Body and Building

Essays on the Changing Relation of Body and Architecture

EDITED BY **GEORGE DODDS** AND **ROBERT TAVERNOR**

6

Alina Payne

Reclining Bodies: Figural Ornament in Renaissance Architecture

Criticism and Historiography

It is commonly acknowledged that the appropriation of classical ornament constituted a defining feature of Renaissance architecture. Indeed, its deployment and design elicited a rich body of theory that is preserved in the numerous treatises of the period.[1] Yet despite this considerable act of attention, neither definitions nor a general theory of ornament was ever explicitly formulated. The orders claimed exclusive prominence in the literature, while the human figure that so often accompanied them—the masks, herms and terms, caryatids, figural bas-reliefs, reclining bodies on window and door pediments, and upright ones on roof parapets and stair balustrades—received no commentary (figure 6.1). Why they were there, whose province this sculpted matter belonged to, and how they were thought to interact with the columns and pilasters, cornices and entablatures, remain open questions.

Occasional insights can be gleaned from the literature of the period. For example, in the fourth book of the *Quattro libri* (1570), Palladio presents his reconstructions of the various Roman and foreign antiquities best known to his contemporaries. As we know, much of this was an exercise in imagination, for although some of the ruins now lost to us were still standing, many of the temples he illustrates were in bad repair and, worse, obscured by *tumuli* and medieval construction. A far greater figment of his imagination, however, was the figural sculpture with which he completes, and evidently believes he has embellished, parapets, pediments, colonnades, and niches. In fact, he admits as much when he describes the temples of Mars Ultor in the Forum Augusteum and the Temple of Minerva in the Forum Transitorium (or Forum of Nerva): "I have shown tabernacles with statues since the ruins *seem* to suggest this."[2] And as if to ensure that his readers do not think him entirely fanciful, he adds, "No one should marvel that I have shown such a wealth of statues in this building, because we read that in Rome there were so many that they seemed to constitute

6.1
Andrea Palladio, Detail,
Loggia del Capitaniato, Vicenza.
(Photo: Author)

another people" (figure 6.2).³ The image, which belonged to Cassiodorus, was apparently as well known as Augustus's quip that he had found Rome brick and left it marble.⁴

But this is as far as Palladio will go with his comments on the sculptural matter attached to or placed on Roman buildings. Curiously enough he is even less forthcoming when he describes his own buildings. Although they too are inhabited by petrified bodies—parapet figures, reclining nudes on window pediments, caryatids or modified caryatids, figures on balustrades standing sentinel at entrances, not to mention varied figural bas-reliefs embedded in walls—none is mentioned even in passing (figure 6.3). It could be argued that as they were conceived and carved by others—such as Vittoria, Rubini, Zelotti, and India and their teams of sculptors, *scalpellini*, and *stuccatori*—they did not belong to the architect's province. Sketched into the facade by him, they awaited the input of others. Still, it seems difficult to believe that such an important component of a facade—one, moreover, that would affect its reception just as much as the columns and pilasters, and one that in some of Palladio's buildings takes on significant proportions—should be brushed off as if of no architectural consequence at all.

Although Palladio may be a good example to illustrate how often such sculptural devices were used, he may not be as instructive with respect to theory. His texts are very concise and factual, and his silence on the sculpture of his facades may not in itself be that singular. However, *not one* Renaissance author comments on the sculptural programs of his buildings and projects: not Francesco di Giorgio, sculptor though he was; not Alberti, who may well be expected to have done so since he wrote authoritatively on all the visual arts; not Serlio, despite his evident interest in the representation of personality types and character through architectural detailing; not Scamozzi; and certainly not Vignola.⁵ And this silence extends beyond the architectural treatise. Even Vasari, who had explicitly set out to explicate art with categories that crossed mediums left architectural sculpture outside his purview.⁶ The architects' and critics' collective gaze was firmly trained on the orders, and the sculpture they routinely included on the facades they designed was passed over in silence. Thus, we do not know how these figures were proportioned, if their dimensions were part of the larger network that embraced the whole facade, how their gestures were selected and how they were positioned, why some were languidly hugging pediments while others lined the roofs in *contrapposto*.⁷

Occasionally an author offers faint hints. In Book VII of *De re aedificatoria,* for example, Alberti assures his readers that in antiquity, "the use of statues was splendid (*egregius fuit usus statuarum*)," and he defines them as the ornament of public and private buildings alike.⁸ Yet as promising as this may sound, it is only moderately relevant. In this section he describes everything as ornament (not only columns and cornices but also roofs and vaults,
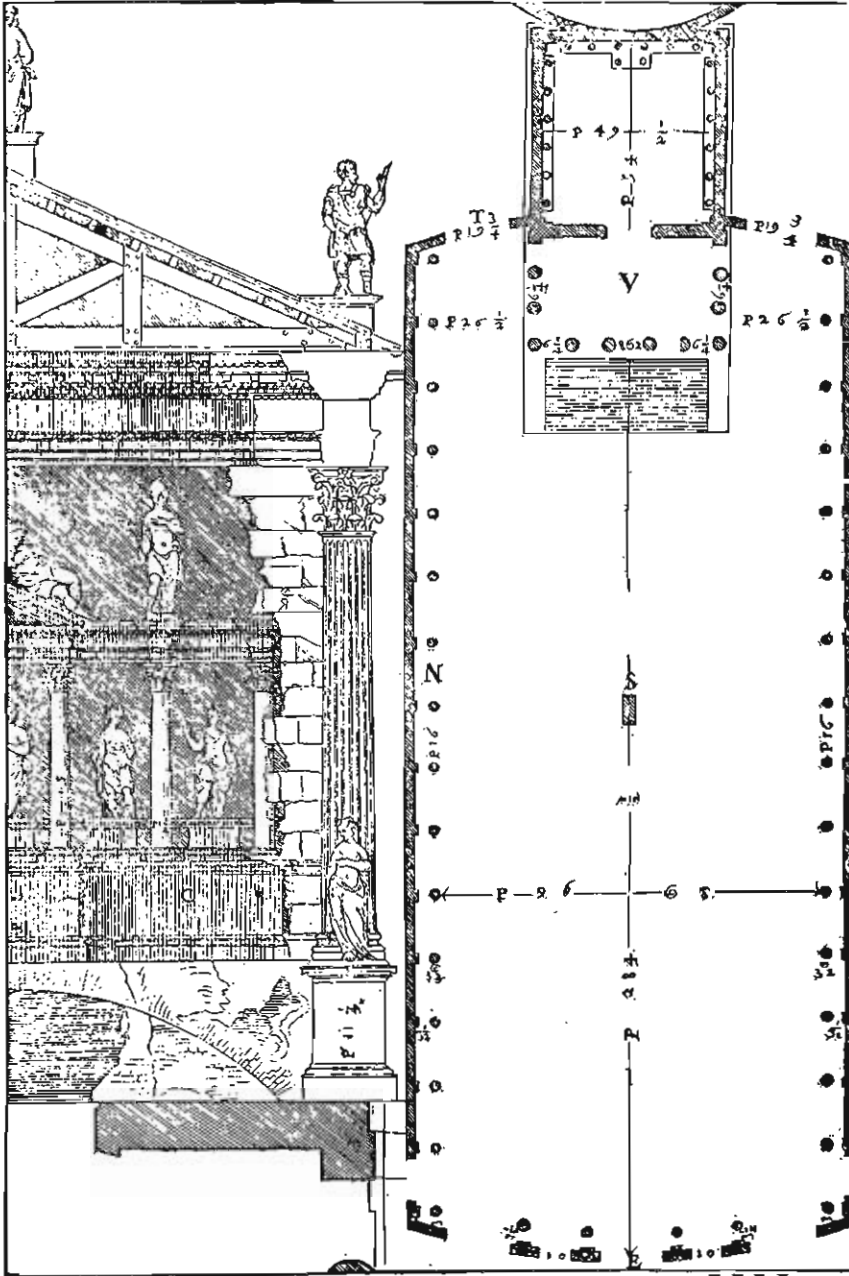
6.2
Andrea Palladio, *I quattro libri*
(1570), Forum of Nerva.

6   ALINA PAYNE · Reclining Bodies   96 · 97

6.3
Andrea Palladio,
Palazzo Iseppo Porto, Vicenza.
(Photo: Author)

gates, streets, arches, and so forth). Moreover, this statement occurs in a passage focused on commemorative monuments and effigies, and thus does not directly concern architecture.

Gherardo Spini, a Florentine letterato who wrote a treatise on ornament in the 1560s, makes a more pertinent statement.[9] Unlike his predecessors he includes a short commentary on the acroteria in his systematic survey of all architectural ornament. For him, this device is the final touch in the sequence that starts with the column base and reaches all the way to the roof. And with great acuity, he declares it to be most successfully used when representing winged deities such as Fame and Victory.[10] It is clear from the context of his overall argument that Spini sees such figures, frozen in the act of taking flight and suggesting unfettered movement, levity, and weightlessness, as a necessary counterpoint to the load-versus-support dialectic that the columns and beams set up. Yet despite the perceptiveness of these observations, Spini remains unique among his contemporaries in discussing acroteria as a formal device of the facade and as sculptural ornament.

Given that such a blind spot affects commentaries of their own work, perhaps it is not surprising to see how few Renaissance architects analyze triumphal arches critically. This is not to say that they pass unnoticed, for the *taccuini* from the period are bursting with sketches that demonstrate how attentively their details were studied.[11] Palladio, for example, planned a separate book on triumphal arches and many of his preparatory drawings have been preserved.[12] What he would have said about them is hard to speculate on, though from scattered remarks we know that he admired their form and details. He specifically praises the *intagli* of the Arch of Titus as an example of *"edifici che furono fatti ai buoni tempi"* and describes the Arch of Constantine as "very beautiful."[13] Such an attentive examination of triumphal arches can be traced back to Alberti, who was the first to include them in his treatise on architecture and comment on their figural ornament. Thus, he recommended that "statues may be best set up on the ends of the beams where they project from the work to embrace the columns" (VIII, 6), yet he offered no comment on the visual function that such a gesture performs. Moreover, the passage is so brief, and had so little resonance even within Alberti's own treatise, that it did not generate a tradition of critical attention.[14]

An exception among his contemporaries, Serlio discusses triumphal arches in his Book III (1540) on antiquities at great length. Yet, like Alberti, he omits figural ornament from the discussion. Instead, he focuses on the agglomeration of profiles and the rich carvings that characterize these later products of Roman art. Although evidently drawn to them, he finds them licentious and confused, and he dismisses all triumphal arches one by one, with the exception of the least interesting of all, the Arch at Ancona.[15] His illustrations are no less biased, for he edits out all traces of extraneous ornament, figural sculpture in particular (figures 6.4 and 6.5). It may be that early criticism of the sculptures on the Arch of Constantine had set a precedent for such treatment; after all Raphael had dismissed them as the products of a "late" and exhausted style producing *figure sciochissime* (foolish figures), and Serlio may very well have been familiar with such a view from his days in the ambience of the Raphael and Peruzzi circles in Rome.[16] But even if true, such shortcomings in the execution of specific sculptural forms do not adequately explain why he should entirely neglect a whole class of ornament.

The absence of a discussion of figural ornament in architectural discourse has been accentuated by our own disciplinary biases and a scholarly tradition that came of age at the end of the nineteenth century. Such neglect is hardly surprising in an intellectual climate in which both representation and ornament were under attack.[17] Indeed, whether focused on tectonics or abstraction, on materials and building technique or empathy theories,

6.4
Sebastiano Serlio, *Il terzo libro*
(1540), Arch of Septimius Severus,

6.5
Arch of Septimius Severus, Rome.
(Photo: Author)

definitions of ornament that went back to Schinkel and Riegl, Wagner and Worringer did not include the human body.[18]

It is certainly true that Jakob Burckhardt devoted a fair amount of space to architectural decoration in his *Die Geschichte der Renaissance* (1867, 1878) as he drew attention to now frequently neglected items such as door surrounds, candelabra mullions, interior decoration, fireplaces, infilling of pilasters, friezes and window surrounds, altars and pulpits.[19] Yet he was also quick to distinguish between figural sculpture focused on the human body and decorative carving that drew on vegetal motifs. The former was excluded from this survey; even the latter received only an ambiguous accolade. Thus, he stated that "the great architects almost all loved ornamental work, and, if nonetheless they designed their buildings to be simple and grand, for them this factor has to be taken all the more deeply into consideration."[20] The emphasis on "simple and grand" as the business of architecture resurfaces later when he declares that "architecture, more than once threatened by the dominance of a decorative style, held to the course of its high destiny thanks to the activities of the great Florentines."[21] Even Wölfflin, who liked sculpture and was himself a great supporter of Adolf von Hildebrand, concentrated on the orders and the proportional relationships they set up on facades when he dealt with Renaissance architecture.[22] In his *Prologomena zu einer Psychologie der Architektur* (1886), Wölfflin argued that "ornament is an expression of an excess of force to form. The heavy mass produces no flowers. . . . Weight is overcome, the excess of striving force manifests itself in the rise of the gable and celebrates its greatest triumph in the plastic figures that, freed from pressure, unfold freely."[23] Yet when he talked about liveliness of surface or movement and excitement, he referred only to niches and pilasters, and sculpture receded into the background.[24]

That half a century later Wittkower should similarly ignore ornament, particularly figural ornament, need not surprise us.[25] For his generation, truth and honesty of structure were the ultimate goals of architecture, and so Alberti's adage that "the work ought to be constructed naked, and clothed later; let the ornament come last" (IX,8) rang a familiar note.[26] That Alberti meant no value judgment, but simply advised on a sequence of building operations so as not to damage finished parts if set up too soon, naturally escaped notice. Finally, in what became the principal reference work for modern scholarship, Heydenreich and Lotz attended little to ornament, figural or otherwise. On the few occasions when they did, as in the case of Alessi, they labeled his facades "pictorial" (*malerisch*). In a world focused on structure and its expression, on "space-time" and essential form, this was not altogether a compliment.[27]

Sculpture scholars have been equally disinterested in architecture with the exception of those working on Donatello and Michelangelo.[28] Around the turn of the century, some

scholars brought architecture and sculpture together in the same work, as did Pietro Pao-
letti and Julius Baum.[29] Yet the echoes of these works remained weak. The treatment of the
oeuvre of sculptor-architects like Ammannati and Sansovino is particularly revealing in
this instance. Though we have exemplary studies on both, they tend to act out the preju-
dices of the field: some study their sculpture, others their architecture. Consequently, the
two parts of one artistic personality remain essentially isolated.[30] Although there have been
occasional efforts to redress the imbalance, such as Wolfgang Lotz's short but powerful for-
mal analysis of Sansovino's sculpted frieze for the Marciana or the work on the sculptors
associated with Palladio, this has not materially affected the interests, questions, and re-
search among historians.[31]

For a world focused on abstraction and technology, neglecting figural ornament was
perhaps inevitable. However, it is more difficult to explain why Renaissance authors should
have done so too. And it is precisely because this omission is so baffling that it deserves
attention. Located at the point where architecture and sculpture meet (or part), figural
ornament, as dealt with at both the level of theory and practice, allows us unique op-
portunities to investigate how Renaissance architects defined ornament and construed the
relationship between the visual arts.

Ornatus

What caused this gap between the practice of architecture and its commentators? One ev-
ident reason for the absence of a discourse on figural ornament has to be sought at the
fountainhead of all architectural theory: Vitruvius's *De architectura*. His treatise, the blue-
print for all those that followed from the Renaissance onward, entirely neglected this
aspect. For Vitruvius, architecture precedes the other arts and supplies them with their
context; paintings, mosaics, and sculpture are added later by other craftsmen, attached,
embedded, and mortared into walls, roofs, and porticoes. As such, architecture is isolated
away from this *Gesamtkunstwerk;* it precedes it and sets its parameters.[32] Implicitly, how the
arts communicate with architecture is the sculptors' and painters' problem. Vitruvius's
well-known vituperation against the irrational painted architecture of the second Pom-
peian style is only one example that confirms this bias: the painter fails to attend to the ar-
chitectural narrative, and the whole is an unmitigated disaster.[33]

These structural characteristics of *De architectura* had a direct impact on the treatise
writers of the Renaissance: Vitruvius excluded sculpture, and so did his readers. However,
three other moves Vitruvius made affected decisively, if more subtly, the way in which a
theory of architectural ornament was formulated. First, he suggests that the *ornamenta*
might be isolated as a concern unto itself.[34] This is evident in Book IV, 2 where he discusses

the elements above the column and supplies origins and prescriptions for their correct use. When he defines the *ornamenta* as *imago* (triglyphs and dentils as representations of beam-ends and purlins) in a subsequent passage, he reinforces the separation between building and ornament. Nevertheless, Vitruvius was ambiguous on this point. In Book III, for example, the orders are embedded in and indistinguishable from the building type itself. Yet his Renaissance readers privileged the notion of an applied ornamental screen that starts with pedestals, runs through columns and entablatures, and ends with acroteria.[35] Such a reading began to gain currency with Alberti, who declared the column to be "the principal ornament without any doubt" and became so established that the fact that Vitruvius had never stated as much was completely lost from view.[36]

If Vitruvius's first prophetic move was to suggest that ornament could be isolated as a concern, his second was to compare his endeavor in setting down the theory of architecture with that of Cicero, Lucretius, and Varro.[37] However, Cicero wrote on rhetoric, Varro wrote on the Latin language, and Lucretius wrote on the origin of things. These terms of comparison, though perhaps innocent enough for Vitruvius to use, were nevertheless not innocent of innuendo, particularly for Renaissance readers whose entire culture was so language driven and dependent on texts. For them, the subtle association of architecture, language, and rhetoric would have been implicit, whether Vitruvius had intended it or not.

Finally, Vitruvius made one other interesting opening in his treatment of ornament: his aesthetic category *decor* seemed to be of one family with the *decorum* of poetics and rhetoric.[38] And since *decor* particularly affected the appropriate deployment of ornament—which orders and decorative motifs were appropriate for which deity—and its definition came so close to that of *decorum,* the two virtually merged in the Renaissance reception of *De architectura.*[39]

These three aspects of Vitruvius's treatise may not seem significant in the context of the whole work, yet small gestures though they were, isolating ornament as a category, implying a *paragone* between architecture and the literary arts, and opening up ornament to the theory of *decorum* did not pass unnoticed by the reception. To be sure, ornament was already on the way to acquiring independent status in the Renaissance, as the contemporary *taccuini* with their endless records of carved details and measurements amply testify. Perhaps with the sole exception of the temple pediment, ornament produced the most powerful visual impact and gained an almost iconic currency as the most obvious way of declaring the appropriation of antiquity. No other aspect of ancient architecture had the same associative power when used as quotations; without its grid of classicizing pilasters, the Rucellai palace would have been just another Florentine block.

Once isolated, ornament could enjoy a semiautonomous existence. Separated from the main trunk of architecture, it could feed off other disciplines, especially those where ornament was a distinct category and claimed its own body of theory and critical vocabulary. Thus, when it came to a theory of ornament, it was difficult to resist the *paragone* that Vitruvius had so subtly proposed and not rely on the models provided by the literary arts. As his readers learned all to soon, the theoretical apparatus provided by *De architectura* was thin, at least when compared to that of rhetoric and poetics, where *ornatus* was part of a highly complex and developed analytical vocabulary and theoretical framework. Inevitably they turned to Cicero, Quintilian, and Horace for guidance to fill in the gaps.[40]

This process of appropriation of a theoretical apparatus from another discipline did not happen overnight. At first, architects were more concerned with identifying the forms that Vitruvius named, connecting and reconnecting signified and signifiers. From Alberti through Francesco di Giorgio to Bramante, Raphael, and Peruzzi, architects were preoccupied with little else. But as archaeological expertise sharpened and ever more authoritative translations and commentaries of Vitruvius's text became available, the interest in a theory of ornament formation and use increased, as did the isolation of ornament into a self-contained category. Already Alberti had intended the second half of his treatise to focus on ornament, even if he ended up broadening this topic; Francesco di Giorgio also focused on *colonne* separately and gave the orders their own chapter. Nevertheless, it is Serlio who consecrated the primacy and internal cohesiveness of ornament as an independent category by using it as the lens through which he looked on architecture. In Book IV, *Regole generale d'architettura sopra le cinque maniere degli edifici* (1537), columns, entablatures, and cornices combine and recombine into ever more complex systems, from door frames, through gates and fireplaces, until they become entire facade arrangements for town houses, villas, and palaces. Though he never made the connection himself, Serlio's Book IV may be seen as the complement to the *ornatus* section of any treatise on rhetoric or poetics. The gradual buildup from simple to complex forms, complete with their definitions, parameters for use, examples, warnings against abuses, and possible effects, constitutes the architectural equivalent of the structured presentation of literary *figure.*

Perhaps the consequences of isolating ornament into a self-contained category is nowhere more evident than in Gherardo Spini's *Trattato intorno all'ornamento* (c.1569). An author of poetry and scientific treatises, a member of the Accademia Fiorentina, involved with various literary and scientific circles, Spini was also in close contact with artists, among them Vincenzo and Ignazio Danti, Ammannati, Cellini, Dossio, and Bernardo Gamucci.[41] Perhaps, given his literary formation, treating ornament as an independent concern was a self-understood strategy for Spini, and it may be that his work illustrates the

prejudices of his own discipline. Yet the very fact that he enters the architectural arena, focuses on ornament, and structures his text with the rigor of a treatise on rhetoric indicates that such trespasses were possible, latent in the discourse, and that he simply enacts links that were already there. Most important, he demonstrates that these links were associated with ornament.

For Spini, the cardinal points of his theory of ornament are *imitatione, corrispondenza, invenzione,* and *decoro,* categories customarily associated with the composition of a poem or tragedy.[42] Indeed, he says so outright when he concludes that "from here derives the similitude between the architect and the poet[,] for both delight with the same means in general."[43] Once he establishes this simile, Spini sets out to develop a rigorous theory of architectural *imitatio.* And he bases it on the treatises on poetics by Aristotle and Horace. To be sure, his efforts to derive every piece of the ornamental ensemble from construction is not new, though he is more consistent than most others. What is new is the reason he offers for this procedure: "Imitation is the representation and similitude of something that has been first produced by Nature or by Art," and he continues,

> Indeed imitation has great force to move man to pleasure and delight, given that his nature is intellectual; because while he recognizes through the means of the work which is being represented the intention of the artist, he feels delight above anything else, as there is no pleasure that equals that of the intellect and of learning . . . it will suffice that in imitating something the architect gives another the opportunity to recognize it, and who recognizes learns and concludes what everything is, as human beings naturally find pleasure in recognizing the things that they see.[44]

Clearly the shadow of Aristotle looms in the background and shows how, by way of ornament, architecture can enter the discourse on *imitatio* that united the figural and literary arts.[45]

That architectural ornament could be conceived of in this manner by the 1570s was not only a direct result of the gradual isolation of ornament as category but owed much to three other phenomena. First, the reception of *De architectura* was largely left in the hands of *letterati* and historians, who routinely imported literary theory to fill in its gaps. Second, the developing language of architectural criticism had borrowed heavily from literary criticism and so invited transference from one to the other. Third, the debate on the *questione della lingua* that shaped Italian culture in the sixteenth century offered striking parallels to what may be termed the *questione dell'ornamento,* that is, the debates on the correct use of architectural ornament.[46]

As far as the reception of *De architectura* was concerned, it had been in the hands of humanists since the time of Sulpitius and Pomponio Leto's Accademia Romana. Its language, already a hindrance to Vitruvius himself, who complained that he had to resort to Greek all too often due to a lack of appropriate Latin terms, was difficult to translate into an even less shaped Italian. As result it was in a "receiving mode": notions, concepts, and categories had to be named and, more often than not, were imported from the literary arts in which the translators were expert. When Barbaro, for example, translated *decor* with *decoro,* when he compared the *maniere del dire* with the *maniere del edificare,* when he talked of the *stile misto,* he both enriched the vocabulary of architectural theory and provided opportunities for a whole theoretical apparatus from the literary arts to seep through the porous wall of language.[47]

In some cases, more was at stake than the translation of terms. Criticism demanded its own vocabulary. To be sure, literary critics drew their most powerful similes and delivered the most incisive observations when using a vocabulary rich in images. Yet the attentive reading of detail, such as Serlio initiates and Scamozzi later fully articulates, depended in large measure on the practices of literary critics. The *questione della lingua* had prompted ever closer analyses of language, and works such as Carlo Lenzoni's *In difesa della lingua fiorentina e di Dante* (1556), where he sought to pinpoint the effects of consonants, vowels, and their combinations on the sound of words, were the natural outcomes of such attention. For him few consonants produced "weakness, lowness and sweetness," many produced "gravity and grandeur," and excessive use caused "inflation and difficulty."[48] Scamozzi's description of the effects of individual profiles, such as cymas, egg and dart, *cavetti,* and crown molds, on the work as a whole owed not a little to this tradition of analysis:

> It is a certain thing that the soft (*morbide*) profiles make buildings turn out well, in such a way that they have firmness and beauty: and as the manners that are too solid, and too swollen make them seem deformed, squat, and without grace; thus, to the contrary, styles that are not fleshy enough (*scarnate*), or too sharp as some use, make the work appear weak and dry: in such a way that the marble and any other noble stone becomes like wood, completely dry and without pulp (*spolpato*).[49]

Indeed, the parallelism between sixteenth-century projects to consolidate the Italian language and develop a systematic ornamental vocabulary for architecture is striking. Both architects and humanists were engaged in sifting through a thesaurus of forms and words and striving to identify criteria for their selection. The concern with setting up grammars on

the one hand, and books of *regole* on the other, was only one of a series of similar responses to what were in effect similar conditions. When Vignola wrote his virtually textless *Regola deli cinque ordini* (1562) and Guillaume Philandrier his virtually imageless *Vitruvii Pollionis De Architectura Annotationes* (1544), both were reacting to the impact of the exegetical methods current in the literary circles of the Accademia della Virtù in whose great archaeological project they had both participated.[50]

In all these instances, theoreticians and critics acted in their own ways on that which Vitruvius had offered. And in so doing, they demonstrated that he had been too strong for his reception. What they talk about was what he talked about and in a world in which language and its formation took on such prominence they leaned toward the most rapidly expanding and most heavily used critical and theoretical apparatus available, that is, the apparatus provided by the language arts. Vitruvius had hinted that such a rapprochement was possible, and so it was.

Figura

The theory of the literary arts was not alone responsible for the architects' failure to include figural sculpture in their definitions of ornament and its functions. Yet this phenomenon of borrowing affected decisively the direction in which their attention was channeled, the issues they favored, and the problems they privileged. The remarkable *fortuna* of the *decorum* concept in architecture is one such consequence; so is the *vocabolario* mentality that invaded its treatise industry and caused a growing interest in *regole* and encyclopedias of parts; so is ultimately also the focus on the orders. Once conceived in terms of *maniere del parlare,* they necessarily took over the center stage of ornament theory, as the *genera dicendi* had taken over center stage in any treatise on rhetoric and poetics. In conjunction with Vitruvius, this set up the *forma mentis* with which ornament was approached.

It would therefore seem that we witness a parting of the ways between practice and theory, visual and verbal. The sculptural ornament so central to Renaissance architecture escapes theory and disappears into some form of collective blind spot. Yet is this cleavage one that separates the two on the surface, or are these truly noncommunicating vessels? Does the theory associated with the orders suggest nothing when considering figural devices?

The presence of the human body on a facade is no novelty in the Renaissance. If the Roman remains did not afford any other examples but the triumphal arches and written documents, that was certainly enough. But there was more, for free-standing sculpture was also a feature of Gothic architecture, and despite the shift in taste toward a classical vocabulary, it survived in the context of religious art, especially in the design of chapels, funerary monuments, and, most important, church facades. In all these cases, the religious
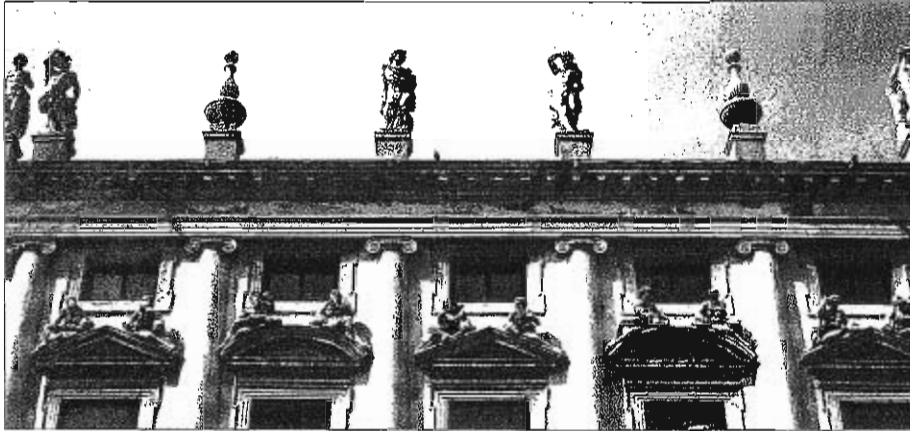
6.6
Andrea Palladio, detail, Palazzo
Chiericati, Vicenza. (Photo: Author)

origin of the device and its connotations remained strong: the figures are placed in niches as if in the consecrated space of the church. From the cathedral at Cremona to Donatello's *St. George* at Orsanmichele and *Annunciation* at St. Croce, the examples illustrating this type are legion. The same survival path is also true of acroteria figures. If they were missing from ancient temples, and architects knew of them only from Vitruvius, the Gothic figures on pinnacles certainly carried forward the notion of a petrified *gens*, negotiating the delicate transition between building and sky as a diaphanous intermediary.

A dialogue between figure and frame—that is, an exchange between sculpture and architecture—was certainly developing in this religious context. Tomb sculpture offered another powerful point of intersection for the two media. Still, rich though this tradition was, there were no examples of reclining, freestanding nudes on a pediment such as are most conspicuously evident in Palladio's palace facades (figure 6.6). In fact these architectural "*gisants*" seem to be a device newly invented in the Renaissance, which makes it all the more interesting to ask, Why was it deemed necessary? What function did it perform? Why were the figures in niches and parapets, the *statue* that Palladio mentions, insufficient? One precedent was certainly the winged victories framing the central opening of Roman triumphal arches (figure 6.7). Yet they were fully clothed, relatively flat reliefs, and contained within spandrels, not detached from the wall, literally reaching out into the viewer's space, without an evident inconographical function to elucidate their suspended position or their nudity.

Something approaching Palladio's device may be seen in the Loggia Cornaro by Falconetto; in Ammannati's Arco Benavides, in Sanmicheli's Veronese palaces, and in Sansovino's Marciana and Loggetta. As has been observed, all are indebted to some degree to
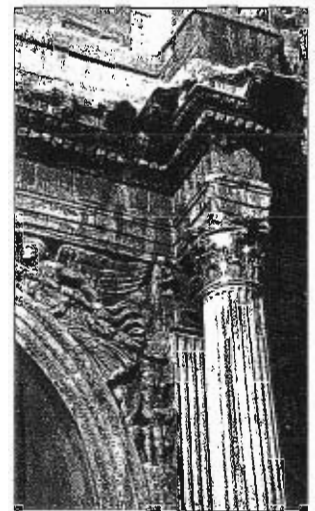
6.7
Detail, Arch of Constantine, Rome.
(Photo: Author)

Raphael's late work, to his facade of the Palazzo Branconio, where statues in niches tradi-
tionally associated with a religious type were brought into the domain of the profane, lit-
erally leaping from religious three-dimensional icons to a purely decorative device that
allowed texture, light, shade, and movement to enhance the tactility of the architectural el-
ements of the facade.[51] In Falconetto's case the theater-related context for the Loggia, the
tight three-way relationship among himself, Ruzzante, and their patron Alvise Cornaro,
may suggest why detached "live" figures should suddenly inhabit the blank window spaces

of a reconstructed *scaena frons*.[52] And in Sansovino's case as in Ammannati's, the origin of the winged victories in triumphal arches is still apparent, especially as they gracefully enhance similar arched openings. Yet although their figures are more outspokenly three-dimensional and nude than the Roman exemplars, there is still another leap from here to Palladio's pedimental figures.

It is possible to argue that the leap occurs in the wake of Michelangelo's Medici chapel at San Lorenzo and that his treatment of the sarcophagi with their reclining nudes, generically named Dawn, Night, and so on, is the missing link that connects Palladio's Palazzo Chiericati with medieval tomb sculpture and Roman victories (figure 6.8). An inhabitable sculpture or a sculpted piece of architecture, Michelangelo's chapel begged the kind of translation across media that I would like to suggest occurred here. The uniform use of marble for figures, furniture, and spatial container enhances the equivalence between them. Every dentil, volute, garland, and bead-and-reel appears to be of one family with the stone furniture, the sarcophagi, and the bodies placed on them. They are all seemingly carved by the same tools, the same hand; the architectural details belong to sculpture in the same way that the geometry of the bodies placed along pyramids and diagonals suggests that they belong to architecture. On the eve of the seventeenth century, Scamozzi suggested as much when he attempted to define architectural forms and was forced to resort to the Michelangelesque reclining bodies to reinforce the traditional image of the Vitruvian man (figure 6.9).

But not only bodies enter the architectural structure of the whole. A close look at the sarcophagus shows clearly that its lid has much of the so-called *tetto spezzato* (broken pediment) that was to become such a disputed architectural feature in the later sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. Moreover, this practice was put at Michelangelo's door by many later critics like Pirro Ligorio and Teofilo Gallaccini, who were exasperated with the excesses of the *epigoni*.[53] The same convex curve, very slight yet taut, the same scrolls and interruption in the middle that we find in the Porta Pia, we also find in the Medici sarcophagi. Nor does this effect of telescoping one member into another across media end here. The curve and counter-curve of the sarcophagus lid echo the curve of the niche pediments and garlands; its supports respond to the pilasters framing them; the reclining nudes refer to the figure of Lorenzo contained in his architectural setting. And, the same profiles make up the sarcophagus lid as the niche and door frames, thus suggesting continuity between them. As a final gesture, the scroll placed directly below the knee joints of the seated figure, and replete with connotations of mobility, simultaneously carries architectural connotations by recalling the Ionic volute (figure 6.10). Indeed, it is only by comparison with more traditional funerary monuments and with ancient sarcophagi that it becomes clear just how deliberately architectural the Medici ensemble is.
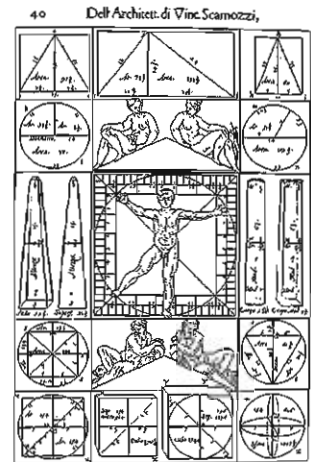
6.9
Vincenzo Scamozzi,
L'idea dell architettura universale
(1615), Architectural Forms.
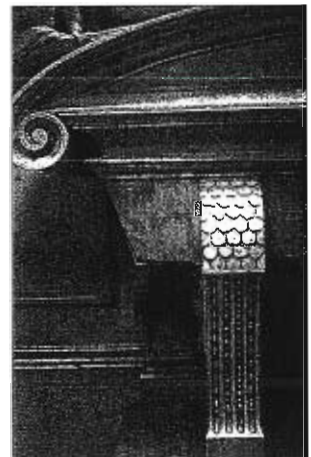
6.10
Michelangelo, detail of
sarcophagus, Medici Chapel,
Florence. (Photo: Author)

Michelangelo had already proposed the human figure as ornament with the *ignudi* of the Sistine ceiling and in the facade of San Lorenzo in Florence. And certainly Palladio would have known this work and its offspring in the painted work of others.[54] But the impact of the Sistine ceiling should not obscure the kind of transposition possible between two three-dimensional arts like architecture and sculpture—and one that could have reached the Veneto through the confluence of relationships between Sanmicheli, Sansovino, Ammannati, Falconetto, and Palladio, in which patrons like Trissino and Cornaro played their part.[55] Indeed, Vasari tells us that "everyone was astounded" at the sight of the Medici chapel and goes on to describe its extraordinary impact, particularly on architects.[56]

Seen in this context, Michelangelo's anonymous naked figures set into a classical interior and reclining on a classicizing sarcophagus enhance and modify the tradition of the detached figures set up on triumphal arches or winged victories in the spandrels of the arch itself. Like them, from being sculpture they become architectural ornament. Palladio may talk of *statue* when he describes ancient building complexes, but in fact they have ceased to be unique objects authored by one artistic personality. In his pedimental figures, we witness a recession of authorship, a recession of the object as artifact to be admired and apprehended in its uniqueness. His figures stop being one exceptional object offered to close-up view, to be walked around and almost touched; they become one of many. According to the illustrations in the *Quattro libri,* there were fourteen such figures intended for the Palazzi Barbaranno and Iseppo da Porto (figure 6.11) and ten for the Palazzo Chiericati (and, if we add the parapet figures, another eight in the case of the former). Just as a column is one of many, just as the Corinthian capital is one piece of sculpture in the round among many, these figures too are exactly repeatable objects. Lifted high off the ground (not even on the first story as in the case of the Marciana, but all on the *piano nobile*), an intermediary layer of deep carving between the column capitals and the ground floor rustication, they are not presented as a unique artifact to be appreciated as the "original." Alberti said as much: "But I would have the ornament that you apply be for the most part the work of many hands of moderate skill."[57] Walter Benjamin's mechanical reproduction is far in the future, but the aura is nevertheless the issue here. Between architectural ornament and sculpture lies multiple reproduction; the aura is missing.[58] Neither unique accomplishments deserving of commentary in their own right, nor precisely quantifiable (like the orders that can be described piece by piece for a reader), these figural sculptures inevitably disappear through a fissure between image and text.

We are witnessing here the translation of a sculptural motif into an architectural one, and this is happening purely at the formal level, for there are no iconographic implications associated with it as there are with the figure placed within a niche. Nor is this a preferred
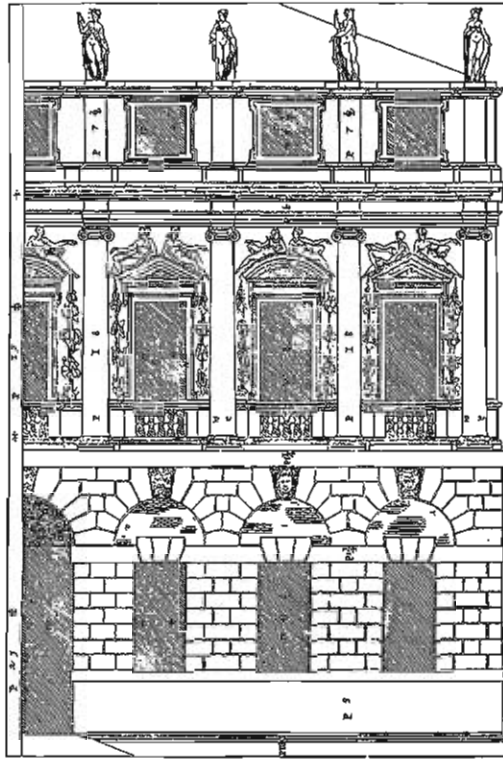
6.11
Andrea Palladio, *I quattro libri*
(1570), Palazzo Iseppo da Porto.

device for sculptor-architects like Sansovino or Sanmicheli. Palladio who crosses media less than others, is perhaps the most frequent user of the pedimental reclining nude in the sixteenth century, and his interest in this form is a testimony to its absorption into the professional architect's vocabulary.

Why do architects reach out for this device? Why add more sculptural incident to the facade? Certainly, when Renaissance architects wanted to signify a Gothic manner (as in the proposals for the completion of the facade of San Petronio in Bologna, for example), they covered the surfaces with figural sculpture. Why then skirt potential failure?[59] To say that they were necessary props for an *all'antica* appearance (as Palladio argued) is to stop short of the real issues. With this example I would like to argue that in a visual culture focused on *moti* and *istoria*, architecture seeks a point of contact. Palladio resists the humanization of the frame in the manner of Alessi, Serlio, and other north Italian architects, or indeed, that of the northern European tradition. Yet he uses it to explicate architecture more subtly and more effectively. From the late 1540s, Palladio begins to add figural sculpture to the *piano*

nobile. The trend starts with the Palazzo Porto Festa; continues with the Palazzo Chericati, the early drawings for the Rialto Bridge, and the Palazzo Valmarana; and reaches a climax with Palazzo Barbaranno and Loggia del Capitaniato. These devices accompany a growing sculpturalization of his architectural members that seems to require an intensification of visual incident at the middle story.[60] His choice is for organic forms that literally lie beside and accentuate the swelling of a column, and so enhance the carrying message of a pilaster or the heavy, inert weight of a pediment.

We know that Palladio conceived of the classical frame of column/entablature/pediment in gestural rather than strictly tectonic terms.[61] This is especially evident when he discusses junction points of the frame, such as bases and friezes, that is, the points where the columns meet the platform or where the roof beams meet columns: "Likewise, since it is most appropriate that those things upon which a great weight is placed are squeezed, they [the ancients] placed bases under the columns, which, with their torus and scotiae seem (*paiano*) to be crushed by the weight above. Thus, they also introduced triglyphs in the cornices, modillions and dentils, to represent the ends of those beams in the attic which are placed to support the roof."[62] Clearly, for Palladio, bases and triglyphs exist no less in a world of representation and fiction than in one of loads and structure. For him, "abuses" in the use of ornament are those instances that violate this fiction. These are the *cartocci,* a manner of brackets or scrolls that occasionally supported columns but most often appeared in entablatures as *mensole triglifate* (brackets as triglyphs). Palladio's target is clear:

> For this reason instead of columns or pilasters which have to carry some weight one should never place *cartelle,* also called *cartocci,* which is a sort of involuted form which strikes the intelligent as extremely ugly, and to those who are not knowledgeable brings confusion rather than pleasure, and produce no other effect except to raise the expense. Similarly these *cartocci* will not be made to project out of entablatures; since it is necessary that all the parts of the cornice be made towards some effect, and display that which would be visible if the work were made of wood, and in addition, since it is appropriate that in order to support a weight something hard and able to resist is required, there is no doubt that these *cartocci* are entirely superfluous, since it is impossible that a beam or any other member produce the effect they represent, and feigning to be soft and tender, I don't know with what reason they can be placed under something hard and heavy.[63]

This concern for expressive tectonics is not without precedent, though it builds up gradually over the course of two centuries. Alberti likened columns, beams, and arches with

bones and ligaments, the wall with flesh (III, 14);[64] Francesco di Giorgio described the *fregio pulvinato* (curved frieze) as "little squashed pillows (*piumacetti*)";[65] Gherardo Spini described the entasis as *tumefazione* (bruising), found etymological grounds to suggest that the torus represented a muscle under stress, like the chest of a straining horse, and described the egg-and-dart motif as gravel squeezing through mortar under the pressure of the floor beams.[66] But none of these authors associated this organismic reading of ornament with the structural frame as consistently as did Palladio. Nor was their reference to *imitatio* as unequivocal. Of course, not being a *letterato* like Spini, Palladio does not resort to Aristotle to ground his argument. But his terms of expression—*fingere* (to seem), *dimostrare* (to demonstrate), *pare* (to appear), and *piacere* (pleasure aroused in the viewer)—testify to the assimilation of the theory of literary *imitatio* and its almost unself-conscious application to architecture.

What do the two strands of this argument—about figural sculpture and the exchanges with literary theory—reveal about the definition of ornament in Renaissance architecture? As the discourse on *imitatio* developed in the literary and figural arts slides imperceptibly into the reading of Vitruvius, ornament increasingly blends structural and corporeal references. By Palladio's time, the ornamental screen is understood to swell and contract as if it were a muscle. In this scenario, the human figure completes the story—the architectural *istoria*—of load carried by support. As figural ornament takes up the space halfway between the inert wall of the building and the street of moving bodies, it gestures the structure. In so doing, it beckons the viewer "in" as seductively and effectively as the strategically placed *figura* that Alberti recommended painters include in a well-structured painted *istoria*.[67] Located at the intersection of literary theory, figural *imitatio,* and architecture, ornament could and did slide between the artificial barriers with which scholarship so often separates disciplines. Yet it is precisely from its location on this edge that ornament facilitated dialogue and exchange between the arts and tied Renaissance architecture into the fabric of its culture.

only through the perfection represented by his body. The primary structure of the painting is therefore overlaid with groups of figures whose bodies articulate the numerical and dimensional qualities of the painting. Their identities (about which there can be no certainty, and are not the focus of this study) are a secondary consideration.

66. Tavernor 1998.

Chapter 6

I am grateful for the support of the Graham Foundation in preparing this chapter.

1. Payne 1999, 1–10.

2. Palladio 1980, 276: "Io ho posto de' tabernacoli con statue, come per le ruine *pare che vi fossero.*"

3. Palladio 1980, 277.

4. Palladio 1980, 523, n. 5. Alberti mentions the story too (VII, 16). Alberti 1988, 240.

5. Alberti 1988; Francesco Di Giorgio 1967; Scamozzi 1964; Serlio 1964; Vignola 1985.

6. Vasari 1986. Vasari's 1568 edition of the *Vite* shows the same bias.

7. Payne 1999.

8. Alberti *Faksimile,* VII, 16, 134.

9. Spini 1980, 30–201.

10. Spini 1980, 179.

11. See especially Günther 1988.

12. Puppi 1990.

13. Palladio (1988, 18) comments on the Arch of Constantine in his *L'antichita di Roma* when he reviews the triumphal arches in Rome; it is the only arch that receives such an accolade. For Palladio's use of arches as authority to justify his use of bas-reliefs on the facade of San Petronio see Palladio 1988, 133. Palladio specifically praises the *intagli* of the Arch of Titus as an example of "edifici che furono fatti ai buoni tempi" unlike the Temple of Peace (Basilica of Maxentius) that he illustrates: Palladio 1980, 262.

14. Alberti 1988, 266.

15. Serlio 1619, 109v. For his criticism, see, for example, comments on the Arco dei Argentieri, which shows members that are *vitiose, confusione,* same profiles one on top of the other (100–101r); on the Arch of Constantine, which has *mensole e dentelli* and *confusione di intagli* (106v); and on the Arch at Benevento, which has too many *intagli* and caters to the *piacere del vulgo* (104v).

16. Rowland 1994, 104; Frommel 1989, 39–49.

17. The seminal text that best illustrates this position is without a doubt Adolf Loos's "Ornament und Verbrechen." Although traditionally dated 1908, more recent research shows that Loos wrote it as a lecture in late 1909 or 1910 (Rukschcio 1985, 57–68). Le Corbusier published the essay in 1920 in *L'Esprit Nouveau.* His own *L'Art decoratif d'aujourd'hui* (1925) and *Après le cubisme* (1918, with Amedee Ozenfant) constituted equally influential (if somewhat differently oriented)

statements on the subject. On the larger issue of imbrication between architectural history writing and contemporary discourse, see Payne 1994, 322–342.

18. The tectonics discussion owed much to Friedrich Schinkel, whose well-known position ("Architektur ist eine Fortsetzung der Natur in ihrer konstruktiven Tätigkeit") was developed by Bötticher 1852 and others. On Schinkel, see Börsch-Soupan 1976, 161. The discussion, focused on materials and building technique as determinants for architectural form initiated by Gottfried Semper, found an enthusiastic reception in the written work of Otto Wagner. See his influential *Moderne Architektur* (Vienna 1896, 1898, 1902). For the abstraction-empathy lineage of the ornament discussion, see especially Riegl, *Stilfragen* (1893) and Worringer, *Formprobleme der Gotik* (1910) and *Abstraktion und Einfühlung* (1907).

19. Burckhardt 1987.

20. Burckhardt 1987, 192.

21. Burckhardt 1987, 191.

22. See, for example, the 1893 article on Adolf von Hildebrand: Wölfflin 1946a, 84–106.

23. "Das Ornament ist Ausdruck überschüssiger Formkraft. Die schwere Masse treibt keine Blüten"; "die Schwere ist überwunden, der Überschuss der strebenden Kraft erscheint in der Hebung des Giebels und feiert den höchsten Triumph in den plastischen Figuren, die, dem Druck en-

thoben, hier frei sich entfalten können." Wölfflin 1946b, 41.

24. Geoffrey Scott, the champion of Einfühlung for the English-speaking world, also ignored the place of figural ornament in classical architecture and, like Wölfflin, concentrated on the orders, proportion, mass, and space. Scott 1965.

25. Wittkower 1949. The tradition leading up to Wittkower included Willich and Zucker's influential *Baukunst der Renaissance in Italien* (1914–1926). Following in the steps of Schmarsow, they focused on the spatial characteristics of Renaissance architecture and described ornament as "devoid of content" and "the architectural furnishing of the facade as unimportant." Willich and Zucker 1914, vol. 1, 1926, 2: 257, 266.

26. Alberti 1988, 312.

27. Lotz defines Alessi's treatment of the Villa Cambiaso as a case of "ornament drowning structure" and his style more generally as "pictorial." Heydenreich and Lotz 1974, 290–291. On the association of *malerisch* (pictorial) with ornament in modernist architectural criticism and theory, see Payne 2001. On structure/ornament, see Sankovitch 1998, 686–717.

28. von Bode 1902; Summers 1981.

29. See Paoletti 1897–1898.

30. See, for example, Boucher 1991; Howard 1975; Kiene 1995.

31. See Lotz 1977, 140–151. Among exceptions, see also Wolters 1992–1993, 102–110; Del Turco and Salvi 1995; Shell and Castelfranchi 1993; and Brandt 1994.

32. Vitruvius I, 1; II, 1, 7; 1983, 9–21 and 85.

33. Vitruvius VII, 5, 5; 1983, 107.

34. Vitruvius distinguishes the *ornamenta* from the columns and uses the term for the elements above the column that he discusses separately under this rubric. See Vitruvius, I, 1, 6 and IV, 2, 1.

35. Vitruvius, IV, 3.

36. Alberti 1988, VI, 13. Thoenes and Günther 1985, 261–271.

37. Vitruvius, IX, praef.

38. "*Decor* demands the faultless ensemble of a work composed, in accordance with precedent, of approved details. [*Décor autem est emendatus operis aspectus probatis rebus conpositi cum auctoritate.*] It obeys convention (*statio*), which in Greek is called *thematismos,* or custom (*consuetudo*) or nature (*natura*)." Vitruvius, I, 2, 5.

39. On the aesthetic implications of *décor* and its reception in the Renaissance see Payne 1999, chaps. 1, 3; on its implications for the representation of a socioeconomic hierarchy through architectural means, see Onians 1988.

40. On the impact of literary theory on architecture, see Payne 1999.

41. On Spini's contribution to the theory of architecture, see Payne 2000b, 143–156.

42. Spini 1980, 68. For similar categories used in poetics, see Minturno 1563.

43. Spini 1980, 68.

44. Spini 1980, 68–69.

45. See Aristotle 1982, III, 4: "Speaking generally, poetry seems to owe its origin to two particular causes, both natural. From childhood men have an instinct for representation, and in this respect man differs from the other animals that he is far more imitative and learns his first lessons by representations. What happens in actual experience proves this, for we enjoy looking at accurate likenesses of things which are themselves painful to see, obscene beasts, for instance, and corpses. The reason is this. Learning things gives great pleasure not only to philosophers but also in the same way to all other men, though they share this pleasure only to a small degree. The reason why we enjoy seeing likenesses is that, as we look, we learn and infer what each is, for instance, that is so and so.'" On the tradition of imbrication between the literary and figural arts, the seminal work remains Rensselaer W. Lee, *Ut pictura poesis: The Humanistic Theory of Painting* (New York: Norton, 1967).

46. On the relationship between the debates on language and architectural ornament, see Payne 2000c.

47. Barbaro 1567, 115.

48. Lenzoni 1556, 129.

49. Scamozzi 1615, II, 140.

50. For the archaeological and exegetical program of the academy, see especially Tolomei 1985, 31–61.

51. Howard 1975, 27.

52. On Cornaro's relationships with Ruzzante and Falconetto, see Fiocco 1965; *Alvise Cornaro e il suo tempo,* ed. L. Puppi (Padova: Commune di Padova and Assessorato ai Beni Culturali, 1980).

53. Coffin 1964, 191–211; Gallaccini MS, f. 78v.

54. Burns and Tafuri 1998.

55. Perino del Vaga's drawing of a project for the facade of the palace of Andrea Doria in Genoa (Amsterdam, Rijksmuseum, 1948/133) shows similar devices and may suggest another possible filiation. See Burns and Tafuri 1989, 1998, 307.

56. Vasari 1986, 901.

57. Alberti 1988, IX, 8, 312.

58. Benjamin 1968, 217–252.

59. See, for example, Vasari's criticism of the Gothic manner, in particular of the "maledizzione" of agglomerated sculptural incident in his introduction to architecture. Vasari 1986, 35.

60. The trend toward increased sculpturalization in Palladio's work has been noted and variously assessed; see Ackerman 1977. Puppi finds the late work problematic for this reason and describes his manner as "exaggerated pictorialism"; see Puppi 1986, 236. In an earlier article, Wolters (who focuses mostly on interior decoration but also assesses the Loggia del Capitaniato) also sees Palladio's "decorated" style as attributable to outside factors (whims of the client or professional *stuccatori* to whom he would have given no design guidance). Wolters 1968, 255–267.

61. On Palladio's tectonics, see Payne 1999, chap. 8.

62. Palladio 1980, 67.

63. Palladio 1980, 67.

64. Alberti 1988, 385.

65. Francesco di Giorgio Martini 1967, II, 385.

66. Spini 1980, 84.

67. "In an *istoria* I like to see someone who admonishes and points out to us what is happening there; or beckons with his hand to see; or menaces with an angry face and with flashing eyes, so that no one should come near; or shows some danger or marvellous thing there; or invites us to weep or to laugh together with them." Alberti 1966, 78.

Chapter 7

1. Francesco's approach was that of an expert and experienced fortress builder as well as an architectural theorist, and it is this double qualification that distinguishes his claim to primacy against those of Filarete and