

Joseph Connors, "Poussin detrattore di Borromini," in *Francesco Borromini*, Atti del convegno internazionale (Roma 13–15 gennaio 2000), ed. CHRISTOPH L. FROMMEL, ELISABETH SLADEK, Milan, Electa, 2000, pp. 191–204.

English title: "Poussin Thought Little of Borromini."

Nicolas Poussin, who seems totally silent on matters of contemporary architecture, was, I will argue in this paper, Borromini's harshest and most dangerous critic, one whose views won converts both in Paris and in Rome and whose stern disapproval helped to isolate the architect in his last years.¹ The argument is based on a reconsideration of well-known texts and images, in particular, on a reading of Fréart de Chambray's *Parallèle de l'architecture antique et de la moderne*. It has a surprising corollary. Under Alexander VII Bernini, resentful of Borromini at least since the affair of the campanili of St. Peter's, came under the spell of French classical theory and reformulated his hostility to Borromini in Poussinian terms. Borromini became an "original" and hence contemptible architect. Original, in French classical criticism, could be equated with a term of opprobrium, gothic. Bernini, I would argue, following hints from Poussin, is the person responsible for putting into circulation the idea that Borromini's architecture was gothic. This was a dark allegation, and in spite of Borromini's attempts to defend himself it stuck. Indeed it contributed much to the ruin of the architect's reputation during the last decade of his life. "Borromini gotico" has been resurrected in modern criticism, but as a positive quality, one particularly appropriate for an architect who seems explicable in terms of the mathematical formulae of the medieval mason.² But Borromini would not have recognized himself in the gothic mirror that the twentieth century has held up to him.

As is well known, Borromini admired Michelangelo and used the cult of Michelangelo to elevate the virtue of originality. He was fond of quoting a maxim of the master: "chi segue altri, non li v'è mai inanzi." In the context of Vasari's *Vita*, Michelangelo uttered the phrase when confronted with the example of a sculptor who claimed to be able to produce statues that could be mistaken for antiques. In the decades after Michelangelo's death it became something of a slogan in the *botteghe* of many independent-minded artists and architects. In its most radical form "Chi segue altri" might mean rejection of all discipleship, even to Michelangelo himself, a refusal in other words of the radical Buonarrotism that had seduced architects like Giacomo Del Duca and Pellegrino Pellgrini in the 1560s and 1570s. The creative architect would follow no single master, but form his own original style by emulating and then going beyond many worthy masters, all of whom had themselves formed their style on the antique.³

1. This paper was inspired in part by a visit to the Poussin exhibition in London in 1995, and by a reading an insightful article, Frommel 1996. My thanks to Fabio Barry and Sabina de Cavi for reading drafts.

2. Wittkower 1974.

3. Borromini's prefatory letter to the *Opus Architectonicum*, in Connors 1998, fol. 2r, and pp.

Thus Michelangelo should be seen as Borromini's guiding star but not in every case as a stylistic model. Indeed, references to Raphael, Serlio, Vignola, Ligorio and Palladio outnumber direct borrowings from Michelangelo in Borromini's work. He truly attempted to form his style on all the Renaissance masters and on the antique, in the spirit of the title Martinelli's guidebook: "Roma ricercata nel suo sito, e nella scuola di tutti gli antiquari."

However, even if Michelangelo was not Borromini's exclusive guide, he remained a source of special fascination. Borromini turned himself into a Michelangelo expert. He studied his buildings with a connoisseur's eye and sought out new documentation. He could point out where Michelangelo stopped in the Sforza chapel in S. Maria Maggiore and where Tiberio Calcagni began ("ma non fu intesa e si vede non corrispondere alla bizzarria del resto").⁴ He knew which Michelangelo follower did the cupola of S. Maria di Loreto (Del Duca), and which the doors (Ammannati). He must have been delighted when his friend Martinelli made a discovery in the archives, namely Michelangelo's promise to finish the Julius tomb, drafted before a notary in 1517.⁵ With Martinelli and Mocchi he visited the Della Rovere chapel in the Trinità ai Monti, and pointed out the portraits of Michelangelo's associates and of the master himself in Daniele della Volterra's altarpiece.⁶ The Michelangelo model for S. Giovanni dei Fiorentini was stored in the Florentine *consolato* until 1720, and Borromini must have studied it closely.⁷ He felt that he was Michelangelo's successor in that project of founding "una chiesa sì grande in un fiume tanto terribile" (Vasari-Milanesi, V, p. 455).

After Borromini's death his friend and printmaker, Domenico Barrière, confided to the Minim scientist at the Trinità ai Monti, Charles Plumier, that Borromini had shown him a manuscript on architecture that he thought was by Michelangelo. It contained many beautiful examples, but it also came to grips with the paradox of teaching originality:

...Dominique Barriere, François de nation, l'un des plus habiles Dessinateurs & Graveurs

xvi-xvii. The phrase was first used of Michelangelo by Michele Tramezini in his preface to Lucio Fauno's translation of Flavio Biondo, *Roma Trionfante*, Venice, 1543: "Chi segue altrui, li sia doppio" (Steinmann and Wittkower 1927, pp. 349 and 367). It then appears in Vasari (1993, p. 126): "Chi va dietro a altri, mai non li passa innanzi; e chi non sa far bene da sé, non può servirsi bene delle cose d'altri." It was used by Lelio Guidiccioni in reference to the young Bernini: "che s'egli doveva sempre andar dietro altrui, non sarebbe giammai arrivato a passar facilmente avanti ad alcuno" (D'Onofrio 1966; D'Onofrio 1967, p. 183). Burns 1999, pp. 284f., adds a similar dictum from the writings of Ben Jonson: "One, though he be excellent, and the chief, is not to be imitated alone. For never no imitator, ever grew up to his author."

4. D'Onofrio 1969, p. 104.

5. Martinelli 1658, pp. 218-22.

6. D'Onofrio 1969, p. 182; on the chapel see Hirst 1967 and Davidson 1967.

7. D'Onofrio 1969, p. 59; Rufini 1957, pp. 15f.

de Rome. Je lui entendis dire bien des fois avoir vû un Manuscrit de la propre main de Michel-Ange entre les mains de ce bizarre Architecte il Borromino, contenant plusieurs belles leçons d'architecture, où il concluoit pourtant que les meilleures étoient celles du génie de l'Architecte même.⁸

Although it cannot be traced today, and is unlikely to have been an autograph Michelangelo manuscript, it must have been one of Borromini's most cherished possessions, a gospel-book that would keep him in the faith and remind him of the primacy of the creative imagination: "the best lessons are those of the architect's own genius."

Michelangelo had his admirers, but also his enemies and critics. Pirro Ligorio, Daniele Barbaro, Cardinal Paleotti, Bernardino Baldi and Pietro Testa all thought that Michelangelo had led architecture astray.⁹ In 1612 Cigoli could compare the resistance to Galileo's discoveries to the resistance that had once greeted Michelangelo's innovations.¹⁰ Michelangelo, "il prencipe degli architetti," was an embattled fortress in the seventeenth century, a beacon to those who believed in innovation but anathema to those who held innovation suspect. Radical classicists would have no truck with the slogan, "che segue altri non gli va mai innanzi." On the contrary, their creed was complete fidelity to antiquity and the Renaissance tradition, submission to ideal beauty and distrust of individuality. These beliefs were held, indeed actively proselytized, by an artist who never built a building though he designed many, Nicolas Poussin.

Poussin studied architecture closely in order to give his historical and biblical paintings appropriate backdrops.¹¹ In his early paintings, such as the *Death of Germanicus* (1626), the architectural background reflects a sober version of contemporary architecture. The pretorium of Antioch, where Germanicus lies dying, could be mistaken for the entrance atrium of Palazzo Barberini. In the following years the *all'antica* architecture in the backgrounds of Domenichino's paintings came to have great resonance for him. The ancient temple in the *Execution of S. Andrew* in the Triclinium Pauperis at S. Gregorio Magno showed him the possibilities for a full and literal reconstruction of the classical cityscape.

Most importantly, between c. 1629 and 1631, Poussin lived with Jean Lemaire, the painter of architectural fantasies. Lemaire combed the Renaissance treatises and the great collections of prints after the antique, especially the *Speculum* of Lafréry, in order to reconstruct the ruins of a

8. Plumier 1749, pp. 138-39; see Connors 1990, p. 226. Possibly the sketchbook resembled the one formerly attributed to Michelangelo but now re-attributed to Aristotele da Sangallo and Raffaello da Montelupo by Nesselrath 1994.

9. On Michelangelo's influence and critics see Wittkower and Wittkower 1964; Coffin 1964; Summers 1972; Coffin 1979; Summers 1981, pp. 144-63; Cropper 1984, p. 257; Mignot 1987; Connors 1990, p. 229f.

10. Favaro 1901, vol. XI, p. 361.

11. Blunt 1967, pp. 235ff.; Frommel 1996.

vanished past. Poussin learned how to be an architectural painter from Lemaire, and it has been proposed that Lemaire is responsible for the cityscape in the background of Poussin's *Plague at Ashdod* and an ancient relief in his *Flora*, both painted around 1630.¹² Together Poussin and Lemaire joined in the search to resurrect "la docte architecture."¹³ They explored the ruins and collated the ancient texts. They frequented the antique collections of Vincenzo Giustiniani, Villa Medici and Palazzo Mattei. They studied the Peruzzi *Nachlass*, certainly the great painting of the *Presentation in the Temple* in S. Maria della Pace and possibly also the rich collection of drawings kept by Peruzzi's heirs. When Antonio Bosio's *Roma sotterranea* was published posthumously in 1632 they both turned to it for information on early Christian antiquity. Most of all both Poussin and Lemaire frequented the house of Cassiano Dal Pozzo, where they met the "giovani bene intendenti di disegno" whose drawings Cassiano assembled into what he would later (1654) call his *museo cartaceo*. Poussin always considered himself a disciple of Cassiano, "allievo del suo museo e della sua casa." But so did Lemaire, whom Cassiano collected and whose architecture he liked. "Monsieur Lemer amico mio del quale V.S. ha non so che quadretti di ruine," is how Poussin describes him in a letter to Cassiano of 1642.¹⁴

However, even in their early years together in Rome, there is a noticeable difference between their treatment of ancient architecture. Lemaire is wide-ranging and experimental. He takes his evidence from every quarter, mixing and matching pieces of the various orders with a freedom that Vitruvius would not always have approved. Poussin's approach to architecture, on the other hand, seems more normative and dogmatic. He accepts some but not all of what he sees in the ruins. For example, Lemaire did many variants on the composite capital; Poussin none. In the background of his early *Adoration of the Shepherds* in London (1633-34) Poussin paints two systems of architecture, Doric columns with trabeation, and piers with arches, as though he wanted to show that the architecture of the the Colosseum could be analyzed into its constituent Greek and Roman parts (Fig. 1). The tendency to resurrect the ancient world in the light of reason will grow as Poussin matures. His archeology will always seem driven by moral force.

The personality who changed the life of both Poussin and Lemaire was François Sublet de Noyer, Richelieu's secretary of war and from 1638 to 1643 his *surintendant des batiments*.¹⁵ Sublet dreamed of restoring the prestige of France in the arts, as in the age of François I. He wanted to continue the projects interrupted by the death of Henri III, especially the royal antiquities collection and the Grande Galerie of the Louvre. It seems that he planned to found a

12. Fagiolo dell'Arco 1996, an essential source for the whole ambient of the young Poussin in Rome; Brejon de Lavergnée 2000 is an extensive review of Fagiolo dell'Arco (reference kindness of Fabio Barry); Garms 1999 surveys the whole phenomenon.

13. The expression comes from Georges de Scudéry, *Le Cabinet*, Paris, 1646, pp. 106-09, describing "Un tableau de perspective De la main du Maire"; see Fagiolo dell'Arco 1996, p. 259.

14. Bellori 1976, p. 431; Fagiolo dell'Arco 1996, p. 21 and pp. 43ff.; Brejon de Lavergnée 2000.

15. Goldstein 1966; Ranum 1968, pp. 100-16; Bull 1996.

royal academy of painting and sculpture, analogous to the Academie Française founded by Richelieu in 1635. When Lemaire returned to Paris in 1638 he was welcomed by Sublet, who commissioned a decorative cycle from him for his hôtel on the rue St.-Honoré. Through Sublet he received a commission for frescoes in Richelieu's chateau at Rueil, including the famous perspectival painting of the Arch of Constantine on a garden wall. The illusion was of the highest quality, as birds discovered to their grief. John Evelyn saw it when it was still fresh in 1644: "I was infinitely taken with this agreeable cheate."¹⁶

The next coup was to convince Poussin to accept Louis XIII's invitation to come to Paris and take up the decoration of the Grande Gallerie. In 1640 Sublet sent the two Fréart brothers, Roland Fréart de Chambray and Paul Fréart de Chantelou, to Rome to form a collection of copies of the masterpieces of ancient sculpture, which they carried out with the help of the painter Charles Errard, who had been in Rome since 1627.¹⁷ Some of the sculptures would be cast in bronze to decorate the Louvre, while others would be used for teaching in the new academy. Fréart de Chambray would be its first director, Poussin its hero. Poussin yielded to the French entreaties and accompanied the Fréart brothers back to Paris in late 1640. He lived in the Tuileries, close to his old friend Lemaire. But the Grande Gallerie proved a distasteful task and Poussin returned to Rome in 1642, leaving the work in the hands of Lemaire. Chantelou accompanied him, with the idea of collecting more casts of statues in Rome.

But then disaster struck. Richelieu died in 1642 and Louis XIII in 1643. Immediately after the king's death Mazarin forced the Surintendant to resign and leave for his chateau at Dangu, a retirement that became definitive by the end of 1643 and lasted until Sublet's death in October 1645. The whole Sublet Renaissance fell apart. As soon as he heard of Sublet's disgrace Chantelou hastened back to Paris, leaving his casts to their fate in Rome. Renouncing advancement, he and Fréart de Chambray loyally followed Sublet to Dangu, as did Charles Errard, the painter who had lived in Rome from 1627 to 1643 and was in charge of the casts. Poussin offered his help in Rome. He provided temporary storage for the molds of the molds of the Hercules Farnese. In one letter he says they were taking up half his house. But with Sublet and Noyers out of the picture the project for a great collection of casts and an academy had to wait.

Fréart de Chambray and Errard remained at Dangu until Sublet's death in October 1645. It was here that Fréart de Chambray began his erudite books, the translation of Leonardo's *Trattato*

16. Evelyn 1959, p. 62f. (27.II.1644). There was also a perspectival painting in the garden of the Hôtel de Liancourt in Paris (Boukedja 1998). It has not been precisely dated, but since the hôtel itself was begun in 1623 it may have been done early enough to have been seen by Cardinal Bernardino Spada, who commissioned a similar garden perspective from Paolo Maruscelli at Palazzo Spada in 1642. Maruscelli's shallow relief was replaced by Borromini's famous colonnade in 1653.

17. Thuillier 1978; Anne Le Pas de Sécheval 1991; Connors and Rice 1991, pp. 208-10.

della pittura and the *Parallèle de l'architecture antique et de la moderne*. The *Parallèle* was a tribute not only to Sublet but to Poussin, “le Raphael de nostre siecle,” the “coryphée” who brought the rarest virtues of Italy to France.¹⁸ In this book we see, with crystal clarity, the common body of ideas held by Poussin and the Fréarts.

Roland Fréart knew that his *Parallèle* would be savagely criticized by the building profession, the artisans who resent rules imposed by outsiders, “les ouvriers simples qui n’ont leur mestier, qu’au bout des doigts.” And then there was the whole vile class of men who felt that it was their right to invent, “que pour estre maistres il faut necessairement produire quelque nouveauté,” “que l’esprit est libre & que nous avons autant de droict d’inventer & de suivre nostre genie que les anciens, sans nous rendre comme leurs esclaves, veu que l’art est une chose infinie qui se va perfectionnant tous les iours, & s’accommodant à l’humeur des siecles & des nations qui iugent diversement, & definissent le Beau chacune à sa mode.”¹⁹

Against such vain and frivolous sentiments Fréart de Chambray opposes the ideal of complete fidelity to the three original Greek orders. He seeks out young minds who have little to unlearn, and who will seek a foundation in geometry before setting forth. True originality is to be found not in clever variants on the orders (“fantastiquant une espece de corniche “), but in buildings like the Pantheon (“ce merveilleux & incomparable edifice “), where the architect used an absolutely correct Corinthian, as Fréart would have known from the casts he took of these capitals in 1640. “Ce n’est pas dans le détail des parties qu’on void le talent d’un Architecte.”²⁰

Fréart de Chambray refined the systems of Vignola and Serlio by insisting on the priority of the three original Greek orders, the Doric, Ionic and Corinthian. The Tuscan and the Composite are Latin and thus to some degree corrupt. The Tuscan was crude and rustic. The Composite was worse, even though authentic examples could be found, such as in the Arch of Titus. But being a composite it opened the way to strange admixtures and inventions, and it gave workmen license to depart altogether from the antique, “pour en gothizer à leur caprice une infinité qui passent tous sous ce nom.” Vitruvius, who does not mention the composite, nevertheless condemns admixtures and grottesques, which lead, in Fréart de Chambray’s doctrine, to a bad end, “au libertinage, & au mépris des regles de l’art qui devoient estre inviolables; tellement que c’est un mal envieilly qui va tous les iours encore empirant, & est quasi sans remede.” Young minds tend towards the precipice of novelty, but if they can be disciplined at the outset then reason will take command and they can follow the true model, “l’incomparable & unique Architecture des Grecs, qui fut l’ornement & la splendeur de l’ancienne Rome.”²¹

18. Fréart de Chambray 1650, prefatory letter to Jean and Paul Fréart.

19. Fréart de Chambray 1650, pp. 1-2.

20. Fréart de Chambray 1650, p. 3.

21. Fréart de Chambray 1650, pp. 4, 98; Mignot 1987.

Poussin was drenched in Fréart de Chambray's doctrine. Christoph Frommel has proposed that he is in fact the *spiritus rector* of the *Parallèle*, the conservative thinker behind the text.²² In any case on his return to Rome in 1642, long before the publication of the *Parallèle* in 1650, Poussin would have been conversant with the full range of ideas expressed there. They informed his "practice" as an architect, that is, the backgrounds of his paintings, which become ever more erudite and normative. In the *Rape of the Sabine Women* (1637) in the Louvre he borrows the Etruscan temple from Daniele Barbaro's Vitruvius (Fig. 2). The great dipteral temple with countless Corinthian columns in the background of the *Capture of Jerusalem* (1638) is informed by the description of Josephus. In the background of *Jesus Healing the Blind of Jericho* (1650) the buildings are culled from the early Christian basilicas of Rome, the Renaissance architect Baccio Pontelli (S. Aurea in Ostia and the campanile of S. Spirito in Sassia) and especially Palladio. Blunt even saw affinities between the Palladian palace in the center of the background and the Queen's House of Inigo Jones (Fig. 3). In the *Death of Saphira* (1655) we have a textbook of Renaissance design, including citations from the Cancelleria and Palazzo Thiene in Vicenza (by Palladio after a design by Giulio Romano), as well as Poussin's unique use of Michelangelo's Capitoline palaces (Fig. 4).²³

One can wonder what Poussin thought of the architecture going up around him. We know that he disdained contemporary Roman painters.²⁴ I think we can assume that his opinion of Roman architects was equally low, in fact the the antithesis of all that he stood for. Fréart de Chambray's words expressed Poussin's sentiments:

Enfin on peut dire que la pauvre Architecture est mal traittée. Mais il ne faut pas en imputer le plus grand reproche à nos ouvriers François; car les Italiens sont maintenant encore plus licentieux, & font bien voir que Rome a presentement ses modernes aussi bien que ses antiques.²⁵

The eternal city was full of "esprits mesquins" who remain poor amidst such riches, and "je ne sçay quels petits nouveaux Architectes"²⁶ who make the composite their hobby-horse and clothe it in capricious outfits until it becomes a chimera.

Soon after Poussin returned to Rome Innocent X was elected pope and the wind turned against those who had flourished under the Barberini: "Les choses de Rome se sont bien changées dessous ce Pape icy et nous n'avons point de faveur en Court."²⁷ Poussin must have remarked

22. Frommel 1996.

23. Blunt 1967, pp. 235ff.; Frommel 1996.

24. Montaiglon 1862, p. 293, letter of Louis Fouquet in Rome to his brother Nicolas Fouquet in Paris, 2 August 1655: "M. Poussin m'asseura qu'il n'y avoit plus personne dans le peinture qui y fût tolérable et qu'il ne voyoit pas meme venir personne et que cet art alloit tomber tout à coup."

25. Fréart de Chambray 1650, pp. 82f.

26. Fréart de Chambray 1650, p. 99.

27. Poussin to Chantelou, 20 August 1645, in Fagiolo dell'Arco 1996, p. 258.

the meteoric rise of Borromini in these years. The rustic and still unstuccoed cupola of S. Ivo took shape in 1642-44, just after Poussin's return. In 1646-50 the Constantinian basilica of Lateran, a living vestige of the world Poussin had pictured in his *Sacraments*, was modernized by Borromini with the strangest of new composite orders and endless innovations. The facade of Palazzo Falconieri, built in 1646-49 with a new order of falcon herms, was worlds apart from the architecture in the background of Poussin's *Death of Sapphira*, which is based on Raphael and Serlio. What went through Poussin's mind, we might ask, as he passed by such buildings, contemplating them with the cold, skeptical gaze he shared with Fréart de Chambray, "les yeux purgez & éclairez par l'intelligence."²⁸

Poussin is at his most experimental in the architecture of a handful of paintings of the mid-1650s, especially those showing scenes set in Egypt. In the *Holy Family in Egypt* (1655-57) he combines elements taken from the Palestrina mosaic with buildings borrowed from Ligorio's great map of ancient Rome, which also furnished many of the background buildings in the *Exposition of Moses* (1654). The only curves that appear in any of Poussin's buildings are in strange structures that appear in the backgrounds of the *Finding of Moses* and *Achilles Among the Daughters of Lycomedes*. But in general the curve is anathema to Poussin. The compass Joseph holds in the *Holy Family on the Steps* (1648) is there as a symbol of proportion in architecture, not as the instrument for drawing curved facades.²⁹

Borromini, master of the curved facade, knew the classical orders but used them with considerable freedom. In the *Opus* he speaks of the giant pilasters of the Casa dei Filippini courtyard as though they were animate creatures ("tanti giganti che s'alzino à sostenere il cornicione"), but also as though the order were a suit of well-tailored clothes on the back of a burly giant ("[I pilastri] fanno gran rumore, nella maniera che un vestito ben tagliato, e ben cuscito di tela sangalla comparisce molte volte più che uno di drappo mal fatto indosso di uno homaccio").³⁰ Another metaphor in the book is that of the column and shaft as a growing plant.³¹ In a majestic marble fireplace, also in the Casa dei Filippini, Borromini produced what might be called a textile Doric, where the metopes and triglyphs metamorphose into the tasselled lappets of a baldachin (Fig. 5).

This is all a far cry from the Renaissance world of anthropomorphic proportion in which Poussin still moved. He expressed his views in two revealing letters of 1642. In one he commented on competing designs that Chantelou sent him for the chapel in Sublet de Noyer's chateau at Dangu. His watchwords are *proportion*, *douceur* and *grâce*. An offcenter door would be as offensive as a

28. Fréart de Chambray 1650, p. 3.

29. Dempsey 1963; Verdi 1995, nos. 80, 77, 66, 79, 60; McTighe 1996, pp. 112-35.

30. Connors 1998, fol. 82r.

31. Connors 1998, fol. 65r: "mi valse di una bizzaria osservata frà le cose antiche, e portai sopra le base alcune foglie alte circa un palmo, dalle quali par che nascono le colonne..."

face with the mouth set into the cheek. The role of ornament is to moderate a certain severity in architecture.³² In another letter written to Chantelou, who was about to visit Nîmes, Poussin said that the beautiful girls his friend would see in that city would delight him no less than the columns of the Maison Carée; the latter indeed were just old copies of the former.³³ This was the kind of banter he must have had with Lemaire in their bachelor days, when both were training themselves in “la docte architecture.” It was light years apart from the philosophy of the new architecture in Rome.

In one specific case we can, I think, see Poussin’s criticism of a Borromini innovation. In 1646 Borromini designed the facade of the gallery of Palazzo Pamphilj on Piazza Navona.³⁴ In the early stages of the design the papal benediction loggia in Raphael’s *Incendio nel Borgo* served as an inspiration. But in the Serliana as executed Borromini changed the arch-plus-entablature model of Raphael to a true arcuated lintel, one that bends over the central bay in a plastic way without discrete breaks (Fig. 6). Ivories or other *Kleinkunst* provided him with this form, one that seems unconventional by Renaissance standards but in fact comes closer to the Serlianas of late antiquity. Poussin, however, disapproved. In his painting of 1655, *Sts. Peter and John Healing the Lame Man* (1655), he copied the Raphael fresco faithfully (Fig. 7).³⁵ This was the vision of antiquity, and of Raphael, that his “purged and intelligent eyes” held fast to.

Slowly, one by one, Poussin made his converts. First he turned Cassiano against the baroque. Carlo Dati, in his biography of 1664, makes Cassiano say that it was the great disgrace of his age to allow the whim of a few architects who wish to break away from the antique to bring architecture back to barbarism. This was not the way of Brunelleschi, Buonarroti, Bramante, Serlio, Palladio, Vignola and the other restorers of this great art.³⁶ Thus Cassiano learned to turn a cold eye on innovative architecture, which was doubly sad for Borromini, since he, like Poussin, had received a vital part of his education in Cassiano’s house. There he had copied

32. Poussin 1911, pp. 180f., letter of 21 September 1642; reference kindness of Sabina de Cavi.

33. Poussin 1989, p. 63, letter of 20 March 1642: “Les belles filles que vous aurez vues à Nîmes ne vous auront, je m’assure, pas moins délécté l’esprit par la vue que les belles colonnes de la Maison Carrée, vu que celles ici ne sont que de vieilles copies de celles-là.” The meaning of the passage is explored in Rykwert 1996, p. 30 and 399f., notes 11-13.

34. Preimesberger 1976, pp. 236-41.

35. Verdi 1995, no. 78.

36. Dati 1664, unpaginated: “Onde mi sovviene d’averlo per tal cagione più volte udito esclamare, Gran vergogna dell’età nostra, che quantunque sempre rimiri si belle idee, e norme tanto perfette negli edifici vetusti, tuttavia permetta, che per capriccio d’alcuni professori, i quali si vogliono dipartir dall’antico, l’architettura alle barbarie faccia ritorno! Non così fecero il Brunellesco, il Buonarroti, Bramante, il Serlio, il Palladio, il Vignuola, e gli altri restauratori di sì grand’arte, i quali dalle misure delle fabbriche Romane trassero le vere proporzioni di quegli ordini regolatissimi, da cui niuno giammai s’allontano senz’errore”. See Haskell 1963, p. 103.

drawings from the Codex Coner and Cassiano possibly was his link to the great *Libro* of Giuliano da Sangallo. Above all Borromini studied Cassiano's manuscripts of Montano, finding in them a plastic and curvacious antiquity. Montano's drawing of a tomb with concave walls from the environs of Rome seems to have inspired Borromini's plan of the cupola of S. Andrea delle Fratte (Fig. 8).³⁷ Poussin also studied Montano, but took from him an entirely different kind of antiquity. In the background of his painting of 1653 now in the Louvre, *The Woman Taken in Adultery* (1653), he placed a classical palace on top of a massive retaining wall in *opus reticulatum*, which he copied directly from a drawing by Montano (Figs. 9, 10).³⁸

In the same way Borromini and Poussin both studied the antiques in the Palazzo Giustiniani. Blunt discovered in Windsor an early Borromini drawing of an antique fountain in the Giustiniani collection, and observed that Poussin sketched the same basin.³⁹ But if the two young men drank from the same font as artists they went in diametrically opposed directions. One can only imagine the revulsion with which Poussin would have regarded the many pages of fantastic composite capitals in Montano. But Montano's composites were pure delight to Borromini, who introduced innovations like the lily capitals of the Oratory facade, which in turn stimulated Guarini's majestic passion capitals in the Chapel of the Holy Shroud. This was exactly the kind of contagion that Fréart de Chambray feared would come out of Italy.

Poussin converted Bellori. The young Bellori had contributed a poem to Baglione's *Vite* in 1642, a book that in passing had praised S. Carlino: "bella chiesetta, la quale è leggiadra e capricciosa architettura di Francesco Borromini." But twenty-five years later Bellori had turned against Baglione, a mere "goffo" as painter and writer, and he turned against artists whom Baglione had praised as well. In the margin of one of his copies he entered savage remarks both on S. Carlino-- "brutta et deforme"--and its architect, "gotico ignorantissimo et corruttore dell'architettura, infamia dal nostro secolo. Lombardo."⁴⁰

These marginal notes date to about 1665-67, the time of the construction of Borromini's facade at S. Carlino. But Bellori had already gone public with his polemic several years earlier. In 1664

37. Soane Museum, Montano, vol. II, fol. 72r; Fairbairn 1998, no. 1152. There is a similar tomb in Ligorio's Vatican manuscript: Vat.lat. 3439, fol. 40, "incerto loco." Both plans seem to show tombs in the neighborhood of Rome, but they are identified by Fairbairn with the most famous surviving example of the type, the *conocchia* (the "distaff" of a wool-spinner) on the Via Appia near S. Maria Capua Vetere.

38. Verdi 1995, no. 76. Soane Museum, Montano, vol. III, fol. 53r; see Fairbairn 1998, no. 1281.

39. The Windsor drawing is published in Blunt n.d., p. 55; Blunt 1979, p. 38, fig. 25; Friedlaender and Blunt 1974, V, no. 326; Rosenberg and Prat 1994, p. 454f. no. 230. The print appeared in *Galleria Giustiniani*, Rome, II, ca. 1637, pl. 149. It was reproduced by Montfaucon 1719, III.1, pp. 130f., pl. 65; Montfaucon had personally seen the fountain.

40. Baglione 1935, p. 180; Connors 1998.

he delivered a lecture to the Accademia di S. Luca on ideal beauty, including architecture.⁴¹ He adopted Fréart de Chambray's views on the propriety of the three Greek orders and condemned innovation: ugliness stands right next to beauty. The Renaissance restoration of good architecture was threatened by contemporary architects who conceive base ideas and expound them on facades:

Ciascuno però si finge da se stesso in capo una nuova idea e larva di architettura a suo modo, esponendola in piazza e su le facciate: uomini certamente vuoti di ogni scienza che si appartiene all'architetto, di cui vanamente tengono il nome. Tanto che deformando gli edifici e le città istesse e le memorie, freneticano angoli, spezzature e distoricamenti di linee, scompongono basi, capitelli e colonne, con frottole di stucchi, tritumi e sproporzioni; e pure Vitruvio condanna simili novità e gli ottimi essemi ci propone.⁴²

After such a speech, how could Borromini ever think of attending a meeting of the Accademia?

Poussin's greatest convert was Bernini. The conversion was a long process. In a moment of rare frankness Chantelou reveals that Bernini did not say good things about Poussin in Rome, or Poussin about Bernini. Bernini admired Michelangelo and thought of himself as the Michelangelo of his age. He believed in the right to invent. As early as 1623 Lelio Guidiccioni had described Bernini in terms that Poussin would have hated: "nell'opere di scoltura, ella s'incaminava à liberar questo secolo dall'invidia degli antichi."⁴³

But Alexander VII's Vitruvian culture chilled the atmosphere in Rome. Bernini sensed he was vulnerable to the new classicizing criticism in architecture. He doubtless heard Bellori's lecture at the Accademia. He began to study Fréart's de Chambray's *Parallèle*. All of this bore fruit in the new alliance struck between Bernini and the Fréart brothers in Paris. From their point of view, they had always longed for a return of the golden age of Sublet de Noyers, and now with Mazarin gone and Colbert in power they saw their chance. Colbert made Roland Fréart de Chambray his main advisor on the design of the Louvre. Paul Fréart de Chantelou saw the opportunity to raise his own prestige at court by accompanying the great Italian artist everywhere and interpreting his views. It was an alliance with advantages for both sides.⁴⁴

Bernini for his part did everything he could to assure the Fréart brothers of his agreement with

41. Panofsky 1968, pp. 103-111 and 155-77; Grassi 1955, p. 103; Bellori 1976.

42. Bellori 1976, p. 24. Gombrich 1966, pp. 83f., suggested that Bellori's condemnation of Borromini is based on Vasari's description of the gothic, which in turn derived from Vitruvius's condemnation of grottesque paintings of the Augustan age.

43. D'Onofrio 1967, p. 381; Sousloff 1989; Schütze 1998, p. 176-78.

44. Bandera Bistoletti 1985; ; Del Pesco 1994; Stanic 1994; Stanic 1997. My thanks to Milovan Stanic for showing me the introduction to his forthcoming edition of Chantelou, and to Daniela Del Pesco for showing me the text of her important paper on Chantelou to be published in the *Atti* of the conference on *Le Bernin e l'Europe*, held in Paris in November 1999.

their views. When his carriage first met that of Chantelou on the road to Paris, he was so anxious to show that he had read the *Parallèle* that he jumped out and recited a little discourse on the divine proportions of the body of Adam. In Paris he hardly allowed the young English astronomer, Wren, more than a few minutes with his drawings for the Louvre, but he begged Chantelou to show them to his brother and convey back to him his advice.⁴⁵ In a visit to Chantelou's house he made a point of praising the architecture in the background of several paintings by Lemaire.⁴⁶

The architects Bernini met in Paris were those Fréart de Chambray wanted him to meet. Bernini avoided Le Vau and in the end never met him.⁴⁷ But with the Fréart brothers quietly overseeing the matchmaking Bernini sought out François Mansart's buildings, particularly the Val de Grâce and the Hôtel de La Vrillière. Mansart never abdicated his right to innovate, but he did own a copy of the *Parallèle* and was anxious to remain on good terms with Fréart de Chambray. Chantelou was alert to any remarks of mutual admiration between the Cavaliere and the great representative of French classicism. He must have been pleased at the remark made by one M. Boutart that Bernini and Mansart would have worked well together at the Louvre. Towards the end of Bernini's stay most French architects had turned against him, but Mansart still spoke of Bernini as a great man and an innovator, as well as a sculptor worthy of praise. Bernini reciprocated in his own way, saying that Mansart would have been a great man if he had gone to Rome.⁴⁸

During his Parisian visit Bernini became, possibly genuinely, an admirer of Poussin. He praised the *Seven Sacraments* and the other Poussin's in Chantelou's collection.⁴⁹ A key event was a visit he made to the home of the art dealer Cérissier, when he admired the Poussin's and, pointing to his forehead, came up with the famous remark, "Lavora di là." That very evening the Fréart brothers paid a visit to Bernini's apartment and Fréart de Chambray tried to present him with a copy of his book. At first Bernini hesitated, saying that he already kept a copy in his studio and had given one to Mattia De Rossi and to his son Paolo. But finally out of courtesy he accepted what must have been his third or fourth copy of the *Parallèle*.⁵⁰

45. Whinney 1971, p. 26.

46. Chantelou 1985, p. 77 (25 July).

47. Chantelou 1985, p. 237, (20 October).

48. Chantelou 1985, pp. 47, 109, 114, 160, 247 and 219. In 1668-70 Bernini inserted a lantern into the small cupola over the high altar of S. Andrea al Quirinale (Frommel 1983). He may have gotten the idea for this innovation from Mansart's church of the Visitation, where the high altar cupola has a lantern (Lecomte in Mignot 1998, p. 142). The rapprochement so ardently desired by the Fréart brothers had at least this effect on Bernini's architecture, an extra burst of baroque light.

49. Chantelou 1985, pp. 75-81 (25 July).

50. Chantelou 1985, pp. 110f. (10 August).

In this atmosphere Bernini, the Michelangelo of his century, felt he had to offer a few criticisms of Michelangelo, a “divine architect” but one whose cupola at St. Peter’s “had a hundred flaws.” Still this was mild compared to Chantelou’s harsh anti-Michelangelo stance. The giant order, broken cornices, cartouches and masks: these were all innovations that Michelangelo had introduced into architecture without any antique precedents:

c’a été lui [Michelangelo] qui a introduit le libertinage dans l’architecture par une ambition de faire des choses nouvelles et de n’imiter aucun de ceux qui l’ont précédé.⁵¹

Once the ice was broken about Michelangelo it was easy for Bernini to joke with Chantelou about Borromini:

dont l’architecture est extravagante, et qui fait tout contre ce qui pourrait imaginer; qu’un peintre et un sculpteur dans leur architecture ont pour règle de proportion le corps de l’homme; qu’il fallait que le Borromini formât la sienne sur des Chimères.⁵²

During Bernini’s summer in Paris Poussin’s health was fast failing. Bernini departed Paris on 20 October 1665, and Poussin died on 19 November. It is unlikely that they ever saw each other again. Bernini wrote Chantelou to tell him the sad news. Chantelou replied that he already knew. In his courtly way he said that his esteem for Bernini would now be increased by the esteem in which he had held the illustrious departed, and that henceforth he would bestow on Bernini alone the affection that he had formerly divided between him and Poussin.⁵³ Bernini by this time was a trophy of the classical camp.

After Bernini’s return to Rome, Borromini had only two years longer to live. Bernini cast a long shadow. With honors heaped upon him, conversant with royalty, enormously rich, his features enshrined in medals, this sculptor of European fame could afford to look down on his rival. He had never forgiven him for his opposition in the affair of the campanile, especially during the crucial meetings of the *congregazione della fabbrica* in 1645-46, when Borromini attacked him: “egli [Borromini] solo alla presenza del papa inveì contro di lui di tutto cuore, e di tutta lena.”⁵⁴ But under Alexander VII Bernini developed a new theoretical dimension to his criticism. Borromini was not just a personal enemy but he departed from the rules; he was willful and original; he built chimeras; he skirted on the edge of heresy; in short, he was gothic.

On 29 April 1656 Bernini received the “il libro dei disegni della facciata del Duomo di Milano,

51. Chantelou 1885, p. 108 (20 August); Mignot 1987.

52. Chantelou 1885, p. 257 (20 October); Chantelou 1985, p. 326.

53. Letter of Chantelou to Bernini, 1 January 1666, in Stanic 1997, p. 110: “J’avais déjà su sa mort m’ayant fait exécuter d’une partie de son testament. Avec l’estime que j’ai, mon cher Monsieur, pour votre haute vertu, vous hériterez encore de celle que j’avais pour cet illustre défunt et j’enfermerai désormais en vous seul des affections qu’il partageait avec vous.”

54. Baldinucci 1682, p. 29.

con le oppositioni, proposte, pareri et altre scritte in esso registrate.” This was a collection of prints of all of the recent gothic projects for the Duomo. The fabbrica was eager to have the great man’s opinion, and Bernini would not give it until he had full documentation.⁵⁵ But once he had the *libro* Bernini was the best informed person in Rome on the Milanese gothic revolution of the 1640s and 1650s. In one of his four hundred interviews with Alexander VII he showed this material to the pope and whispered a secret in his ear: Borromini was gothic. The Vitruvian pope was pleased, and came to think that he had thought up the epithet himself:

Disse [Alessandro VII] che lo stile del Cavalier Borromini era gotico né esser meraviglia per esser nato in Milano, dove era il Domo di architettura gotica e che tale era anco il Domo di Siena.⁵⁶

All the other hints that Borromini was a gothic architect come from Bernini or his biographers, Baldinucci and Domenico Bernini.⁵⁷ They reflect the talk in the Bernini household. They show how easily the charge of gothic elided into one of heresy. During his perusal of the *Parallèle* Bernini might have noticed that Fréart de Chambray held the same low view of gothic. It was an inept architecture that affected beauty by making buildings seem suspended in air, almost on the point of collapse. This is exactly Guarini’s characterization of gothic, which he admired.⁵⁸ But Fréart de Chambray adds that it is an idea so ridiculous and extravagant it would be a waste of words to refute it.⁵⁹ It is as bad as the composite, which saps the principles of true architecture, “pour en introduire une nouvelle Tramontaine, plus barbare & moins plaisante que la Gothique.”⁶⁰

55. Wittkower 1974, pp. 45ff., 55-58 and 88-92; *Annali della Fabbrica del Duomo dall’origine al presente*, Milan, 1877-85, V, pp. 256f.

56. Diary of Carlo Cartari of the visit of Alexander VII to the Sapienza on 16 March 1660, in ASR, Cartari-Febei, 72, fasc. 2, int. 8, fol. 20, transcribed in Del Piazzo 1968, pp. 136f., and Eimer 1971, vol. II, p. 446.

57. Baldinucci 1682, pp. 75 and 81; Bernini 1713, p. 32: “Tuttavia, diceva, che la vera base dell’Architettura era lo studio dell’Antico. E perciò ad un Personaggio illustre, che non potea soffrire, che il Borromino avesse tanto traviato dai documenti appresi nella sua scuola, e da buon Disegnatore, ch’egli era, più tosto avesse affettata la maniera Gotica, che l’antica Romana, & il bel modo moderno, rispose sorridente: *Io stimo meno male essere un cattivo Cattolico, che un buon’Heretico.*”

58. Guarini 1968, pp. 207-10.

59. Fréart de Chambray 1650, p. 89: “car c’est une chose de tres grande obligation en l’Architecture, de faire tout non seulement sode & durable, mais encore qui paroisse tel, pour éviter l’ineptie Gothique, que affecte comme une beauté, de faire que les ouvrages semblent suspendus en l’air, & quasi prests à tomber; qui est une extravagance trop visible, & trop ridicule, pour perdre du temps & des paroles à la contester.”

60. Fréart de Chambray 1650, p. 98.

Borromini must have been taken aback by this charge. He had left Milan in 1619. In the days of his apprenticeship, indeed throughout the half-century of the two Borromeo archbishops, gothic was not much valued in Milan. Tibaldi's facade projects, those officially in force during Borromini's time there, were meant to hide and envelop this distasteful style, which was, in Tibaldi's words, "architettura barbara et non usa al studio di architettura de tempi nostri."⁶¹ It was not until 1638 that Milan went gothic, so to speak, when Ricchini was dismissed as architect of the Duomo and the gothicizing architect Buzzi was hired in his stead. The layers of influence that the young Borromini took with him from Milan were multiple: the legacy of Leonardo's projects for the Tiburio, Bramante's sense of perspectival illusion, Tibaldi's version of Michelangelo, and Ricchini's sense of artful curves and camouflage. He was deeply influenced by the debates that swirled around the reconstruction of S. Lorenzo, in which the natural was pitted against the Roman, *levitas* against *gravitas*, solidity against daring.⁶² But he did not consider himself in any way gothic.

On the defensive in the 1660s, and deeply wounded by the charge of being gothic, Borromini immersed himself still deeper in the classical world and the Renaissance texts. The Lateran was the place where Alexander VII had declared Borromini gothic, and so as if in expiation he designed a classical barrel vault to go over the nave, with coffering à la Bramante. The acorns sketched on the crest of the vault date it to the pontificate of Alexander VII; it was clearly meant to catch the attention of the Vitruvian pope.⁶³ In 1660-62 he designed the Re Magi Chapel in the Propaganda Fide. As Wittkower long ago intuited, it is an exercise in creative Palladianism. The facade of Palazzo Valmarana in Vicenza served as the model for the wall elevations and the Redentore as the model for the plan; to all of this he added pilaster bases taken from the garden loggia of Raphael's Villa Madama.⁶⁴ But he made the Palladian wall more skeletal, the plan more fluid and the vault more dynamic in a manner all his own. Even at this most classical, he could not help interpreting classicism originally.

61. Della Torre and Schofield 1994, p. 28. Vasari's attitude toward the Gothic is discussed by Panofsky 1930; Gombrich 1966, pp. 83f.; and Wittkower 1974, p. 19. See also the preface of Rubens 1622, which calls for an end of the *maniera* "Barbara, ò Gotica," in favor of an architecture based on the rules of the Greeks and Romans (Muller 1989, p. 12, n. 21). Downes 1979, p. 257, cites a Hawksmoor letter of 1734-35 on the use and abuse of the word gothick: "But the critics go further beyond sea, and here in England also, if they think they see anything, in the Latin or Italian way, where they fancy too much liberty is taken (as the Modern Italians have done, especially Borromini and others) they call it Gothick."

62. Bassi 1771.

63. Portoghesi 1984, fig. cxlviii; Echols 1992; Roca de Amicis, 1995, pp. 51-54 and fig. 24. The drawing is dated in the literature to late 1646-early 1647, which is indeed the date of the lower half. The cluster of acorns at the apex is similar to those sketched on Alb. 515v for a print of the Oratory facade c. 1660 (Connors 1980, p. 269, cat. 91).

64. Wittkower 1958, pp. 147-51 and 360, n. 48; Connors 1980, p. 137, n. 32; Burns 1999, p. 296.

Martinelli, Borromini's apologist, saw Borromini's work as the paradoxical combination of erudition and imagination. It exhibited "vivezza dell'ingegno, per la pratica delle regole Vitruviane."⁶⁵ Poussin and the Fréart brothers would have found this paradox unsustainable, but Borromini did not. He indulged neither in servile copying nor in the pursuit of rootless freedom. It was mathematics, deep culture and the carefully studied use of allusion, both to antiquity and the Renaissance masters, that gave Borromini's work an inner truth. "Allusions energized" (but certainly not gothicized) would be a pithy way of describing his approach. Martinelli has the perfect formula for his method of design: "operando da vero architetto, e variando su le fermezze delle vere regole."⁶⁶

As the study of the seventeenth-century architect's library matures scholars are moving from the compilation of library inventories to an assessment of how architects used their books.⁶⁷ Perhaps the case of Poussin and Borromini, both booklovers, will allow us to go a step further and consider how artists with diametrically opposed philosophies read the same book. Both artists owned Palladio's *Quattro Libri*. Poussin worshipped Palladio and put many of his buildings in the backgrounds of his paintings, as we have seen. Borromini owned Palladio too, and read him with respect, but he saw in the woodcuts the potential for a more skeletal and plastic architecture than Palladio himself would have dreamed of.

Both owned Serlio, but they read the text differently. Borromini, one feels, would have warmed to the free and vigorous atmosphere of the *Quarto Libro* of 1537 (Serlio's first publication), where there are many passages praising invention: "bella cosa è ne l'architetto l'esser abbondante d'inventioni."⁶⁸ Poussin, on the other hand, would certainly have preferred the general outlook of the *Terzo libro* of 1540 (Serlio's second publication), with its about-face in the direction of dogmatic orthodoxy. Here Poussin could see Fréart de Chambray's cherished doctrine presaged: "havemo da tenere la dottrina di Vitruvio come guida e regola infallibile." And here he could see Borromini damned in advance: "saranno heretici ne l'architettura negando quell'autore."⁶⁹

65. D'Onofrio 1969, p. 216.

66. Fioravante Martinelli, *Il Tevere scantenato*, 1664, in D'Onofrio 1969, p. xxvii.

67. Ballon 1999, pp. 92-107.

68. Serlio 1537, p. viir.

69. Serlio 1540, p. xlvi.

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