Antiquity and Modernity: Sixteenth- to Eighteenth-Century French Architecture

Frédérique Lemerle

With the exception of Italy, France is only rivalled by Spain for the number of Roman ruins it boasts. In the Middle Ages and the Renaissance, remnants of classical edifices were an integral part of the urban landscape. Many owed their survival to economic considerations, since it was often more profitable to preserve or transform than to destroy them. It was thus that city walls, even those which reductions in the urban population had rendered disproportionately large, were conserved; city gates and triumphal arches were often transformed into fortresses; sometimes triumphal arches were incorporated into new city walls or new buildings. Theatres and amphitheatres, generally invaded by houses, were integrated into fortifications or transformed into citadels or bastions. Temples were frequently converted into churches (Temple of Augustus and Livia in Vienne, Temple of Diana in Nîmes) and only demolished when they became too small to accommodate growing congregations. Aqueducts were often repaired and extended and sometimes served as toll gates (Pont du Gard). Thermal waters continued to be exploited and baths were rebuilt when they had been destroyed by cataclysms and restored when damaged by either Christians or barbarians; thermal complexes, like those in Paris (hôtel de Cluny), were often divided into lots and taken over by shopkeepers and craftsmen; in the Cimiez neighbourhood of Nice, the western baths became the site of the cathedral and its baptistery. Transformed as they were, these edifices nevertheless continued to provide a rich formal and decorative repertory that local artists naturally drew inspiration from. During the Romanesque period, the approach to this repertory was typically piecemeal: rather than seeking global models, the artists of the time tended to single out classical elements which furthered their own original aims.¹ The obviously intentional citations made by Provençal artists of the period offer a particularly eloquent example, but other regions, including those of Narbonne, Poitiers, Angoulême

1 Crozet R., "Survivances antiques dans le décor roman du Poitou, de l'Angoumois et de la Saintonge", *Bulletin monumental*, 114 (1956) 7–33; Lassalle V., *L'influence antique dans l'art roman provençal* (2nd edition, Paris: 1983).

and Saintes, as well as Burgundy were also concerned. In the 16th century, *archaeologia*, in the etymological sense of the study of Antiquity, made a considerable leap forward in France quite as much as in Italy.²

1 Architecture and Gallo-Roman Antiquities in the 16th Century

Henry II's architects, whose ideas about both modern architecture and the monumental architecture of the classical period were largely informed by the first two tomes of Sebastiano Serlio's to be published – the *Quarto libro* (1537) and the *Terzo libro* (1540) –, accorded little interest to the antiquities of Gaul. No mention of even the most famous amongst them, the size and splendour of which were comparable to those of Rome and Verona, is made by either Jean Bullant (*Reigle generale d'architecture des cinq manières de colonnes*, 1564) or Philibert De l'Orme (*Premier tome de l'architecture*, 1567). Both seem to have been aware of them however. It is almost certain that De l'Orme travelled to the south of France sometimes between 1536 and 1541, either accompanying Francis I to Nîmes at the end of 1536 or following the court to Aigues-Mortes for the meeting between the French king and Charles V in July 1539. In the contract for the Château of Lésigny, dated 1543, he specifies that

all the stone blocks will be artfully cut, care taken to ensure that the size, masonry, lines and shapes of all the elements on the left side correspond perfectly with those on the right, and all these stone elements will be so perfectly cut, assembled and joined that none of the joints will be uneven, nor appear in any way different than those of the Arena of Nîmes or other similar ancient edifices.³

As a specialist of stereotomy (art of cutting stones), De l'Orme could hardly have failed to appreciate the quality of the stonework of the Arena of Nîmes. In 1549, the four months he spent participating in the siege of Boulogne probably allowed him to also admire the Tour d'Ordre, an ancient Roman light-post, remarkable for its octagonal form. As for the seven or eight hundred

2 Lemerle F., *La Renaissance et les antiquités de la Gaule: l'architecture gallo-romaine vue par les architectes, antiquaires et voyageurs des guerres d'Italie à la Fronde* (Turnhout: 2005) 17–21, 58–60.

3 Grodecki C. (ed.), *Documents du Minutier central des notaires de Paris. Histoire de l'art au XVI^e siècle (1540–1600)*, vol. 1 (Paris: 1985), n° 116. De l'Orme was also exacting about the fineness of joints in other works (Pérouse de Montclos J.-M., *Philibert De l'Orme Architecte du roi, 1514–1570* (Paris: 2000) 111).

drawings – now lost – that De l'Orme made during his lifetime and which Peiresc acquired from his heirs after his death,⁴ it is probable that these represented the principal classical monuments of France as well as those of Rome, in particular, those of De l'Orme's home town, Lyon, and its surroundings, including the Pyramid of Vienne and the famous mausoleum and triumphal arch of the ruined Roman oppidum of Glanum.

Jean Bullant's treatise, published in 1564 (and, in extended form, in 1568), contains exclusively Roman examples: the Theatre of Marcellus, Arch of Titus, Pantheon, Temple of the Castor and Pollux, and the Temple of Portunus. That Bullant considered this city as the sole source of worthy classical models is also attested by his practice: the avant-corps of the Château of Écouen is directly inspired by the orders of the Temple of Castor and Pollux and the Basilica Aemilia; the entablature of the Château of Chantilly is taken from the Temple of Serapis.⁵ It is possible that Bullant, unlike De l'Orme, was not familiar with the prestigious ruins of the Provence, but it is difficult to imagine him being entirely unaware of the antiquities of Nîmes, which Poldo d'Albenas' well-diffused *Discours historial de l'antique et illustre cité de Nismes* (1559–1560) had made generally known.

Both Bullant's and De l'Orme's persistence in writing of Gallo-Roman antiquities as inferior to those of Italy appears in fact to be a perfectly conscious and curiously paradoxical choice. Though these edifices were appreciated and praised by a number of their most brilliant Italian colleagues (Giuliano da Sangallo, Fra Giocondo, Sebastiano Serlio and Andrea Palladio), to say nothing of a great many other educated foreigners (diplomats, doctors, students, etc.), these two royal architects, intent on creating a specifically French mode of modern classical architecture, waived their own country's rich classical heritage in favour of Serlian – in other words Italian – models. References to French ruins are similarly absent from the work of Pierre Lescot. Jacques Androuet du Cerceau is a case apart: he was the only one to make a major contribution in the area of national antiquities and, besides, to have an overall view of Roman antiquity. But as a non-building architect, he could only have influenced his colleagues by way of his engraved or designed series, which can be dated 1545–1549, and where, next to Italian antiquities he reproduced for instance the pyramid at Vienne, the mausoleum at Glanum, the Piliers de

4 See the letter to Aleandro, June 5, 1618 (*Correspondance de Peiresc et Aleandro*, vol. 1, (1616–1618), ed. and comm. J.-F. Lhote – D. Joyal (Clermont-Ferrand: 1995) 188–189 and note 110.

5 Pauwels Y., "Les antiques romains dans les traités de Philibert De L'Orme et Jean Bullant", *MEFRIM*, 106 (1994–2) 531–547.

Tutelle in Bordeaux, the Maison Carrée in Nîmes or the arches of Langres.⁶ For Italian and French architects ancient edifices provided stereotypes to be developed and amplified, as Serlio demonstrates perfectly in the *Quarto libro* in which he proposes a model derived from the arch of Ancona.⁷ It is the very same Serlian model that Pierre Lescot, the architect of the Louvre, went back to, for the Fontaine des Innocents in Paris, adapting it naturally to the monument's function and to its location in the make-up of the city. Other, less famous 16th-century architects also developed an interest in Gallo-Roman antiquities – sometimes through the demolition of ancient edifices. Such was the case with Nicolas Bachelier (1549–1555) who, in 1549, was charged by the king with the destruction of the Château Narbonnais of Toulouse; this essentially medieval edifice had been grafted onto a Gallo-Roman fortification, the structure and the materials of which Bachelier was able to study, as well as a magnificent triumphal arch, unearthed at the same time. At once architect, sculpture and scholar, Bachelier's high degree of cultural knowledge owed something to his chosen place of activity, since Toulouse was at the time one of France's first intellectual and artistic centres. It was notably the scene of one of France's first royal entries: that of François I in 1533, which Bachelier participated in. The educated elite of the city were familiar with the treatises of Alberti and Vitruvius – indeed, the jurist Jean de Boyssoné read Alberti so ardently that he literally wore his copy out and was obliged to purchase a new one in 1538 – and at least two others shared Bachelier's interest in Gallo-Roman ruins: the annotated version of Vitruvius' *Epitome*, published in 1556–1559 by Jean Gardet and Dominique Bertin, respectively humanist and royal architect in charge of marblework, contains the oldest known mention of the aqueduct at Saint-Bertrand-de-Comminges (close to the Pyrénées, south of Toulouse). Unfortunately, the famous "Architectural Commentaries" evoked in the dedication were never published, nor the notes and drawings which constituted the principal material.⁸

In the mid-16th century, De l'Orme and Bullant's attitude towards Gallo-Roman edifices was representative of that of most French architects and

6 Fuhring P., "Catalogue sommaire des estampes" and "Catalogue sommaire des dessins", in Guillaume J. et al. (eds.), *Jacques Androuet du Cerceau. 'Un des plus grands architectes qui se soient jamais trouvés en France'* (Paris: 2010) 301–332.

7 Serlio Sebastiano, *Regole generali di architettura sopra le cinque maniere degli edifici (Quarto libro)* (Venice, Francesco Marcolini: 1537) 59; *Il terzo libro* (Venice, Francesco Marcolini: 1540) 123.

8 *Epitome ou Extrait abrege des dix livres d'Architecture de Marc Vitruve Pollion. [...] Par Ian Gardet Boubonnois et Dominique Bertin Parisien. Avec les annotations sur les plus difficiles passages de l'auteur* (Toulouse: 1556/1559) 67.

humanists: Roman vestiges on French territory, it was felt, did not possess the same aura as those of Italy; consequently they were not considered to make good aesthetic models and the little attention they received was uniquely due to their technical qualities. Neither Maurice Scève nor Jean Martin imagined integrating the Kingdom's ruins into the scenarios of the royal entries into Lyon and Paris of respectively 1548 and 1549. They might however easily have chosen to use Gallo-Roman triumphal arches, rather than Serlian ones, to accompany the image of *Gallia* in the Parisian iconographic programme or to associate Gallo-Roman ruins with the Gaulish myths exploited for the event. It seems however that they considered the relationship between political power and national antiquities to be too slight for it to be worthwhile. Other French humanists, even those with a keen interest in antiquities in general, hardly showed more enthusiasm for the nation's treasures: Philandrier does mention the baths of Chaudes-Aigues and the amphitheatres of Nîmes and Arles, but nothing else; Blaise de Vigenère refers to the vestiges of the thermal complex of Nérès-les-Bains close to his home town; Jean-Jacques Boissard, on the other hand, doesn't make even the slightest allusion to the ruins of Metz, where he passed the end of his life, nor to those of Besançon, where he was born.⁹

Gallo-Roman antiquities nevertheless exerted a real influence on local architectural practices in the regions most rich in ruins, in particular in the vast region called *Gaule Narbonnaise*, which had been the first Roman *provincia* north of the Alps, whence the designation of 'Provence'. The *tempietto* of the mausoleum of Glanum inspired a number of creations, from the Romanesque dome of Mollégès to the Clock Tower at Arles [Figs. 8.1a–8.1b]. In the second half of the 16th century, many entrepreneurs and master masons adopted the new classical language by using the ornaments of antiquities they had right in front of them. The Italian architect Ercole Nigra, for example, drew inspiration from the twin arches of the Flavian Bridge at Saint-Chamas – one of the most remarkable Gallo-Roman ruins according to Serlio¹⁰ – for the monumental entrance pavilion at the Château of La Tour-d'Aigues (1571), constructed in large stone blocks and endowed with two superposed single arches [Figs. 8.2a–8.2b]. Nigra also borrowed the glyph motif used for the abacuses of the Maison Carrée at Nîmes [Figs. 8.3a–8.3b]. The Maison Carrée also inspired Palladio, who re-employed its characteristic Attic base with specific mouldings (an extra

9 Lemerle, *La Renaissance et les antiquités de la Gaule* 76–77, 79–80.

10 Serlio, *Il terzo libro* 4. The Flavian Bridge arches mark the two entrances to the bridge; they combine a semi-circular arch with a square entablature crowned at the corners with statues of lions. See Lemerle F., "Serlio et les antiques: la dédicace du *Terzo Libro*", *Journal de la Renaissance* 1 (2000) 267–274.

FIGURE 8.1 Left: The Mausoleum of Glanum (Saint-Rémy-de-Provence)

Right: The clock tower of the Hôtel de ville at Arles

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strip above the upper torus and double strips between the lower *torus* and the *scotia*) in conjunction with the composite order for his Loggia del Capitaniato (1565) in Vicenza – a citation made all the more obvious by the contrast between this single Attic base and the theoretical model proposed in his *Quattro libri dell'architettura* (I, 21).¹¹

The practitioners in Arles used the unconventional decor of the Doric entablature of the pseudo temple of Diana, which had originally been a theatre. In the 16th century, only two parts of the *cavea* were visible: one on the southern side, known as the Tower of Roland, where all three of the superposed Doric orders which had originally decorated the entire outer side of the *cavea* could still be seen (though the entablature of the lower level was very damaged) and one on the northern side, known as the Arcade de la Miséricorde (Arcade of Mercy), corresponding to the lower level of the original triple-level

11 Lemerle, *La Renaissance et les antiquités de la Gaule* 81, 49–50.

FIGURE 8.2 Left: The Roman bridge of Saint-Chamas
 Right: The entrance pavilion of Château La Tour d'Aigues (Vaucluse), 1571
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FIGURE 8.3 Left: Maison Carrée at Nîmes
 Right: The entrance pavilion of Château La Tour d'Aigues (Vaucluse)
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FIGURE 8.4 Left: “Arcade of Mercy”, the north side of the theatre at Arles.
 Right: “Tower of Roland”, the southern side of the same theatre
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structure and boasting an almost intact entablature: it had in its day been comparable in size and splendour with the Theatre of Marcellus in Rome [Figs. 8.4a–8.4b].¹² It was this unusual entablature that particularly struck, since it comprises an architrave decorated with alternated triglyphs and metopes (which according to Vitruvian rules belonged to the Doric frieze,¹³ situated above the architrave) and, above this “architrave-frieze”, a traditional frieze, decorated with ornate *acanthus rinceaux* and surmounted by a *cornice* supported by foliated consoles – all of which were more normally met with in the Ionic order. This heterodox combination of elements probably dates back to the spread of the Italic-Hellenistic style, characterised by an effacement of the specificities of the orders, during the late Republic. A similar “double frieze” entablature adorned another edifice built in Arles during the same

¹² Ibidem 89–90.

¹³ Vitruvius, *De Architectura*, IV, 3, 4–6.

period as the theatre, the Arch of the Rhone, destroyed shortly before 1687 to facilitate traffic circulation, but known through drawings and engravings.¹⁴

In the theatre, the ornamentation of the “architrave-frieze” changes from one level to another. On the two upper levels of the three superposed arcades which subsist on the southern side, the metopes are alternatively decorated with paterae and (living) bulls’ heads adorned with thin headbands, rather than the *bucrania* generally proposed as theoretical models.¹⁵ The frieze of the ground level, visible on the northern vestige, is decorated with bull protomes, that is the busts of bulls represented with their forelegs jutting forwards. This rather rare motif was also found on the Arch of the Rhone. Whatever the symbolic meaning of the motif,¹⁶ it should be observed that the metopes of the frieze are not alternated with triglyphs but with quadriglyphs, characterised by three central vertical grooves (glyphs) with triangular sections and two lateral half-grooves (counting as a single glyph); these grooves are capped by a thick horizontal band (their “capital” in Vitruvian terminology) and, under them, below the *taenia* (the thin band that runs continuously underneath both the quadriglyphs and the metopes), hang six pyramidal drops (*guttae*), which recall those of the theatre of Marcellus, even though the latter is endowed with traditional triglyphs [Figs. 8.5a–8.5b]. Besides the presence of the additional groove, the quadriglyphs of the Arlesian theatre are particularly unusual in that the glyphs are juxtaposed rather than being separated by flat bands.

That the vestiges of the theatre of Arles were a source of inspiration for local architects is proved by the number of sixteenth-century house façades that use the Doric order, combined, in certain cases, with entablatures more or less integrally modelled on that of the theatre and, in many cases, with individual elements taken from the theatre’s frieze: the prismatic glyphs, for instance, or the bull protomes. The citation is almost perfect in the case of the façade of the

14 The lower level of the entablature comprised two sections of architrave decorated with triglyphs and metopes adorned with paterae and bulls. As in the theatre, this “architrave-frieze” was surmounted by a frieze decorated with rinceaux, itself surmounted by a cornice supported by consoles. Contrary to the theatre (and taking the heterodoxy a degree further), the order used for the capitals of the arch was Corinthian (Lemerle, *La Renaissance et les antiquités de la Gaule* 90).

15 Lemerle F., “Le bucrane dans la frise dorique à la Renaissance: un motif véronais”, *Annali di architettura* 8 (1996) 85–92.

16 The architectural and artistic choices of the Augustinian building programme of the colony of Arles were decided by the political authorities: the bull protome represented the sacrificial animal reserved for the *genius Augusti*.

FIGURE 8.5 Left: Doric entablature of the “Arcade of Mercy” at the theatre of Arles.
Right: Doric entablature (second level) of the “Tower of Roland” of the
same theatre

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Hôtel de Donines, situated some ten metres from the vestiges of the Arcade de la Misericorde: we re-find here the theatre’s “architrave-frieze” with its unusual quadriglyphs and the alternation of paterae and bull protomes in the metopes; we also re-find the cornice supported by foliated consoles and surmounted by egg-and-dart moulding – and this really is an example of citation and not of recuperation [Fig. 8.6]! The Doric order of number 20 Rue de la Calade is again clearly inspired by the theatre; it would seem however that the architect had some knowledge of Vitruvian rules, since he restored the canonic form of the entablature by replacing the Doric frieze in its correct place between the architrave and the cornice. He also refrained from using bull protomes for the metopes, but he did not replace the theatre’s characteristic quadriglyphs with triglyphs and he maintained the “Ionic” cornice with its foliated consoles. This it would seem is an example of an architect who had some notion of the orders and their rules but either did not entirely master them or did not choose to always respect them: one notes the curious way that quadriglyphs, devoid this time of pyramidal drops, are engraved, rather than sculpted in relief.

The belfry of the Hôtel de Ville, reconstructed in the mid-16th century, is one of the most notable examples of buildings which paid homage to the

FIGURE 8.6 Doric entablature of Hôtel de Donines, Arles

IMAGE © F. LEMERLE

theatre by “borrowing” certain elements from the “architrave-frieze”, in this case the quadriglyphs and bull protomes [Fig. 8.7].¹⁷ Other Renaissance façades dating from the 1560s employed juxtaposed triangular glyphs, together with capitals and *regulae*, but in hexaglyphs rather than quadriglyphs (as far as I am aware, the only earlier monument for which hexaglyphs were used is the Porta Augusta in Perugia): examples include the building on the Place du Forum, corresponding to the corner of the baths and the house known as the Maison des Amazones, situated at the corner of Rue Baléchou and Rue des Arènes. For the latter, even the consoles which support the Doric pilasters were adorned with hexaglyphs similar to those of the frieze. In the Place du Forum, the varying number of *guttae* (five to six) reveals the ignorance of the master mason. The tendency to refer to the entablature of the Theatre of Arles spread through the whole region. The Renaissance façade of the Château of Uzès, for example,

¹⁷ A first attempt to replace the belfry was started in 1547, but the construction was destroyed due to insufficient foundations and the tower was entirely rebuilt between 1549 and 1553.

FIGURE 8.7 Doric entablature of the Belfry of the Hôtel de ville, Arles
IMAGE © F. LEMERLE

FIGURE 8.8 Doric entablature of Château of Uzès (Gard)
IMAGE © F. LEMERLE

is endowed with a frieze decorated with quadriglyphs without bands between the glyphs separated by metopes alternatively decorated with bull protomes and *paterae* and surmounted by a cornice supported by consoles [Fig. 8.8]. It would only have needed the quadriglyphs to have adorned the architrave and the presence of a frieze decorated with rinceaux for the entablature of Uzès to be a perfect imitation of that of the theatre.¹⁸ It is rather astonishing that the impact of the Arlesian model can be traced as far as Bordeaux, but the description and drawing of the cathedral's rood screen left by Claude Perrault leave little doubt:¹⁹ the only difference between its entablature and that of the Theatre of Arles is that the metopes were not decorated and it was supported by Ionic rather than Doric columns.

Bull protomes, very rare in classical architecture in general, met with a certain regional success in south-eastern France. In Beaucaire, the façade of the house situated at number 73 Rue Nationale boasts bull protomes similar to those of the Theatre at Arles alternated with *bucrania*. In Nîmes, the Renaissance façade of 17 Rue des Marchands re-produces rather faithfully the decoration of the Arlesian frieze, including quadriglyphs (though the three full prismatic grooves are divided here by two flat bands) separated by metopes decorated, like in Beaucaire, with *paterae*, bull protomes and *bucrania*, while the cornice, supported by denticulate and foliated consoles, is a simplified version of that of the neighbouring Maison Carrée, the architect having seen fit to combine two prestigious models in order to produce this "composition". The impact of the theatre's bull protomes even spread beyond Provence, in particular towards the regions situated to the north west. When the north wing of the Château of Bournazel in the Aveyron department was reconstructed in 1545, it was endowed with a Doric entablature comprising a richly sculpted frieze decorated with alternated bull protomes and *bucrania* [Fig. 8.9]. One curious example can even be found as far afield as Saumur: in the church of Saint Pierre here, the frieze adorning the arcade of the side chapel (1549) presents the typically Arlesian alternance of quadriglyphs and metopes decorated with *bucrania* and protomes and, just as in the theatre, the cornice is supported by foliated consoles. The specificity of the decoration of the Gallo-Roman theatre of Arles allows it to be incontestably identified as the model of all these sixteenth-century buildings. The progressive mastering of the classical

18 See Lemerle F., "L'entablement dorique du théâtre d'Arles, et sa diffusion dans l'architecture de la Renaissance", *Bulletin Monumental* 154,4 (1996) 297–306.

19 *Relation de Paris à Bordeaux du voyage fait en 1669 par Mrs. de Saint-Laurent, Gomart, Abraham et Perrault*, Paris, BnF, Ms. fr. 24713, fols. 127v–128v. The rood screen, planned in 1529 by the chapter of the cathedral, was still unfinished in 1544, date at which the work was interrupted. The rood screen was removed in 1805.

FIGURE 8.9 Doric entablature of Château of Bournazel (Aveyron)

IMAGE © F. LEMERLE

language rapidly led local constructors to efface the most unique characteristic of the entablature, i.e. the double frieze. However, the quadriglyphs and especially the bull protomes, less at odds with the canonical forms advocated by the treatises, finished by acquiring a sort of decorative legitimacy which allowed them to enjoy a certain regional success.

2 Ancient Architecture in the 17th Century: An Affair of State

In the 17th century the situation was very different. Rather quickly architects, painters and sculptors as well as writers and musicians were at the service of an overall artistic policy based on the academic system. In 1666 Jean-Baptiste Colbert, Minister and Superintendant of Buildings, created the Académie de France in Rome in 1666 and the Royal Academy of Architecture in 1671. Like Richelieu, who created the Académie française under Louis XIII in 1635, Colbert understood that the arts were a brilliant expression of the king's power, and monuments are the most undeniable proofs and symbols of it. At the same time as the academic system was being created, a whole series of

projects came into being in order to establish the *translatio imperii et studii*, already desired and initiated during the preceding century with Francis I who had wanted to make Fontainebleau a new Rome. The antiquities in the kingdom were a part of the program. Louis XIII and then Louis XIV introduced missions in order to obtain measurements. In 1642 François Sublet de Noyers, Superintendant of Buildings, gave the painter Louis Bertrand the task of drawing antiquities in the Midi of France. Alphonse-Louis du Plessis, Cardinal and archbishop of Lyon and Richelieu's own brother, a lover of antiquities, asked the architect Jean Sautereau to make drawings during his stay in Provence in 1640. Although the cardinal's drawings were lost, the architectural plans that Sautereau made of the theatre, forum and of the arch of the Rhône at Arles, of the mausoleum and the arch of *Glanum* were retained in two collections put together in the 18th century by the lawyer Jean Raybaud and by Louis Natoire.²⁰ In 1669 Colbert entrusted the architect Pierre Mignard, the painter's nephew, with an identical mission.²¹ And then in 1676, he sent Antoine Desgodets to Rome to make the most precise plans of the ancient edifices, for the study of the architecture of Antiquity was at the preliminary stage in creating a doctrine of French architecture which would claim universal validity. In this respect it became an affair of state. Then everyone had to respect the academic system and the artistic policy conducted since Louis XIII was continued *ad maiorem regis gloriam*.²²

Starting in the years 1664–1665, Colbert entrusted Claude Perrault, a member of the Academy of Science, with the task of translating, annotating and illustrating Vitruvius's *De Architectura*, considered the sum total of ancient knowledge. It was a question of rendering the treatise accessible to the widest public possible and in priority to the various trades so that they could obtain the 'authentic rules of beauty and perfection in edifices'.²³ We know that reading Vitruvius, one of the first tasks that members of the Academy of Architecture set for themselves, was postponed until Claude Perrault's work was published, for Jean Martin's translation (1547), the only one available then

20 Portefeuille Natoire, Arles, Museon Arlaten, Ms. 31, 11–12; Recueil Raybaud, Arles, Médiathèque, Ms. 796, 54–61.

21 Pierre Mignard's drawings are lost; however, the faithful copies that he made were sold by his heirs to the painter Sauvan and were subsequently acquired by the count of Caylus. Cf. Labande L.-H., "Notice sur les antiquités de la France méridionale exécutés par Pierre Mignard et sur leur publication projetée par le comte de Caylus", *Revue du Midi* 28 (1900) 272–298.

22 Lemerle F., "D'un *Parallèle* à l'autre. L'architecture antique: une affaire d'État", *Revue de l'art* 170 (2010–4) 31–39.

23 *Les dix livres d'architecture de Vitruve* (Paris, Jean-Baptiste Coignard: 1673).

in French, had become unreadable. Thus the minister's project fitted into his overall policy.

The directive viewpoint of the request obliged Perrault to make the most precise translation possible, which he explained in voluminous notes, often more considerable than the translation itself, and to illustrate it. The in-folio publication, printed by Jean-Baptiste Coignard (1637–1689), printer to the Académie française, was illustrated by the best engravers for the sixty-five full-page or double page copper-plate illustrations, supplemented with more than eighty plates in the notes. Sébastien Leclerc, the author of the frontispiece, contributed to the prestige of the book. One sees France receiving Perrault's book with the Colonnade of the Louvre in the background and on the side the project for the arch of triumph at the place du Trône. These prestigious achievements, with which Perrault was directly associated, call to mind that the Sun King's architects could compete with the most famous individuals of antiquity mentioned by Vitruvius (Dinocrates, Chersiphron, Ictinus, Hermogenes ...). Perrault's translation is astonishing, with a mixed status, in which he as translator and commentator accords an honoured place in his notes to contemporary architectural achievements and techniques and appears to criticize the ancient author whose mistakes, even inconsistencies, he reports. And it was exactly this contemporary viewpoint as well as the numerous illustrations which insured the book's success, and Perrault took advantage of a second edition published in 1684 to enrich his notes further and bring them up to date. In this second edition of chapter 5 of book VI devoted to great Corinthian rooms he depicts the famous Piliers de Tutelle in Bordeaux, a perfect example showing an entablature without a cornice, as Vitruvius prescribes for covered places [Fig. 8.10]. This monumental ensemble characterized by its Corinthian colonnade on a double stylobate and topped by a row of arcades decorated with caryatids, led to the second forum constructed under Septimius Severus. Perrault, who had himself admired the edifice and made a drawing of it during his stay in Bordeaux in 1669, also wanted, among others, to correct Androuet du Cerceau's faulty representation.²⁴

24 *Les dix livres d'architecture de Vitruve* [...] Seconde edition reveuë, corrigée, et augmentée (Paris: 1684) 217–218, note 8. Perrault himself admired and drew the edifice in 1669 (*Relation de Paris à Bordeaux*, fol. 128v).

FIGURE 8.10 Pierre Le Pautre, "Pili de Tutelle" at Bordeaux. From: Claude Perrault, *Les dix livres d'architecture de Vitruve* [...] (Paris, Jean-Baptiste Coignard: 1684) 219
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3 Representing Edifices from Antiquity

In the 17th century it was the depiction of ancient edifices which focused attention and obscured the specific features of the national ruins. Under the reign of Louis XIII, Roland Fréart de Chambray in his *Parallèle de l'architecture antique et de la moderne* published in Paris in 1650 saw the quintessence of ancient architecture in the finest Roman antiquities, 'those having the consent and universal approval of all those of the profession'.²⁵ For him only a few monuments could aspire to it, owing to the decline of the arts: the arch of Titus, the Pantheon, the theatre of Marcellus, the baths of Diocletian, the Porta Leoni in Verona. Thus their models of the orders were to put contemporary architecture back on the straight and narrow, after the Mannerist excesses at the end of the 16th century. It was to be understood, French antiquities could not compete. Chambray suggested precise plans made on one scale from a single unit (the half-diameter, divided into thirty minutes or parts) which allowed one to understand ancient reality objectively. He produced them after Serlio and Palladio and above all after Ligorio, since he owned a large number of his drawings. During the 1640s the French court showed great interest in this Italian antiquarian's manuscripts, at that time the property of the Dukes of Savoy. The *translatio imperii* desired by Richelieu tending to make Paris the new Rome, was accompanied in fact by an attempt to appropriate the most remarkable testimonies on antiquity, authentic works of art like their depictions. In any case the minister-cardinal did not manage to acquire the Turin manuscripts, or Cardinal Ludovisi's famous Roman collection.²⁶

In spite of the strict approach, Chambray's process remained artificial. The plans at his disposal were not consistent (the measurements were not the same) and Ligorio's plans were not always reliable. Herein lies the whole problem: Chambray was not an architect and had made no plans himself. And beyond that, Richelieu's death in 1642, that of the king in 1643 and the subsequent disgrace of François Sublet de Noyers, prevented Chambray from imposing his opinions which were the pre-eminence of Greek orders, superiority of the Ancients over the Moderns and Palladio's supremacy as the only one among the Moderns to approach ancient perfection.²⁷

25 "qui ont le consentement et l'approbation universelle de ceux de la profession" (Fréart de Chambray R., *Parallèle de l'architecture antique avec la moderne* [Paris, 1650], ed. F. Lemerle [Paris: 2005], Foreword).

26 Fréart de Chambray., *Parallèle de l'architecture antique avec la moderne* 21–265.

27 Lemerle F., "Fréart de Chambray: les enjeux du *Parallèle*", *XVII^e siècle* 196 (July–September 1997) 419–453.

The new power, aware that it was necessary to have exact plans available, made *in situ*, according to a rational unquestionable method in order to elaborate an official doctrine which could claim the endorsement of Antiquity, sent Antoine Desgodets to Rome in 1674, accompanied by new members of the Académie de France, an institution created eight years earlier. But because he was captured by the Turks he had only sixteen months (1676–1677) to make plans, which resulted in large expenses, particularly for unearthing the buried parts of the buildings and constructing necessary scaffolding. In Rome he met up with Adrien Auzout, a founding member of the Academy of Science (1668) who helped him to define a method of measurement. Through the scientific study of ancient monuments he thought he would manage to extract the universal laws of nature which they were obeying. The *Edifices antiques de Rome* (1682)²⁸ contributed to the prestige of the French monarchy, its intrinsic quality immediately made of it a reference in France and abroad, up until the 19th century. For the first time in fact exact plans of the finest monuments of imperial Rome were available. In addition through his strict metrology Desgodets claimed ownership of Roman antiquity; better, he gave universal value to his measurements expressed in the king's foot. The book to the glory of the Monarch emphasized that the architecture under Louis XIV attained perfection and was the alternative to antiquity.

4 Political Architecture

It was with regard to Vitruvius and the most prestigious Roman antiquities that the seventeenth century theorists reflected on the theory of the orders, transformed into a theory of Order based on a scientific aesthetics and a domineering rationalism. The orders were a part of the effort to rationalise measurements which characterized the century, without which there could be no cultural imperialism. A sixth order was even imagined, which was to be the French order, the order of the kingly Order, the order of orders.²⁹ Beyond obvious differences, Fréart de Chambray, François Blondel and Claude Perrault were speaking with one voice, without questioning the academic system they represented in various ways. They all contributed to define the general rules of architecture in the French style. In the 1640s, in his *Parallèle*

28 *Les edifices antiques de Rome* (Paris, Jean-Baptiste Coignard: 1682).

29 Pérouse de Montclos J.-M., "Le sixième ordre d'architecture, ou la pratique des ordres suivant les nations", *Journal of the Society of the Architectural Historians* xxxvi, 4 (1977) 223–240.

Chambray was striving to define a new architectural language which would recover the original purity of the Greek orders, to return to a natural architecture, in which the order expresses the architectural structure of the building. Under Louis XIV Claude Perrault and his brother Charles, the right-hand man of the minister Colbert, declared themselves defenders of the Moderns. After the edition of the *De Architectura* (1673) and the *Abrégé* (1674), Claude Perrault's ambition was to establish definitive rules of architecture in his *Ordonnance des cinq espèces de colonnes* published in 1683, an original synthesis of Vitruvius, of Roman antiquities and of the theoreticians as well as of French traditions and sensitivity. Critical of his contemporaries, (Bosse, Blondel, Mansart), praising his own work (the Louvre Colonnade 1667–1668, the Observatory 1667–1672), Claude Perrault claims the accolade of the best of the Moderns, because his invention of the “*médiocrité moyenne*” resolved the theory of the orders definitively, in the same way that his commentary on the *De Architectura* put an end to Vitruvian problems by giving superiority to the Moderns over the Ancients.³⁰

In fact under Louis XIV national antiquities were hardly restored: nonetheless François Blondel, who dealt with the arch at Saintes, devoted the last chapter of book XI of his famous *Cours d'architecture* to this edifice, judging it ‘not less beautiful than any of the preceding ones’ (that is to say Italian ones).³¹ The Piliers of Tutelle, which Claude Perrault judged as ‘one of the most magnificent and the most complete [monuments] which had remained in France, of all those that the Romans built in the past’ were destroyed in the national interest in 1677, along with the whole district in order to build the citadel of the Château Trompette. The power did not manage to incorporate into its missions the study of the ancient heritage be it national or not, nor create protective archaeological institutions as the Scandinavians did.³² Most likely Colbert did not have enough time to devise his vast project. His initiatives of the 1660s concerning the national antiquities had given cause for hope and would have strengthened France's leadership. Colbert, Blondel and Claude Perrault died within a few years of each other, and the new strong men, the architect Jules Hardouin-Mansart (1646–1708) and his pupils and colleagues Robert de Cotte, Germain Boffrand and Jacques Gabriel did not care much for antiquities, Roman or Gallo-Roman. Studying the kingdom's ruins

30 Lemerle F., “Claude Perrault théoricien: l'Ordonnance des cinq espèces de colonnes (1683)”, in Massounie D. – Rabreau D. (eds.), *Claude-Nicolas Ledoux et le livre d'architecture en français / Étienne Louis Boullée, L'Utopie et la poésie de l'art* (Paris: 2006) 18–29.

31 Blondel François, *Cours d'architecture* (Paris, Nicolas Langlois: 1683), vol. III, XI, 13, 598–600.

32 Schnapp A., *La conquête du passé* (Paris: 1993) 166–215.

remained a matter for the antiquarian elite. The plan to create an inventory of the kingdom's antiquities, which the antiquarian-collector François Roger de Gaignières (1642–1715) submitted in 1702 to Count of Pontchartrain, the protector of the Academies, was hardly successful. It was not until much later that the Intendant of Finances Charles-Daniel Trudaine, appointed director of Ponts et Chaussées in 1743, encouraged his engineers to make a note of the monuments discovered during fortification construction. Félix-François de La Sauvagère, director of the Corps du génie, published his *Recueil d'Antiquitez dans les Gaules* in 1770. The support of the minister Necker and the Académie des Inscriptions was necessary for Pierre de Beaumesnil to constitute the project of publishing his *Recherches générales sur les antiquités et monumens de la France avec les diverses traditions*. But the most famous antiquities of the kingdom were well enough known that they haunted the imagination of artists like Hubert Robert, with his pre-romantic sensitivity. He devoted a series of paintings to the ruins of the South-East, the Pont du Gard, the temple of Diana, the Maison Carrée at Nîmes, or to archaeological fantasies including the Maison Carrée, the amphitheatre and the Tour Magne in Nîmes in the same painting, or the mausoleum and the arch of *Glanum* and the Theatre of Orange.³³ It was necessary to wait until the 19th century for national antiquities to be recognized as part of the national heritage. It was also at that same time that archaeology was established as a scientific discipline, but its connections to contemporary architecture were quite different.

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33 These paintings, from 1786 and 1787, most of them today at the Louvre (*Intérieur du temple de Diane à Nîmes; Le pont du Gard; La Maison Carrée; Les Arènes et la Tour Magne à Nîmes; L'arc de triomphe et l'amphithéâtre d'Orange*), were commissioned by Louis XVI for Fontainebleau.

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