth, 1988. For more recent research, see *The Virtual Tourist in Renaissance Rome: Printing and Collecting the Speculum Romanae Magnificentiae*, ed. Rebecca Zorach. Chicago: University of Chicago Library, 2008.

response to the ruins and transmit it? And if so, what does it convey that may have slipped between the words and lies locked in the materiality of the paper on which the images are recorded?

Ancient Stones on White Paper

The images that were made as reportage are images of the ruins as they are—or, more often, as they might be, because they are never quite untouched by the artist's perspective. Scattered, partially buried, and decaying, the ruins of an ancient site present the vestiges of an urban coherence and magnificence irretrievably lost that interrupt the present unexpectedly and challenge understanding as well as any sense of permanence. Sebastiano Serlio's "Roma quanta fuit ipsa ruina docet" on the title page of his *Terzo Libro* (Venice, 1540), which wraps all of lost Rome with its past tense into the nebula of oblivion (Fig. 1) is iconic of this type of presentation.² But if the decayed grandeur of Rome appealed to some, especially poets and artists, the desire to reconstruct this past was its corollary and appealed to others. Indeed, the two approaches may be seen as the yin and yang of the Renaissance engagement with the past, one of them melancholy, the other constructive. And the sketchbooks and treatises of the architects, groaning with reconstructions of the orders, of temples and other buildings, testify to this curiosity driven by practicality.

However, sometimes more than observation and analysis pierces through even these apparently factual representations. For example, Andrea Palladio's illustrations of the temple at Pola in Capodistria, in his *Quattro Libri* (Venice, 1570) like a number of other images depicting temple sites in the same treatise, exhibit a somewhat bizarre presentation that has not been addressed thus far. In fact, Palladio's single, compact image of the temple of Pola (Fig. 2) emerges as an interpenetration of several images—views, details and sections—connected by cutouts, raking angles, superimpositions, and overlaps. The images nestle inside one another, compelling the viewer to decipher the resulting composition with some difficulty, and forcing the architect or patron for whom such an image was intended to puzzle it out, literally to twist and rotate the sheet in order to read it—in short, to work at it. The treatment of scale in this compound group of images adds yet another layer of interpretive complexity. The large scale is small (the overall view of the temple), the small scale is large (the ornamental details), and the shift from one to the other vertiginous,

² Sebastiano Serlio, *Il terzo libro di Sebastiano Serlio Bolognese*. Venice: Francesco Marcolini da Forlì, 1540.



FIG. 1 Sebastiano Serlio, *Frontispiece, Il terzo libro*. Venice, 1540.

so sudden and extreme that it is almost alarming. Of course, there are practical reasons for it: a detail would be copied and needs to be enlarged; a view cannot be presented much larger within a book, and so will necessarily remain a partially detailed silhouette; and so on. And yet, as an image, this illustration of the temple at Pola presents the appearance of a topsy-turvy, destabilized reality.

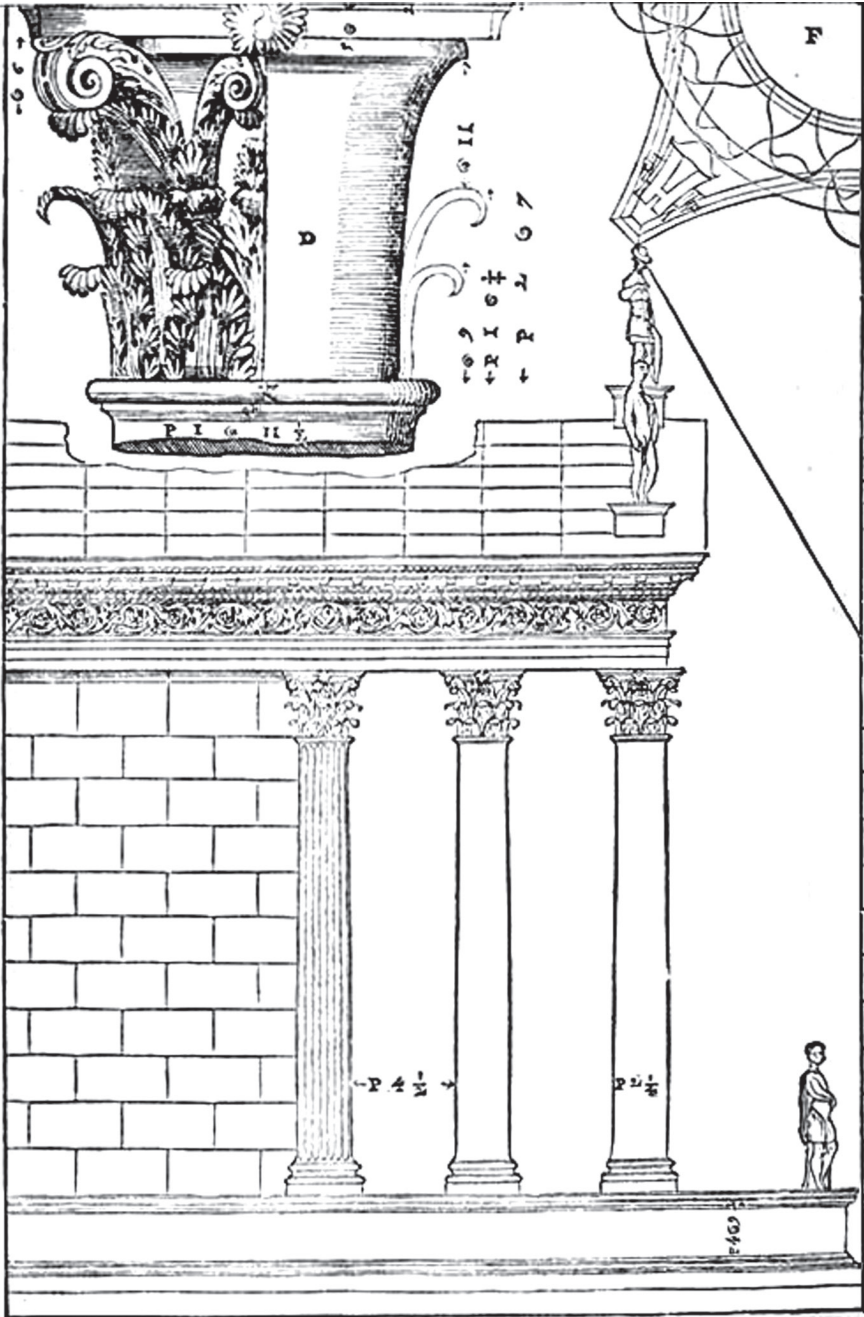


FIG. 2 *Andrea Palladio, Temple at Pola, I quattro libri dell'architettura. Venice, 1570.*

In addition, there is a strange compression at work here: the page is overcrowded, so completely filled that it suggests a certain tightness. Most bizarre of all are the figures. Although they are the expected pedimental and podium sculptures similar to those found on many ancient temples, they seem activated into the role of seeing bodies, whose rays of vision become dynamic vectors that cut up the image as if challenging the viewer to look and focus. Like cypresses in a cemetery, they stand sentinel, witnessing and commemorating a lost *and* an enhanced view: the sight vector emanating from an acroteria figure's eye reads both like a scalpel cutting across the page (and the site itself) and like a ray of vision, even a piercing laser beam, and suggests simultaneously a loss—the lost view of the whole that escapes the page and the architect—and the enhanced view of the section, of an incision penetrating deeper, below the surface.

What seems to be represented here then with great economy of means—whether intentionally or unselfconsciously—is *also* a reaction to the archaeological site: on the one hand, a labyrinthine experience of the disorder of collapsed stones and resistance to interpretation, caused by a site that is confusing; and on the other, a visual experience that is also expansive, just as the visual vector of the pedimental statues implies, extending infinitely outward like a searchlight into the distance. In Palladio's rendition, order and disorder tear at each other, both very palpable. His is an image of discomfort, of an upside-down, destabilized world—it is the drama of controlling something that escapes (Fig. 3).

In its richness, the image of the temple at Pola is quite different from what other treatise writers present in similar circumstances. Compared to Serlio's images, for example, the differences are subtle but affect the end result dramatically. An apparently insignificant detail is that Palladio's images are framed by a thick black line while Serlio's are not (Fig. 4). Despite its stand-by role, the frame works double duty, at the level of the book and of the image represented: it functions as a perimeter to the drawing but also, implicitly, to the site, and becomes an elliptical way of referring to its boundary within which disorder reigns and that the architect wishes to contain and re-order. A very compact image, it recalls ivories and plaquettes, perhaps a slippage from other (minor) art forms of compressed images gathered within a frame as if with some difficulty. Instead, Serlio's ruins are scattered and float independent of each other upon the page, randomly as it were, where they might happen to make sense or fit. Indeed, the open-endedness of their arrangement is akin to the somewhat random walk through Rome that he proposes on his frontispiece. To be sure, such a quality can be apprehended from Palladio's images as well, and it could be argued that the availability of paper (scarce) and its sizing



FIG. 3 *Anonymous, Fragments of the Temple of Augustus and Roma in Pola. Alinari, No. 21192.*

(small) were at the root of most of his choices when composing his images. But there is more to it, for within these practical restrictions artistic choices have been made. The *mise-en-page*, along with the addition of a frame that is as strong as the laserlike gaze of the witnessing pedimental figure, and the suggestion of space through the implied perspective created by the statue's visual ray—these are all deliberate gestures. Not all antiquarian-architects follow suit, neither Antonio Labacco nor Jacopo Barozzi da Vignola, for example.³ Vignola, in his *Regola delli cinque ordini* (Rome 1562; Fig. 5), does frame his reconstructed orders, but he does not attend to ruins as such or to their sites as Serlio and Palladio do: his presentation is more abstract, aiming more toward a visual “dictionary” than to a holistic description of an actual location.

As has been noted often in the literature on Palladio, his treatise is very cerebral, and his approach to illustration takes a giant stride toward the modern professional's drawing set and format,⁴ a notion that seems to be supported not only by the images' *factura*, his crisp lines, strict orthogonal

3 Antonio Labacco, *Libro appartenente all'architettura*. Rome: In Casa Nostra, 1552; Jacopo Barozzi da Vignola, *Regola delli cinque ordini d'architettura*. Rome: s.n., 1562.

4 See Licisco Magagnato, Introduction, in Andrea Palladio, *I quattro libri dell'architettura*, eds. Licisco Magagnato and Paola Marini. Milan: Il Polifilo, 1980, p. xx.

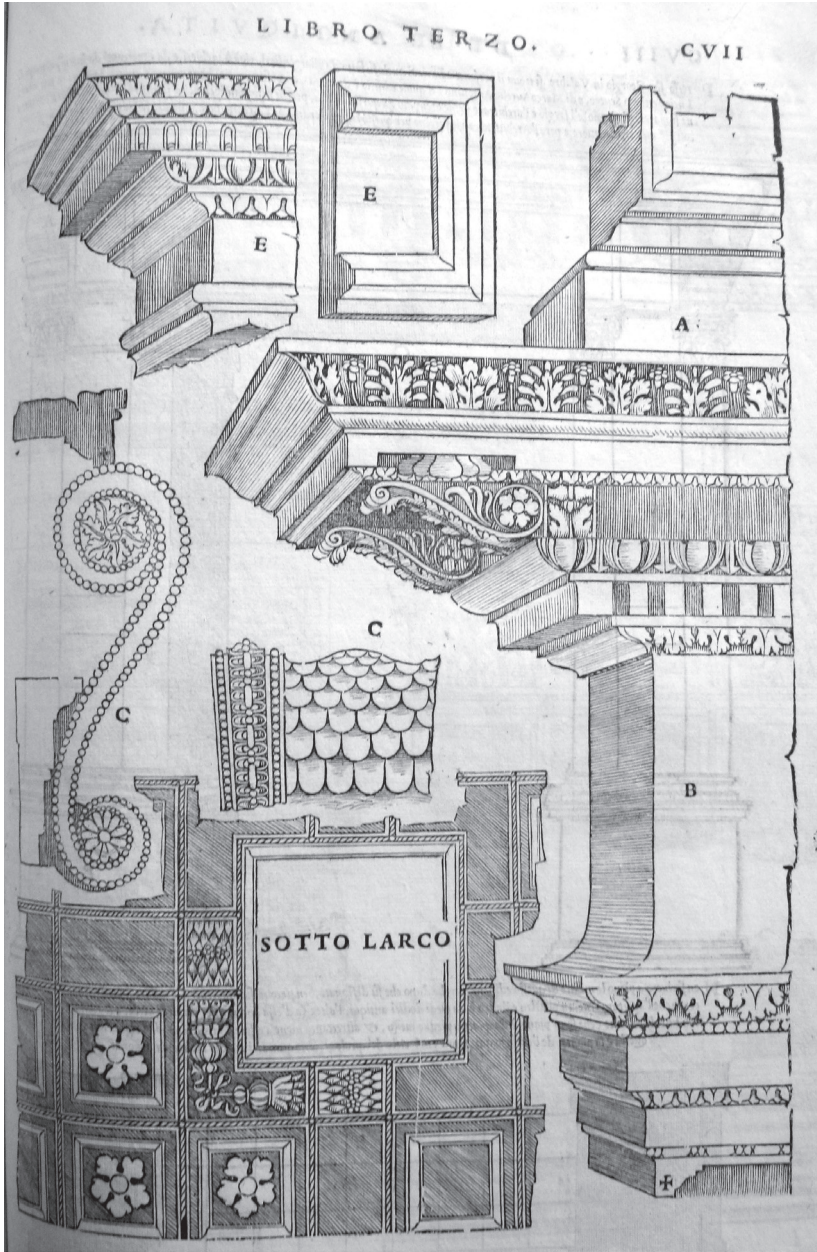


FIG. 4 Sebastiano Serlio, *Architectural Details of Arch*, Il terzo libro. Venice, 1540, f. cvii.

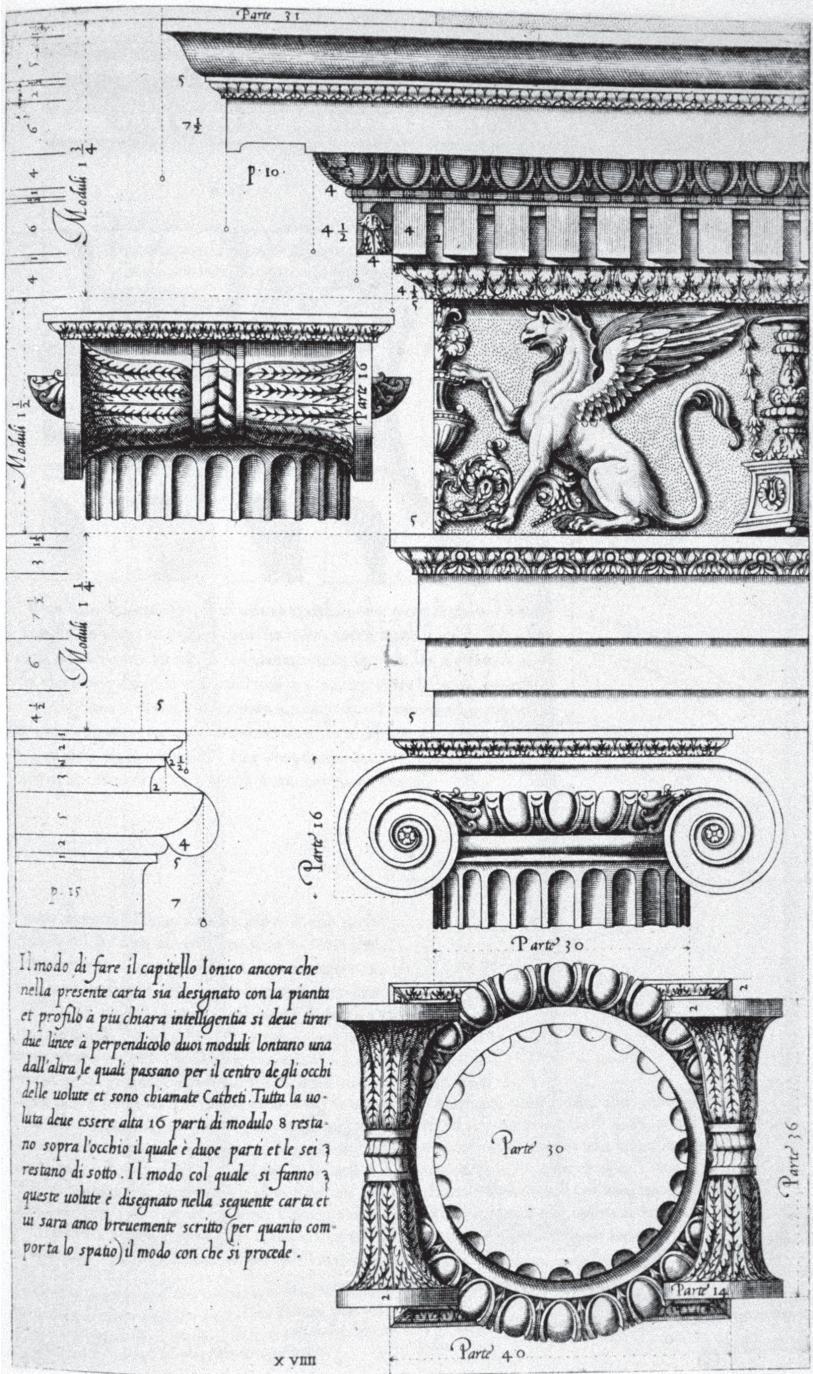


FIG. 5 Jacopo Barozzi da Vignola, *The Ionic Order*, La regola delli cinque ordini d'architettura. s.n., 1562.

representation, and apparently logical slicing of a whole into its parts but also by their content. Yet, more pierces through these apparently objective images, and the visual information laid out for view also captures the complexity of the site and the architect's response to it. What may be sensed from its complex *mise-en-page* is an anxiety in the face of a reality that cannot be fully grasped, that literally escapes the page no matter how hard it is compressed in it, and is that much more revealing as it is manifested differently, more covertly, and more unselfconsciously than in the studies of ruins by his contemporaries.

The opening and closing images to Daniele Barbaro's 1556 edition of Vitruvius's *De architectura* (Fig. 6)—on which Barbaro collaborated with Palladio, although the image is not by him—may offer a parallel testimony to this greater range of responses to the recovery of the past than architectural treatises usually convey. The architect gazing skyward through his astrolabe while turning his back on the chaos of tools and fragments that surround him offers a possible confirmation of this complex response to antiquity and is its pendant narrative explanation.⁵ The confusion through which the architect tries to see clearly (sight is once again the main subject matter), surrounded as he is by the scattered instruments of his profession and a collapsing building, is a powerful expression of the condition of the archaeological site among whose ruins he finds himself trapped as in a labyrinth or cavern. There is drama here—the drama of controlling that which escapes, to raise one's eyes from earth to heaven, one step ahead of the collapse of the edifice surrounding him and drawing him back into the vortex of oblivion.

There is one other significant feature in these reconstruction images of Palladio's. It has been noted that they are clean, precise, apparently objective and dispassionate, in pure orthogonal projection.⁶ What has not been said is that the overall impression they give is of being white. The absence of any shading, the plain paper background as a major protagonist of the images, is both new and rare. However compressed the images (such as those of the temple at Pola), the overall whiteness of the architecture is never in doubt. Indeed, the compression and crowding are that much more striking seen against this emptiness, against this lavishness of white, unmarked paper. Many pages have hardly any writing on them, sometimes only three or four lines. In this sense, Palladio is so different from Serlio, his one great predecessor, who changes

5 Marcus Vitruvius Pollio, *I dieci libri dell'architettura con il commento di Daniele Barbaro*. Venice: Francesco Marcolini, 1556.

6 A summary with related bibliography is in Magagnato, Introduction, pp. xx–xxii, and Alina Payne, "Andrea Palladio," in *Architecture and Its Image*, eds. E. Blau and Kaufmann. Montreal: CCA, 1989.



FIG. 6 *Daniele Barbaro, Frontispiece, I dieci libri dell'architettura, tr. et commentate da monsignor Barbaro. Venice, 1556.*

fonts and scripts to fit his writing into one page and fill it completely (Figs. 7 and 8). The overall impression of his pages is one of grayness, and to this effect the writing surrounding the illustrations contributes significantly. The same is true of Vignola's images in his treatise, albeit his text is minimal though still present on the illustration page and, together with the stippling of the flat

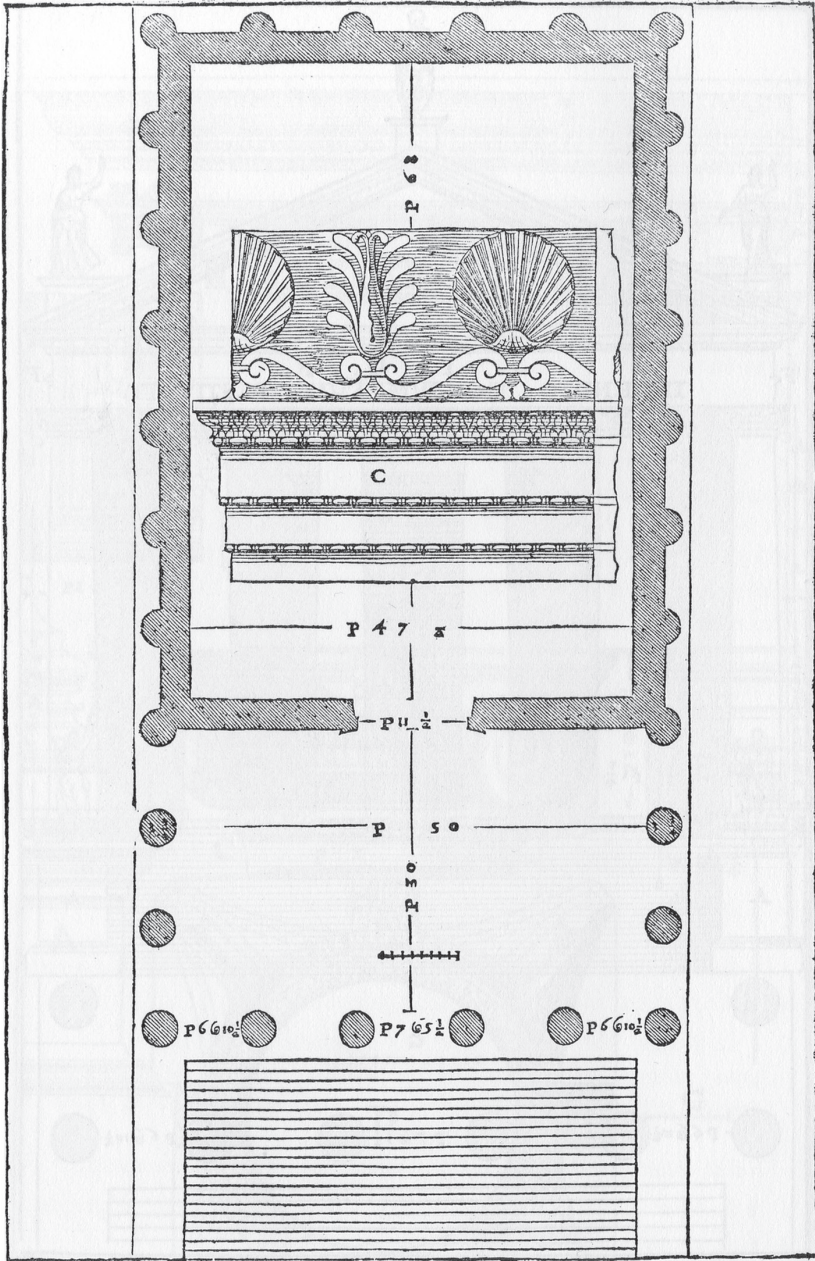
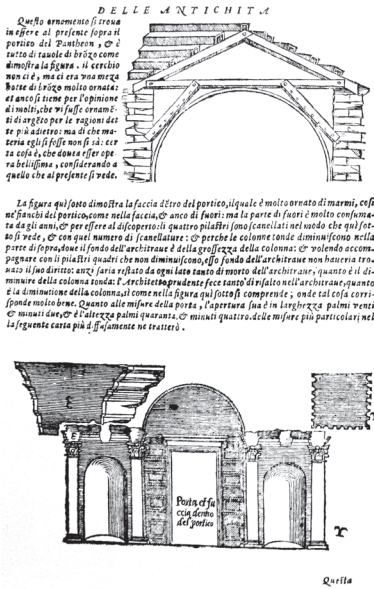
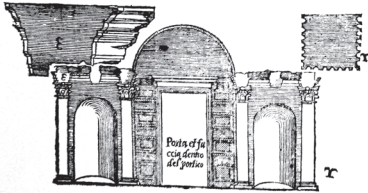


FIG. 7 *Andrea Palladio, Temple of Mars Ultor; I quattro libri dell'architettura. Venice, 1570.*



Questo ornamento si trova in figure al presente sopra il portico del Pantheon, & è fatto di travicoli di legno come dimostra la figura. Il cerchio non è, ma si era una volta fatto di legno molto ornato: et anche si tiene per l'opinione di molti, che vi fu il ornamento di legno per le ragioni che se più adietro: ma di che materia egli si fece non si è certo: che dovea esser pietra delissimo, considerando a quello che al presente si vede.

La figura qui sotto dimostra la faccia d'entro del portico, il quale è molto ornato di marmi, e di fusti di porfido come nella faccia, & anche di fuori: ma la parte di fuori è molto consumata da gli anni, & per essere al disopra: i quattro pilastri sono incavolati nel uado che qui sotto si vede, & con quel numero di fusti: & perché le colonne come dimmostrano nella parte di sopra sono il fondo dell'architrave & della grossezza della colonna: & volendo accomodare con il pilastri quadri che non diminuiscono, esse sono dell'architrave non haueva trovato il suo diritto: auer fatto restato da ogni lato tanto di dentro dell'architrave, quanto è il diametro della colonna: & l'architrave non hauea fatto tanto il fusto nell'architrave, quanto è la diminuzione della colonna, al come nella figura qui sotto si comprende: onde tal cosa corrisponde molto bene. Quanto alle misure della porta, l'apertura sua è in larghezza palmi venti & un: & in altezza palmi quaranta: & in misurati quattro: due misure più partiuarci: nel seguente casto più di quante ne tratterò.

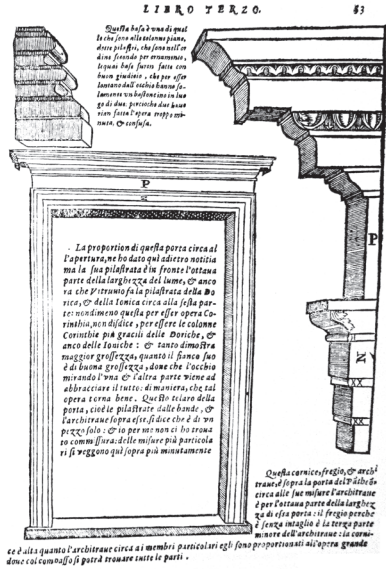


Questa

FIG. 8 Sebastiano Serlio, *Details of the Pantheon*, Il terzo libro. Venice, 1540.

surfaces of stone, also creates a general appearance of grayness, of looking through a hazy veil. Most Vitruvian commentaries such as Cesare Cesariano's (1521), whose images are profoundly black, or Giambattista Caporali's (1536), who follows suit, present a similar appearance. In comparison, Palladio's and the images in Barbaro's commentary produced in collaboration with him appear almost transparent, so light are their traces on the paper.

Thinking in these terms—that is, of a particular eloquence, even an aesthetics of the paper as medium—may also challenge the traditional explanation that crowding on the page is a result of expensive paper: if that were the case why would so many of Palladio's pages be so empty? Text and image are systematically separated, and this includes the explanatory legends, which appear isolated, leaving large expanse of paper untouched. This virgin surface is as critical a participant in the discourse on a pure ancient architecture as any number of painted splendid white ruins might have been. Not only does this approach enhance the pristine appearance of the reconstructed ruins, adding an imaginary dimension to them, but the unrelieved expanse of paper without traces of “pen” also conjures the brightness and whiteness of the stone and stucco in Palladio's own buildings. In effect, in his characteristically pithy manner, Palladio does not dwell on color much, but what little he says is profoundly significant: “among all colors there is none better suited for temples than white, as both the purity of the color and of life are greatly pleasing to



Questo arco è un di quelli che si fa in un solo piano, detto pilastro, che fanno nelle due finestre per ornamento. In questa parte fatto con buon giudizio, che per essere lontano dal tutto l'arco, si fanno in un solo piano, e da due parti, da un lato non fanno sopra l'altro, come si vede.

La proporzione di questa porta circa al l'apertura, ne ho dato qui adietro notizia ma la sua pilastrate l'ho mostrata in questa parte della larghezza del uado, & ancora che è intorno alla pilastrate della porta: & della fessura circa alla parte: non dimostrate quella per essere opera Corintia, non di dice: & per essere le colonne Corintie più grosse delle Doriche, & anche delle Ioniche: & tanto dimostra maggior grossezza, quanto il fusto suo è di buona grossezza, dove che toccano mirando l'una & l'altra parte viene ad abbassare il fusto: di maniera, che tal opera torna bene. Que' due uadi della porta, cioè le pilastrate dalle bande, & l'architrave sopra esse, si dice che è di un pezzo solo: & io per non averlo trovato come si fa: di delle misure più particolare si vi seggono qui sopra più minutamente.

Questa cornice, freccio, & architrave, di sopra la parte di sopra di questa porta, è per l'istesso piano della larghezza di questa porta: si è fatto perché si venga meglio a di sopra parte minore dell'architrave: & la cornice è di una misura più particolare di quella che si fa sopra la parte.

God.”⁷ Clearly the ancients concurred. After all, as Augustus said, he had found Rome brick and left it marble (a quip well-known in the Renaissance)—a statement not only about opulence and magnificence as it has been always understood but also about color: Augustus found Rome red (“brick- or terra-cotta-colored”) and left it sparkling white. Understanding the ruins requires a leap of the imagination; and the difficulty underlying this effort comes through nowhere more poignantly than in Raphael’s letter to Pope Leo X in which he tries to convey both the appeal of the mirage and the near-impossibility of conjuring it.⁸ Beyond the tangible evidence of the ruins themselves, something else needs to be at work to recover what is irreplaceable lost, Raphael hints, and it is to this challenge that Palladio seems to have responded both objectively and intuitively.

What lies embedded in Palladio’s images, therefore, is also a sensitivity to stone and a discourse about it. The sharp outlines with no shading to soften the contours, the absence of *sfumato*, the sparseness of lines—all of these enhance the sense of sharp edges, of a chisel doing its work, of cut stone and sharp contrasts of light and dark. More important, these gestures signal the whiteness of the stone itself—in particular the brilliance of the Istrian stone of which Venice’s principal monuments were built (as were Palladio’s) and that record the memory of the ancient marble of the Roman edifices dotting the Adriatic shores.

The Color White: Portable White Stones and the Appeal of Monochrome Architecture

The eloquent whiteness of Palladio’s paper raises an important question that lies at the heart of this essay: how was the whiteness of the ruins of the Mediterranean “transported,” in particular the intense whiteness of the

7 The original Italian is “tra tutti I colori niuno è che si convenga più ai tempii della bianchezza, conciosiaché la purita del colore e della vita sia sommamente grata a dio”; Andrea Palladio, *I quattro libri dell’architettura*. Milan: I Polifilo, 1908, p. 254.

8 “Holy Father, there are many who, measuring with their small judgement the great things that are written of the Romans’ arms and of the city of Rome regarding its marvellous artifice, richness and ornaments, sooner estimate these to be fabulous rather than true, however to me it seems otherwise. Because, judging the divinity of those ancient spirits from the relics that can still be seen amongst the ruins of Rome, I do not think it beyond reason to believe, that many of those things which to us seem impossible to them seemed extremely easy.” As translated in Ingrid Rowland, “Raphael, Angelo Colocci, and the Genesis of the Architectural Orders,” *Art Bulletin* 76, no. 1 (March 1994): 81–104.

Dalmatian ruins, and hence of the Dalmatian stone (the Istrian variety, so much appreciated on both sides of the Adriatic, and indeed throughout Italy)? This was the stone the Venetians built with, or wished to build with; several unrealized projects to dismantle the Pola ruins and treat them as a quarry for marble to be reused back home testify to the appetite for this particular material.⁹ Indeed, the citizens of Ragusa (Dubrovnik) used ancient stones to build their own city, turning to the ruins of Epidaurum (an ancient Roman city located nearby) as a source of ready quarried and cut material.¹⁰ To be sure, the limestone that is such a common denominator of the built landscape along the Mediterranean and links the Iberian peninsula and Provence with North Africa across Greece and the Middle East is light in color, an effect that is reinforced by the strong sunlight and reflection from the water. But the brilliant whiteness of the Istrian stone, the almost painful white that makes up entire cities and, as aggregates, the length of the Dalmatian shore is an extreme case (Fig. 9). And it is this Istrian/Dalmatian/Illyrian experience that Palladio responded to and that reverberates from the white pages of his treatise.

Geologist and naturalist abbot Alberto Fortis (1741–1803) confirmed this preference for the white stone, by then well established, during his travels along the Adriatic in the late 18th century. His *Viaggio in Dalmazia* (1774) shows him to have been particularly attentive to the many types of stone visible from the sea as he glided slowly along the shores.¹¹ Indeed, he stopped on purpose to explore the rock formations and he was struck by their colors, although what he was looking for and expected to see was the Istrian white.

-
- 9 The cannibalization of ancient ruins was a common occurrence during the Renaissance in Rome as elsewhere; for example, Michelangelo used the travertine from the Coliseum for the Palazzo Farnese he was completing in Rome. For a general treatment of this subject as it relates to Rome (and a summary of the literature on it), see David Karmon, *The Ruin of the Eternal City: Antiquity and Preservation in Renaissance Rome*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011.
- 10 Joško Belamarić, “Renaissance Villas on the Dalmatian Coast,” in *Quattrocento Adriatico: Fifteenth-Century Art of the Adriatic Rim*, ed. Charles Dempsey. Bologna: Nuova Alfa, 1996, p. 106.
- 11 “Costeggiando per mare colla barchetta questo tratto di paese, io feci piu volte prender riposo a miei ramatori per esaminare”; Alberto Fortis, *Viaggio in Dalmazia dell’abate Alberto Fortis*. Venice: Alvise Milocco, 1774, p. 31. Fortis’s book was not received with unanimous acclaim but was popular in Western Europe. Giovanni Lovrich, a native of Dalmatia (from Socivizca) immediately published an entire volume correcting the topographical and etymological errors Fortis made, as well as his own comments on the antiquities and customs of the area, although he admits ignorance as regards the naturalist aspects of the book; Giovanni Lovrich, *Osservazioni di Giovanni Lovrich sopra diversi pezzi in Dalmazia del Signor Abate Alberto Fortis*. Venice: Francesco Sansoni, 1776.



FIG. 9 *Window Detail, c. later 15th century, Sebenico* (PHOTO BY THE AUTHOR).

And he noted with surprise, and in a lyrical tone, that the white, marblelike crests of the mountains that rose above the sea rested on ordinary stone that could not be more different from its luminous splendor.¹²

Clearly the white silhouettes along the shore were not only those of the mountains but also of the cities strung along the littoral. The ancient buildings that could be easily seen were all of Istrian stone, as Vincenzo Scamozzi noted

12 The original Italian is “tutto il corpo del monte che serve di base alla descritta sommita marmorea persino al mare, e di materia dissomigliantissima dal marmo Dalmatino, e Istriano volgare”; *ibid.*, p. 32.

at some length in his treatise *L'idea dell'architettura universale* (1615).¹³ None were more imposing than the ancient ruins of Pola and Spalato, which were monumental in size and close to the shore, although Zara and Ragusa were also impressive. Diocletian's Palace, inside which developed the city of Spalato (Split), was among the most notable and impressive of sights, as any number of illustrations and commentaries from the Renaissance onward testify. The use of Istrian stone did not stop with the passing of the Roman Empire; the overwhelming impression of the Dalmatian and Illyrian coastal cities and those on the other Adriatic shore is one of brilliant white. In Ravenna, for example it was used in substantial quantity and nowhere more famously than in the Mausoleum of Teoderic, where, as Giorgio Vasari noted, the cupola was made from a single piece of Istrian stone.¹⁴ In the Middle Ages, more colored stone was used in conjunction with the Istrian white, as on the Doge's Palace in Venice, where it was used on the façade in combination with the much favored and frequently used *rosso di Verona* (Fig. 10). But in the Renaissance, most Venetian buildings (and bridges) were built of Istrian stone alone: San Zaccaria, the Ca d'Oro (together with Greek marble and *rosso di Verona*), the Scuole Grande of San Marco and San Rocco, the Scuola di San Giorgio degli Schiavoni (of the Dalmatian community), Santa Maria dei Miracoli (Istrian stone for architectural members and Carrara marble for the ornaments), the Palazzo Grimani, Jacopo Sansovino's Zecca and Biblioteca Marciana, Palladio's three Venetian churches (San Giorgio Maggiore, Il Redentore, and San Francesco della Vigna), the Rialto bridge, and Scamozzi's own Procuratie Nuove (Fig. 11).¹⁵

One reason for this popularity was certainly the physical properties of the Istrian stone, as Scamozzi, Francesco Sansovino, and Vasari emphasized at some length in their writings. Istrian stone was very hard, but it was also sculptable; even more important, it resisted salt water and could withstand freezing, which was especially important for a lagoon city such as Venice. Carrara marble could not compete with these features. The best Istrian stone came from Orseno and was loaded in the port of Rovigno—hence its name, *pietra di Rovigno*.¹⁶ But there was more to it than practical considerations. Scamozzi, in his 1615 treatise, promoted the stone used in his native city with characteristic

13 As quoted in Francesco Rodolico, *Le pietre delle città d'Italia*. Florence: Le Monnier, 1965, pp. 189–189.

14 Ibid., pp. 214–215.

15 Rodolico, *Le pietre*.

16 Ibid., pp. 198–199 and esp. 206 (n. B). Deborah Howard has also noted that the Istrian stone was impermeable to water and was therefore used for foundations; see Howard, *The Architectural History of Venice*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 2002, p. 57.



FIG. 10 *Doge's Palace, Venice* (PHOTO BY THE AUTHOR).

national pride, and hinted at a deliberate aesthetic choice: whatever others may say, he argued, the Istrian stone is more noble, whiter, and finer than travertine or indeed any of the stones coming from Naples, Genoa, or Florence.¹⁷ Sansovino (in the 1580s) had mentioned the same important features in his

17 The original Italian is "Ma di qualunque sorte che siano le pietre Istriane, tuttavia, dicansi per ostentazione quello che si vogliono altri (che non le hanno vedute né



FIG. 11 *San Zaccaria, Façade, Venice* (PHOTO BY THE AUTHOR).

guide to Venice, adding that the Istrian stone was similar to marble, “very white, fine, sonorous, solid, and durable.”¹⁸

osservate) elle sono assai più nobile, e bianche, e fine del trevrentino di Roma e delle pietre di Napoli, e Genova, e Fiorenza.” Vincenzo Scamozzi, *L’idea della architettura universale*, vol. I. Venice: expensis auctoris, 1615, pp. 204–205 quoted in Rodolico, *Le pietre*, p. 199.

18 The original Italian is “bella e mirabil cos è la materia delle pietre vive, che sono condotte da Rovigno et da Brioni, castelli in Riviera della Dalmatia: sono di color bianco et simili al

One particularly important point is that, in the Renaissance, the Istrian stone gained favor and became preferred to the previously much used Veronese stone.¹⁹ The multicolored palette of Venetian buildings was not abandoned, and colored stucco and stones such as porphyry and green marbles cut as roundels continued to be embedded in the new façades lining the canals. But during that period, they were much more pointedly and sparingly used, such that there is a notable difference between the façades of the 14th- and 15th-century Doge's Palace and Palazzo Dario and those of the Church of the Miracoli and the Scuola di San Rocco (Fig. 12). However, what clearly emerges is a growing aesthetic preference for the monochrome white, in parallel with the tradition of *bicromia* (bichromicity)—particularly the use of the gray *pietra serena* against light-colored stucco in Florence, for example—and polychromy, which became increasingly used in interiors.

Colored as well as local marbles begin to gain traction in Sicily and Naples from the second half of the Cinquecento onward.²⁰ Yet in Venice, Istrian stone continued to reign supreme in all new construction. Certainly the sculptor's aesthetic of Jacopo Sansovino and his roots in Michelangelo's work, so decidedly focused on Carrara white marble in the years before his final move from Florence to Rome, played an additional, reinforcing role in the Serenissima. Sansovino's reconfiguration of Saint Mark's Square—with the exception of the polychrome Loggetta—is a powerful statement in favor of white. It may be that Vasari's comment that the Tuscan architect/sculptor had brought the new manner to Venice refers not only to his correct use of the orders to but also this aspect of the architectural monochrome, which he highlights in his Introduction when he discusses the Istrian stone.²¹

marmo, ma salde et forti di maniera che durano per lunghissimo tempo a i ghacci et al sole; ...molto bianche, fine, sonore, salde e dure"; Francesco Sansovino, *Venetia città nobilissima et singolare*. Venice: I. Sansovino, 1581, as quoted in Rodolico, *Le pietre*, p. 198.

- 19 Ibid., p. 212. The same observation is made in Wolfgang Wolters, *Architektur und Ornament: venezianischer Bauschmuck der Renaissance*. Munich: C.H. Beck, 2000, p. 64, and Howard, *Architectural History of Venice*, p. 59. Wolters posits San Michele in Isola (1469) as the start of the trend.
- 20 Maybe the influence in southern Italy came from Spain and the Spanish vice-royalties of Sicily and of Naples. See Federica Scibilia "I rossi nodulari," *Lexicon* 10–11 (2010): 75–91, and Domenica Sutura, "Grigio di Billiemi: L'uso a Palermo dal XVI al XX secolo," *Lexicon*, no. 8 (2009); 56–62.
- 21 On Istrian stone, Vasari wrote: "There is moreover in Istria a stone of a livid white, which very easily splits, and this is more frequently used than any other, not by the city of Venice alone, but by all the province of Romagna, for all works both of masonry and of carving... A great quantity of this kind of stone was used by Messer Jacopo Sansovino... Thus they go



FIG. 12 *Scuola di San Rocco, Venice* (PHOTO BY THE AUTHOR).

Indeed, looked at from the perspective of stone color, two main traditions or aesthetics can be observed in the Mediterranean. One is the *bicromia* of

on executing all their works for that city, doors, windows, chapels, and any other decorations that they find convenient to make, notwithstanding the fact that *breccias* and other kinds of stone could easily be conveyed from Verona, by means of the river Adige"; Giorgio Vasari, *Vasari on Technique*, trans. Louisa S. Maclehorse and ed. G. Baldwin Brown. London: J.M. Dent, 1907, pp. 56–57.

white/black along the Tyrrhenian coast and in Sicily (with their mixed parentage from the Lombard and Catalanian North and from the Middle East, especially Damascus). Even the iconic Arco Aragonese in Naples, with its white marble triumphal arch squeezed between dark gray stone walls is a form of *bicromia* and testifies to the various forms that this aesthetic could embrace. The presence of black stone—lava stone—is also a contributing element to the Mediterranean bichromatic aesthetic, although this was not common on the Adriatic coast and was more visible in Sicily in the areas near active volcanoes (such as around Catania and the Lipari islands).²² The two-tone aesthetic—the mixture of light and dark stone in bands and two-tone ornaments to window surrounds—may have been inherited from southern France (by way of Ventimiglia and Cefalu already in the 13th century) as well as Tuscany, Lombardy, and Genoa—that is, from a more widespread Norman influence, with Arab inflections from Spain (Fig. 13). The second principal tradition is that of the brilliant white Istrian stone on the Adriatic coast (Dalmatia, Venice, and the Italian Adriatic).



FIG. 13 Window Detail, Palazzo Chiaramonte, 13th century, Palermo (PHOTO BY THE AUTHOR).

22 The so-called *pietra lavica* was used as ornament but also as construction material in Sicily. See Emanuela Garofalo, "Le lave: Gli usi ornamentali nell'architettura storica in Sicilia," *Lexicon*, nos. 14–15 (2012): 70–88.

That the white aesthetic had a significant presence in the area is further confirmed by the secrecy surrounding the production of colors, including the luminous white and white glazes for the majolica industry in its beginnings on the Adriatic coast (Pesaro and Gubbio in particular). The story of the color recipe book of Antonio and Matteo da Cagli and their partner Almerico da Ventura (from Siena)—who came from Tuscany and worked as architects and painters in late 15th-century Pesaro, and also traded in building materials, leather, and textiles—is a case in point. The colors whose recipes they held (and which originated with a master in Toledo) try to imitate precious stones; the luster applied to these colors, among which white held an important place, was highly favored and kept most secret; ultimately, the income from the sale of the secrets was large enough to provide a substantial dowry for the surviving daughter of the family. This illustrates the popularity and spread of white glazes originating with the Della Robbias across the Apennines and the significance and demand for such wares on the Adriatic shores.²³

It would seem that the whiteness of materials—ancient and new—engendered a peculiar Adriatic *imaginario* to which Palladio's buildings stand witness. This may be one of the most significant (though little noted) components of an "Adriatic style," as Federico Zeri termed it several decades ago.²⁴ In Dalmatia, what was "portable," in terms of architecture, was the stone itself—the white stone that Dalmatia shipped to Italy, thus supporting the white aesthetic as well as its attending vision of antiquity, beyond memory and the drawn records of ruins. And Venice is perhaps the most dramatic example of this phenomenon. As contemporary chroniclers astutely observe, since Venice did not produce anything but needed to import all its goods from outside, it was inevitably one of the most active engines of Mediterranean portability, far more so than any of the other Italian cities of that time, however intense their commercial activities.²⁵ And Venice was a particularly greedy

23 See *Un trattato universale dei colori: Il Ms. 2861 della Biblioteca Universitaria di Bologna*, ed. Francesca Muzio. Florence: Leo S. Olschki, 2012, p. xi.

24 Earlier, André Chastel had also suggested a cultural cohesion and significance of the cities on the two shores of the Adriatic: André Chastel, *Art et humanisme à Florence au temps de Laurent le Magnifique: études sur la Renaissance et l'humanisme platonicien*. Paris: Presses universitaires de France, 1959, and Federico Zeri, "Rinascimento e Pseudo-Rinascimento," in *Storia dell'arte italiana*, part II, vol. 1. Turin: Einaudi, 1979–1983, p. 568. On this argument (and for sources), see Dempsey, Introduction, *Quattrocento Adriatico*, p. 7.

25 The original Italian is "non nascendo in essa [Venetia] cosa alcuna, tuttavia è abbondantissima di tutte le cose, le quali vi sono portate da i luoghi così maritimi, come terrestri"; Rodolico, *Le pietre*, p. 201, quoted from G.M. Memmo, *Dialogo nel quale si forma un perfetto principe*. Venice, 1564.

user of Istrian stone. Indeed, its stone commerce was on a huge scale. The large boats that made the crossing of the Adriatic to bring stone to the lagoon city weighed around 200 tons and were expected to make at least five round trips a year, which indicates the large amount of stone that was imported.²⁶

The Ideal City as Portable Object

Venice used the Istrian stone to great effect; its monuments stand out as small islands of brilliance within the dense urban fabric, nowhere more visible than on the large canals that marked the major approaches to the city.²⁷ The deliberate visual isolation of the stone's whiteness drew particular attention to principal buildings and emphasized their significance, an effect that is readily legible on the many representations and maps of the city, ranging from the illustrations accompanying the published account of the travels of Marco Polo to the paintings of Giovanni Bellini, Paolo Veronese (Fig. 14), and Tintoretto. But beyond that white monochrome, how were the unique qualities of Dalmatia's white cities and their architecture of antiquity "transported" and materialized in other locations? One way was the indirect one of Palladio's white ruins. The message was certainly not missed, however elliptical it may have been. Indeed, it is no surprise that the 18th-century English country houses based on the images in Palladio's books or the new circuses in Regency



FIG. 14 Paolo Veronese, *Dinner at the House of Levi*, *Accademia Venice*. ART RESOURCE.

26 Rodolico, *Le pietre*, pp. 199–200. On traffic in Istrian stone see also Nedo Fiorentin ed., *La pietra d'Istria e Venezia*, Verona: Cierre, 2006.

27 Deborah Howard has described the small church of San Michele in Isola by Mauro Codussi (begun 1468) as looking like a floating iceberg on the lagoon; Howard, *Venice*, p. 135.

London that developed this tradition were so committed to whiteness. This white vision of supreme order remained embedded in modernist ideals, as Rowe's (1947) reading of Palladio—through Le Corbusier glasses—amply attests.²⁸ The other way this vision became embedded in the Mediterranean imagination—the flip side of the analytical reconstruction approach or of reportage (i.e., seeing the ruins as decayed and full of the contaminating soil)—is through the tradition of the ideal city. Here memory, desire, and *immaginario* all blended into one.

Thus, if Dalmatia bequeathed its white stone to Venice and the Adriatic shores, it also contributed much to a peculiarly Mediterranean fascination with the ideal city as a white city. To be sure, the ideal city was more of a desire than a reality in the Renaissance. Although a succession of architect/writers from Leon Battista Alberti, Filarete, and Francesco di Giorgio onward extolled the beauty, organic perfection, and logic of a geometrically planned city with strategically located monuments, little that was tangible could be, or was, achieved in this regard. Indeed, the unsuccessful experiment of the city of Palmanova (founded 1593) remains a testimony of the chasm between theory and practice.²⁹ However, the desire for—and even the utopia of—an ideal city remained deeply entrenched in architects' collective imagination (the subject of a significant body of scholarly literature); yet, its focus has been somewhat narrowly placed on the perspective arrangement and scenographic approach to the ensemble.³⁰ This tendency was bolstered by such a paradigmatic figure as Alberti, who was both the codifier of perspective construction and a significant participant in the discourse on the ideal city.³¹ The power of Erwin

28 Colin Rowe, "The Mathematics of the Ideal Villa," *The Architectural Review* (March 1947): 101–104. On the imbrication between Renaissance and modernist ideals and Rowe's role in fostering this dialogue, see Alina Payne, "Rudolf Wittkower and Architectural Principles in the Age of Modernism," *Journal of the Society of Architectural Historians* 53 (September 1994): 322–342, and Alina Payne, *Rudolf Wittkower*, trans. F. Peri. Turin: Bollati Boringhieri, 2011. On the prevalence of white in modernist architecture (though associated with fashion rather than stone in this case), see Mark Wigley, *White Walls, Designer Dresses*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1995.

29 On the complicated and sad history of Palmanova's foundation, see, most recently, Deborah Howard, *Venice Disputed: Marcantonio Barbaro and Venetian Architecture, 1550–1600*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 2011.

30 For a noteworthy contribution to the argument locating the origins of the ideal city's "look" in stage design, see Ludovico Zorzi, *Il teatro e la città*. Turin: Einaudi, 1977, pp. 76–78.

31 The fascination with the ideal city started with Heydenreich's (1937) essay on Pienza and was subsequently developed both in the literature on this city and in the scholarship on

Panofsky's paradigm-setting essay of 1925 on perspective as a *forma mentis* and epistemological model of the Renaissance also facilitated this connection, finding here its most effective entry into architectural scholarship.³² The two themes—the ideal city and perspective—converged particularly in the scholarship on the 15th-century panels depicting the ideal city now held in Berlin, Baltimore, and Urbino, respectively (Fig. 15).³³ Despite the attention it has

the treatise literature of the Renaissance. Pienza had already been discussed (though not from this perspective) in Carl Friedrich von Rumohr's *Italienische Forschungen* (1827–1831), Jacob Burckhardt's *Der Cicerone*. 2nd ed., 1869, and Stegmann and Geymüller's *Architektur der Renaissance in der Toscana*. The connection to Alberti was a contributing factor to Pienza's role in scholarship on the ideal city and perspective. Subsequently, discussions of Filarete's design and description of the ideal city of Sforzinda contributed to the development of the topic into a central theme for Renaissance scholarship. See the seminal article by Ludwig H. Heydenreich, "Pius II: Als Bauherr von Pienza," *Zeitschrift für Kunstgeschichte* 6, nos. 2/3 (1937): 105–146. For a more recent discussion of this subject, see Hanno Walter Kruft, *Städte in Utopia: Die Idealstadt vom 15. bis zum 18. Jahrhundert zwischen Staatsutopie und Wirklichkeit*. Munich: Beck, 1989; Andreas Tönnemann, *Pienza: Städtebau und Humanismus*. Rome: Hirmer, 1990; and Jan Pieper, *Pienza: Entwurf einer humanistischen Weltsicht*. Stuttgart and London: Alex Menges, 1997, pp. 128–143. Among the earliest essays on Alberti and city design are W.A. Eden, "Studies in Urban Theory: The *De re aedificatoria* of Leon Battista Alberti," *The Town Planning Review* 19, no. 1 (Autumn 1943): 10–28. For a different reading, opposing the tradition of the Albertian model as an ideal model, see Caspar Pearson, *Humanism and the Urban World: Leon Battista Alberti and the Renaissance City*. University Park, PA: Penn State Press, 2011. On the origins of the argument, see the celebrated essay by Eugenio Garin, *Scienza e vita civile nel rinascimento italiano*. Bari: Laterza, 1965.

- 32 Erwin Panofsky, "Perspektive als symbolische Form," *Vorträge der Bibliothek Warburg 1924–1925* (1927), pp. 258–330. The connection of Brunelleschi to perspective construction offered another avenue for Panofsky's idea to penetrate architectural scholarship. See, for example, Giulio Carlo Argan, "The Architecture of Brunelleschi and the Origins of Perspective Theory in the Fifteenth Century," *Journal of Warburg and Courtauld Institutes* 8 (1946): 96–121. The latest important avatar of the city/perspective argument, though pushing back against the traditional Renaissance triumphalist reading and convincingly placing its origins in the Trecento, is Marvin Trachtenberg, *The Dominion of the Eye: Urbanism, Art and Power in Early Modern Florence*. New York: Cambridge University Press, 1997.
- 33 See, especially, Richard Krautheimer, "Le tavole di Urbino, Berlino e Baltimora riesaminate," in *Il Rinascimento da Brunelleschi a Michelangelo: La rappresentazione dell'architettura*, eds. Henry A. Millon and Vittorio Magnago Lampugnani. Milan: Bompiani, 1994, pp. 233–257, and Hubert Damisch, *L'origine de la perspective*. Paris: Flammarion, 1987; trans. into English by John Goodman as *The Origin of Perspective*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1994. See also the review of the two arguments (Damisch's



FIG. 15 *Fra Carnevale, The Ideal City, c. 1480–1484. WALTERS ART MUSEUM.*

received, the fact that many views of the ideal city—whether architectural or pictorial—also present it as white has escaped notice, as did emperor Augustus’s having bequeathed a white Rome by turning it into marble.

The uncanny calm of the Renaissance cities as they were represented in paintings or in architectural drawings also suggests a submerged tension vis-à-vis various forms of horror.³⁴ The order, control, and supreme legibility of the city and its structures envisaged by architect/critics ranging from Alberti and Filarete to De Marchi were as much about a desire for Olympian calm and dignity in the face of threatening chaos that existed just beneath or on the surface of daily life—of warfare, epidemics, invasion, and anarchy—as about a theoretical engagement with ideal geometries and musical harmonies. The whiteness added another layer of desire to this image, and the city inside a white marble palace, as is the case in Spalato, epitomizes this possibility of order and pristine white beauty. In these ideal city views—many associated with Urbino, another Adriatic power in the 15th century—the poetry of the calm, horizontal, white, pristine city that was such an unrealized but desired beacon for generations of architects comes into full view. The ideal cities imagined by Fra Carnevale, Francesco di Giorgio, and Piero della Francesca include both the boats and the horizon with its white shimmer. Indeed, such visions may be construed as the *Pathosformel* of the Renaissance city. Of this utopia, the white Dalmatian cities were a constant reminder. Viewed from the water by artists and architects, craftsmen and ambassadors, humanists and merchants gliding along the shores toward their destinations just like the abbot

and Panofsky’s translated essay) by Margaret Iversen, “Orthodox and Anamorphic Perspective,” *Oxford Art Journal* 18, no. 2 (1995): 81–84.

34 On horror as a submerged yet powerful component of Renaissance art, see the introduction and essays in Maria Loh ed., *Early Modern Horror*, special issue of *Oxford Art Journal* 34, no.3 (October 2011).

Fortis, the coast presented a distant yet gleaming white littoral that connected like a string of white pearls Gallipoli and Ragusa, Spalato and Venice, Bari and Sebenico, the white ruins and the white mountains. Geography plays a particular role here, for the Adriatic is a special case of the Mediterranean, reminiscent of the Aegean or even the Red Sea, for being more like a lake or closed sea, not open like the Tyrrhenian. The two shores are close, the traffic across it sustained, especially the circulation of goods and stone from port to port, from quarry to site. Ancona and Bari, Otranto and Venice are just a stone's throw away from Ragusa and Zara, Spalato and Durazzo.

Indeed, the littoral is a powerful collective experience that binds these sites together—the bright, sometimes white, sometimes golden shore collects them into one winding line that blends into the horizon over vast expanses of water. To be sure the hinterland is the “other” to this experience, but without the shore, there is no hinterland; the mountains that add a backdrop to the evanescence of the horizon are both a barrier and an attraction—they simultaneously protect and separate. The littoral reifies the traveler's filmic experience, in the 16th century as in the 18th or the 21st: the view from the boat (Fig. 16) is the view of the passer-by who does not stop to experience the hinterland, who does not live there, but only touches down to bed for the night in a *lazaretto* and passes on. This is the view experienced and recollected by humanists such as Ciriaco of Ancona and Cristoforo Buondelmonte, by painter Andrea



FIG. 16 *Louis-Francois Cassas and Joseph Lavallée, “Vue générale de Spalatro”. in Voyage pittoresque et historique de l’Istrie et de la Dalmatie. Paris, 1802. HOUGHTON LIBRARY, HARVARD UNIVERSITY, TYP. 815.02.2616.*

Schiavone, by sculptor/architects Francesco and Luciano Laurana, or by Giovanni da Firenze and so many others.

Perhaps the most potent image where the two ideas converged—the white monument and the white city—was that of the palace of Diocletian, which contained the city of Spalato (Split) within its generous boundaries. Located on the very edge of the water, the white ruin-as-city was highly visible from the sea, to which it presented its broadest side and its famous crypto portico. As such, it was the most iconic of the many white Dalmatian cities hugging the shores—among which Pola, Ragusa, and Zadar were the most notable—precisely for its exceptional ancient Roman and imperial pedigree. An enormous palace laid out as a *castrum*, it combined the orthogonal regularity of the planned city with the richness of ornament and white marblelike material into a single architectural body conceived and executed as a single project (Fig. 17).

What distinguished Spalato and gave it iconic status was that it distilled into one powerful image the mythological mirage of the white city that had penetrated deep into most Mediterranean cultures, and mixed religion with the appeal of antiquity and the availability of white stone quarries. Indeed the white city is a *topos* common to many mythologies and religions, including many Mediterranean ones. The vision of Rome, the pagan city of white marble, represents one pole; the other is the Judeo-Christian tradition of the heavenly



FIG. 17 *Palace of Diocletian, Split* (PHOTO BY THE AUTHOR).

Jerusalem and the ideal City of God. Blended together, they reappear as an aspiration throughout history: among the Byzantines as per Manuel Chrysoloras's encomium for Constantinople (the New Rome), in Petrarch's nostalgia for ancient Rome imagined from a distance on Mont Ventoux, in the memory of city names such as those of the many "white cities" on the perimeter of the Mediterranean (both Fez and Alexandria were originally called "the white city"), Beograd (Belgrade), and, as far as Romania (on the Black Sea, an extension of the Mediterranean and a former Roman colony), Alba Iulia and Cetatea Alba.³⁵

Such a vision can be sensed in the built *mise-en-scènes* of the imaginary cities that make up the backdrop of so many Renaissance paintings. From Mantegna to Veronese and Tintoretto by way of Carpaccio and Bellini, the staging of *Saint Mark Preaching in Alexandria*, of the *Wedding at Cana*, or *The Finding of the Body of Saint Mark* presents a Jerusalem and Damascus, a Constantinople and Cairo that are also white cities. All speak of an *imaginario* of the white city, of the miragelike city of the Adriatic that emerges like a specter or phantasm from the blueness of the sea. This city as stage set, then, like the perfect geometrical white cities of Fra Carnevale, owes to the white littoral *imaginario*—that is, to a Mediterranean *imaginario* that has its most powerful expression in the Spalato site but is not unique to it³⁶—and it informs a Venetian *imaginario*, a Pugliese one already willed by an emperor like Frederic II, an Urbino one, and creates echoes across the Adriatic. Perhaps even a Tuscan one: Pope Pius II's Pienza is in many ways an enterprise like Diocletian's, the building of a palace/city at his modest birthplace. In Pienza, though far from the Adriatic and not well endowed with white stone, white does make its appearance to dignify the main square (the church façade, the fountain, the stone ornamental details, the bi-chrome white and gray of the *sgraffito* façades) that is also the palace's forecourt, as if to enhance and ennoble the ideal city, here planned with the recollection of white, perfect cities elsewhere.

35 Manuel Chrysoloras, "Comparison of Old and New Rome" (c. 1411) in Christine Smith, *Architecture in the Culture of Early Humanism: Ethics, Aesthetics, and Eloquence, 1400–1470*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1992, pp. 199–215. Leo Africanus relates the story of Fez being called "Città Bianca" (Madīnat al-Baydā'); see *Il viaggio di Giovan Leone e le navigazioni di Alvise da Ca da Mosto*, ed. Giovambattista Ramusio. Venice: Luigi Plet, 1837, p. 81.

36 Giovanni Gondola (Ivan Gundolic) a Ragusan poet ("il Tasso del Seicento raguseo") and political figure (1588–1638) dedicated to the Turkish Sultan a poem on Ragusa in which he described the city as white: "Oh white city of Ragusa, famous throughout the world and pleasing to the Heavens," quoted in Luigi Villari, *The Republic of Ragusa*. London: J.M. Dent, 1904, p. 379.

However, beyond its appeal as a model of civic utopia, this white, marble-like city of Spalato (but also of Ragusa and Zara) that is one organic whole, seemingly cut out of the same material throughout—rather like the cathedral of Sebenico—is also a complete work of art. The same stone slab that is used for a relief sculpture is also the surface of the ground; the same polish gives both columns and street pavements the quality of brilliance, and suggest preciousness. No tufts of grass, no trees, no dirt spoil the pristine whiteness of the stones that literally glisten in both moon- and sunlight. The marble floor of the city disconnects it from nature and turns it into an artifact that could—implicitly—be lifted. Alberti famously states that a city is like a palace and a palace like a small city, and in so doing proposes a form of miniaturization that suggests this peculiar quality that Spalato has of being an object placed on the ground rather than being of the ground, a form of city as *Kleinarchitektur* (small architecture).³⁷ The city as a hand-held box—as object and portable—comes up time and again in many painted dedications, but nowhere more poignantly than in the sculpture of Saint Blaise holding Ragusa on the main gate of the city, or in Francesco di Giorgio's (another adoptive Urbino architect) image of the ideal city of Dinocrates (Fig. 18).

The city as palace and the palace as city offer a peculiar reflection upon inside and outside, on what is finished and polished and what is not, what is carpet and what is earth. The polished stones of the streets—so close to marble in feeling (indeed, Alberti calls the local limestone a type of marble)—promote the sense of a heightened experience, of an additional whiteness that completes the picture: as if on a stage set, the people walking along are silhouetted powerfully against the full whiteness of the background; they become individualized, attracting focus, drawing the eye upon themselves. This is the setting of Piero della Francesca's Urbino sensibility, of his figure cut-outs against a blinding whiteness, be they in the *Flagellation* or in his Arezzo frescoes; it is also that of Palladio's Teatro Olimpico—itself white, and ghostly—where inside and outside are blurred, both spectators and actors, living and sculpted bodies facing each other. Most important, this extraordinary experience of viewing in and viewing out, of the blurred inside/outside that dramatizes the city as object and as artifact, is fully articulated by Antonio da Proculiano, chancellor of Spalato, in his *Oratione al clarissimo m. Giovan Battista Calbo degnissimo rettor, et alla magnifica communita di Spalato*

37 Leon Battista Alberti, *On the Art of Building*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1988, p. 23. On *Kleinarchitektur*, see Alina Payne, "Materiality, Crafting and Scale in Renaissance Architecture," *Oxford Art Journal* (December 2009): 365–386.



FIG. 18 *St. Blaise, Detail, Dubrovnik* (PHOTO BY THE AUTHOR).

in Venice in 1567.³⁸ After describing at some length in an encomium the palace-as-city, he attempts to convey its uniqueness. What makes him marvel

38 *Commissiones et relationes Venetae, Annorum 1553–1571*, ed. Simeon Ljubic, in *Monumenta spectantia historiam slavorum meridionalium*, vol. III. Zagreb: Oeficina Societatis Typographicae, 1880, pp. 197–238. I am grateful to Joško Belamarić for this reference.

is not only the beauty of the edifice and the buildings it contains, but the fact that the interior is of such dimensions that its inhabitants can walk and ride in it and through its many windows, see the varied landscape and in particular the sea, the boats, the cliffs. Even more telling is that on their platform, elevated from the shore, these walking and riding personages can themselves be seen as in a theater, from the outside, from the shore and the sea, a ballet of shadows, as if they themselves were floating on a watery surface. Proculiano imagines a condition of double yearning, of the outside for the inside and vice versa:

People used to stroll and ride in circles above these sunny vaults almost as through a never-ending square, and while strolling and riding they looked out from the three sides at the territory in front of them, at the grounds, gardens, vineyards, fields, hills, valleys, flatlands and mountains; from the southern side they looked out with great delight and solace at the sea, cliffs, islands, and at the close and more distant bays. And then the people standing outside almost as through a beautiful and elevated theater could look at those strolling and riding inside, one moment from one window, the other from a different one, passing by rarely or frequently; in such a way that it looked like the earth and its inhabitants standing outside, the sea, cliffs and ships *yearned* for the palace and its inhabitants, while the palace and the people inside it *yearned* for the earth and the sea, and for the people outside.³⁹

The city as object thus conveys the notion of the city as work of art, but even more so as artifact, as man-made, man-crafted. and intellectually circumscribed as if by a tight, three-dimensional frame rather than left to the hazards

39 Emphasis added by author. The original Italian is “sopra I quali volti saliggiati quasi per una perpetua piazza in circoito si spassigiava et cavalcava, et spassigiando et cavalcando vedea di fuori tutto il paese obietto dale tre parti, gli horti, i giardini, le vigne, i campi, i colli, le valli, i piani et i monti; dalla faccia meridionale il mare, i scogli, le isole et i seni vicini et piu lontani con grandissimo diletto et solaccio riguardati. Et quelli di fuori poi quasi per entro un bellissimo et rilevato teatro cosi vedeano quei di dentro spassiggianti et cavalcanti hor un fenestrono hor l'altro et rari et frequenti passare; di maniera che pareva, che la terra et gli habitatori di fuori et il mare et scogli et I navigli lo palazzo et li suopi habitatori, esso palazzo et que' che erano dentro, la terra e'l mare et que di fuori vagheggiassino.” Ibid. Some 400 years later, the archaeologist Raymond Chevallier makes similar observations. Raymond Chevallier, “Les anciens voyageurs de Venise à Pola et Salone,” in *Aquileia, la Dalmazia e l'Ilirico: Atti della XIV Settimana di studi aquilesi, 23-29 aprile, 1983. Antichità altoadriatiche* 26, no. 1 (1985): 27.

of time and accretive development. This is Fra Carnevale's city and all the ideal cities on *cassoni* and *spaliere* that abound in church choirs, *studiolos*, and wedding chests. Manuel Chrysoloras, in an encomium that ignited the imaginations of his Italian audiences, described Constantinople as the New Rome in just such terms: for him the city was "not of this earth, but of heaven"; he was struck by its silhouette ("the crown and circuit of its walls"); and saw "the city as an island," "a city in the sea."⁴⁰ The image is powerful and must have resonated across the centuries. Ultimately, this is another way to transport a site, to make it portable: as desire. Perhaps the most tangible records of this unrealized intellectual project remain the churches of Palladio—especially San Giorgio Maggiore, floating on the lagoon like a white apparition on the horizon; or Il Redentore, viewed as a single object on its white platform from the other side of the Canal della Giudecca. The floating white churches like miniature cities on the horizon may be the most lasting effect of Istria and Dalmatia on Palladio (Fig. 19).

Yet, for all its artificial quality, for all its pristine detachment from the soil and its contaminants, the ideal city—be it real like Spalato or imagined like the Urbino utopias—it is still a part of nature. Networks tie it back into the system—a system that leads back to Rome across the roads such as the Via Egnatia and the Via Appia but also to the hinterland. Cities need water, and



FIG. 19 *Andrea Palladio, San Giorgio Maggiore, Venice* (PHOTO BY THE AUTHOR).

40 Chrysoloras, "Comparison of Old and New Rome," pp. 199–215.

the aqueducts reach deep into the wild, untouched depths of the hills to feed off rivers and rivulets. Stone roads and stone aqueducts are both mobility petrified, turned into architecture, made visible. Manuel Chrysolaras makes this point most eloquently: “the aqueducts carry water in underground channels and lift it high in the air over the walls, so that one might call them rivers in the sky, arriving from great distances, as far as many days’ travel.”⁴¹ Built riverbeds and suspended rivers, with water contained, monumentalized, and turned into an artifact as a building, these aqueducts are strange hybrids (Fig. 20). On the one hand, roads and aqueducts, though man-made, are reified signals of movement like arrows in space that are superimposed on topography and on the geometry of landownership and borders like a diaphanous grid that connects the “empire”—one infrastructure embedded in the soil, the other flying overhead. On the other hand, they proclaim with great pathos that cities never really break away from nature, that it always reasserts its presence, that the cities need to be anchored back into it by ties, however diaphanous. Constructive or destructive nature is there—like the decay that ultimately destroys the white cities and turns them into ruins—and leaves their begetters with the *imaginario*—that is, with the desire and the anxiety. Two systems in tension: one a spider’s web tying the city to its site; the other



FIG. 20 *Louis-Francois Cassas and Joseph Lavallée, “Vue de l’aqueduc de Salones,” in Voyage pittoresque et historique de l’Istrie et de la Dalmatie. Paris, 1802. HOUGHTON LIBRARY, HARVARD UNIVERSITY, TYP. 815.02.2616.*

41 *Ibid.*, p. 209.



FIG. 21 View of the Adriatic Littoral from Castel del Monte, Puglia (PHOTO BY THE AUTHOR).

phantasmic, floating white cities on the shores. In his compact images of ruins, Palladio alludes to both geometries that exist in tension: the geometry of hard connections and the free flow. In the end, this is the message that Palladio's compressed archaeological sites on white paper send out with his book across Europe and across time as portable sites and portable architecture—the Fata Morgana of the thin white line on the horizon (Fig. 21).

Bibliography

- Alberti, Leon Battista, *On the Art of Building*, ed. and trans. Joseph Rykwert, Neil Leach and Robert Tavernor. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1988.
- Argan, Giulio Carlo, "The Architecture of Brunelleschi and the Origins of Perspective Theory in the Fifteenth Century," *Journal of Warburg and Courtauld Institutes* 8 (1946): 96–121.
- Chastel, André, "Marqueterie et Perspective au XVe siècle," *La Revue des Arts*, no. 3 (1953): 141–154.
- , *Art et humanisme à Florence au temps de Laurent le Magnifique: études sur la Renaissance et l'humanisme platonicien*. Paris: Presses universitaires de France, 1959.

- Chevallier, Raymond, "Les anciens voyageurs de Venise à Pola et Salone," in *Aquileia, la Dalmazia e l'Ilirico, Atti della XIV Settimana di studi aquileiesi*, 23–29 aprile, 1983. *Antichità altoadriatiche* 26, 1, 1985.
- Choay, Françoise, *La règle et le modèle: sur la théorie de l'architecture et de l'urbanisme*. Paris: Seuil, 1980.
- Chrysoloras, Manuel, "Comparison of Old and New Rome" (c. 1411) in Ch. Smith, *Architecture in the Culture of Early Humanism*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1991, pp. 199–215.
- Concina, Ennio, *Storia dell'architettura di Venezia dal VII al XX secolo*. Milan: Electa, 1995.
- Ćurčić, Slobodan, *Architecture in the Balkans from Diocletian to Süleyman the Magnificent*. London: Yale University Press, 2010.
- da Vignola, Jacopo Barozzi, *Regola delli cinque ordini d'architettura*. Rome: Camera Apostolica for Vignola, 1562.
- Damisch, Hubert, *L'origine de la perspective*. Paris: Flammarion, 1987; Engl. trans. 1994.
- Descrizione della Cargna del co. Jacopo Valvasone di Maniaco*. Udine: Tipografia Jacob e Colmegna, 1866.
- Eden, W.A., "Studies in Urban Theory: The *De re aedificatoria* of Leon Battista Alberti," *The Town Planning Review* 19, no. 1 (1943):10–28.
- Fortis, Alberto, *Viaggio in Dalmazia dell'abate Alberto Fortis*. Venice: Alvisè Milocco, 1774.
- Garin, Eugenio, *Scienza e vita civile nel rinascimento italiano*. Bari: Laterza, 1965.
- Garofalo, Emanuela, "Le *lave*. Gli usi ornamentali nell'architettura storica in Sicilia," *Lexicon* 14–15 (2012): 70–88.
- Günther, Hubertus, *Das Studium der Antiken Architektur in den Zeichnungen der Hochrenaissance*. Tübingen: E. Wasmuth, 1988.
- Heydenreich, Ludwig H., "Pius II. Als Bauherr von Pienza," *Zeitschrift für Kunstgeschichte* 6, no. 2/3 (1937): 105–146.
- Howard, Deborah, *The Architectural History of Venice*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 2002.
- _____, *Venice Disputed. Marcantonio Barbaro and Venetian Architecture, 1550–1600*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 2011.
- Iversen, Margaret, "Orthodox and Anamorphic Perspective," *Oxford Art Journal* 18, no. 2 (1995): 81–84.
- Karmon, David, *The Ruin of the Eternal City: Antiquity and Preservation in Renaissance Rome*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011.
- Krautheimer, Richard, "Le tavole di Urbino, Berlino e Baltimora riesaminate." In *Il Rinascimento. Da Brunelleschi a Michelangelo*, eds. Henry A. Millon and Vittorio Lampugnani. Milano: Bompiani, 1994, pp. 233–257.

- Kruft, Hanno Walter, *Städte in Utopia: Die Idealstadt vom 15. Bis zum 18. Jahrhundert zwischen Staatsutopie und Wirklichkeit*. Munich: Beck, 1989.
- La fabbrica dei colori*, eds. Simona Rinaldi et al. Rome: Il Bagatto, 1986.
- Labacco, Antonio, *Libro appartenente all'architettura*. Rome: In Casa Nostra, 1552.
- Loh, Maria, ed., *Special issue: Early Modern Horror*, *Oxford Art Journal* 34, no. 3 (2011).
- Lovrich, Giovanni, *Osservazioni di Giovanni Lovrich sopra diversi pezzi in Dalmazia del Signor Abate Alberto Fortis*. Venice: Francesco Sansoni, 1776.
- Nesselrath, Arnold, "I libri di disegni di antichità: tentativo di una tipologia." In *Memoria dell'antico nell'arte italiana*, vol. 3: *Dalla tradizione all'archeologia*, ed. Salvatore Settis. Turin: G. Einaudi, 1986, pp. 87–147.
- Palladio, Andrea, *I quattro libri dell'architettura*, eds. Licisco Magagnato and Paola Marini. Milan: Il Polifilo, 1980.
- Panofsky, Erwin, "Perspektive als symbolische Form," *Vorträge der Bibliothek Warburg 1924–1925* (1927): 258–330.
- Parronchi, Alessandro, *Studi su la dolce prospettiva*. Milan: A. Martello, 1964.
- Payne, Alina, "Andrea Palladio." In *Architecture and Its Image*, eds. E. Blau and E. Kaufmann. Montreal: CCA, 1989.
- _____, "Rudolf Wittkower and Architectural Principles in the Age of Modernism," *Journal of the Society of Architectural Historians* 53 (1994): 322–342.
- _____, "Materiality, Crafting and Scale in Renaissance Architecture," *Oxford Art Journal* (2009): 365–386.
- _____, *Rudolf Wittkower*. Turin: Bollati Boringhieri, 2011; trans. F. Peri.
- Pearson, Caspar, *Humanism and the Urban World. Leon Battista Alberti and the Renaissance City*. University Park, PA: Penn State Press, 2011.
- Pieper, Jan, *Pienza: Entwurf einer humanistischen Weltsticht*. Stuttgart and London: Alex Menges, 1997.
- Quattrocento Adriatico. Fifteenth-Century Art of the Adriatic Rim*, Villa Spelman Colloquia, vol. 5, ed. Charles Dempsey. Bologna: Nuova Alfa Editoriale, 1996.
- Ramusio, Giovambattista, ed., *Il viaggio di Giovan Leone e le navigazioni di Alvise da Ca da Mosto*. Venice: Luigi Plet, 1837.
- Rodolico, Francesco, *Le pietre delle città d'Italia*. Florence: Le Monnier, 1965.
- Rowe, Colin, "The Mathematics of the Ideal Villa," *The Architectural Review* (1947): 101–104.
- Rowland, Ingrid, "Raphael, Angelo Colocci, and the Genesis of the Architectural Orders," *Art Bulletin* 76, no. 1 (1994): 81–104.
- Sansovino, Francesco, *Venetia città nobilissima et singolare*. Venice: I. Sansovino, 1581.
- Scamozzi, Vincenzo, *L'idea della architettura universal*. Venice: expensis auctoris, 1615.
- Scibilia, Federica, "I rossi nodulari," *Lexicon*, no. 10–11 (2010): 75–91.
- Serlio, Sebastiano, *Il terzo libro di Sebastiano Serlio Bolognese*. Venice: Francesco Marcolini da Forlì, 1540.

- Sutera, Domenica, "Grigio di Billiemi. L'uso a Palermo dal XVI al XX secolo," *Lexicon*, no. 8 (2009): 56–62.
- Tönnesmann, Andreas, *Pienza: Städtebau und Humanismus*. Rome: Hirmer, 1990.
- Trachtenberg, Marvin, *The Dominion of the Eye: Urbanism, Art and Power in Early Modern Florence*. New York: Cambridge University Press, 1997.
- Un trattato universale dei colori. Il Ms. 2861 della Biblioteca Universitaria di Bologna*, ed., Francesca Muzio. Florence: Leo S. Olschki, 2012.
- Vasari, Giorgio, *Vasari on Technique*, trans., Louisa S. Maclehorse, ed. and intro., G. Baldwin Brown. London: J.M. Dent & Company, 1907.
- Villari, Luigi, *The Republic of Ragusa*. London: J.M. Dent, 1904.
- Vitruvius, Marcus Pollio, *I dieci libri dell'architettura tr. e commenatati da monsignor Daniele Barbaro*. Venice: Francesco Marcolini, 1556.
- Wigley, Mark, *White Walls, Designer Dresses*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1995.
- Wolters, Wolfgang, *Architektur und Ornament: venezianischer Bauschmuck der Renaissance*. Munich: C.H. Beck, 2000.
- Zeri, Federico, "Rinascimento e Pseudo-Rinascimento." In *Storia dell'arte italiana*, part II, vol. 1. Turin: Einaudi, 1979–1983.
- Zorach, Rebecca, ed., *The Virtual Tourist in Renaissance Rome: Printing and Collecting the Speculum Romanae Magnificentiae*. Chicago: University of Chicago Library, 2008.
- Zorzi, Ludovico, *Il teatro e la città*. Torino: Einaudi, 1977.