

Short Abstract

"Lenoir, Quatremère and the hermeneutic significance of the
Musée des Monuments français"

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This thesis proposes an interpretation of the *Musée des Monuments français* in Paris (1795-1816) in conjunction with Quatremère de Quincy's contemporary writings on the museum in general. The aim of this is twofold: Firstly, to identify and explore the significance of the *Musée* as an important instance in the history of the modern museum institution; and, secondly, to offer new insight into Quatremère's celebrated critique against the institution in general, and the *Musée des Monuments* in particular. Through an examination of the *Musée*'s history and its intellectual context, alongside a detailed description of its layout, its collections and their arrangement, informed by contemporary reports and criticism, as well as the lengthy writings of its creator and curator Alexandre Lenoir, the project's key features are identified and analysed. Subsequently, the main aim of the *Musée* is seen as a quest for identity and order in history, through the medium of art. Furthermore, the *Musée* is identified as ultimately transcending its historicist basis, through a poetic engagement with its various fragments - both literal and metaphorical. At the same time, a close reading of Quatremère's texts relating to the museum reveals that, across considerable ambiguity, the concerns which led him to address the institution in the first place also centred around the problem of history and its representation in art. Through an examination of numerous points of rapprochement, the conflict between Quatremère and the *Musée des Monuments* is revealed as largely circumstantial, while a final difference emerges through this reconciliation, pertaining to the *Musée*'s ultimately poetic character.

Extended Abstract

This thesis proposes an interpretation of the *Musée des Monuments* in Paris (1795-1816) in conjunction with Quatremère de Quincy's contemporary writings on the museum in general. The aim of this is twofold: Firstly, to identify and explore the significance of the *Musée* as an important instance in the history of the modern museum institution; and, secondly, to offer new insight into Quatremère's celebrated critique against that institution in general, and the Museum of Monuments in particular.

Through an examination of the Museum's history and its intellectual context, alongside a detailed description of its layout, its collections and their arrangement, informed by contemporary reports and criticism, as well as the lengthy writings of its creator and curator Alexandre Lenoir, the project's key features are identified and analysed.

The Museum of Monuments began life as a temporary depot of the Revolution, but under the guardianship of Lenoir, since 1791, and after years of efforts on his part, it finally acquired permission to open to the public as a permanent exhibition in 1795. The collection which existed in the depot, and subsequently augmented by Lenoir through extensive further acquisitions, consisted mostly of religious, funerary and otherwise commemorative sculptures. These pieces were not considered "high art" of the kind that was consistently claimed by the Louvre, but were rather legitimised as public exhibits through their historical relevance. The representation of history remained a live issue for culture throughout the Museum's life, so the project's

engagement with it was continuously seen as fundamentally legitimate and important, affording the Museum essential support. Nevertheless, on a circumstantial level, there was considerable conflict with both authorities and critics - Quatremère de Quincy being one of the most prominent - which resulted in the Museum's closure in 1816.

Lenoir arranged the collection around the cloisters of the former convent as a chronological panorama of the development of French art, from the thirteenth to the seventeenth centuries. He also envisaged eighteenth and nineteenth century halls alongside plans for further development, none of which executed, but which remain significant as they attest to the character of the Museum as a perpetually ongoing project. The former convent's garden was also transformed for exhibition as a *jardin anglais*, with commemorative pieces in a carefully staged landscape. Lenoir invested extensively in the staging of the whole Museum, including the construction of fictitious monuments/*fabriques*, fusing the boundaries between exhibits and exhibition, in an attempt to convey "character" rather than mere archeological accuracy, appealing to sentiment and imagination as much as to the spirit.

On a first level, the Museum represented the progress and decline of artistic styles since the beginning of the French nation, linking the developments in art with the political situation in the country. Chronology here was the main structuring element, addressing the visitors' intellect as well as their artistic taste. On a second level, a key role in the experience of the Museum played the commemorative aspect of the exhibition. The idea of Great Men was important, as it introduced a parallel history to that of chronology and styles, emphasising the element of continuity and identity rather than change.

Beyond the Pantheon-like celebration of Great Men, however, Lenoir attempted to personalise the historical figures represented, largely through the assistance of the Museum's catalogue, of which he produced twelve different editions in twenty years. It was the visitors' emotions that were mostly engaged, thus, and a sense of identity beyond national specificity emerged. This feeling culminated in the Élysée, where notions of Nature, death and the eternal came as the fulfilment of the flow of history. Furthermore, ideas such as the common Origins of all civilisation and its implications about national identity etc., were evident in the staging of the Museum as well as the writing of the catalogue, enhancing the levels on which the visitor could be addressed during the visit. As such, the main aim of the Museum is identified as a quest for identity and order in history, through the medium of art.

Through a further examination, however, with the aid of philosophical hermeneutics, the Museum is seen as ultimately transcending its historicist basis, through a poetic engagement with the multiplicity of its fragments (both the pieces in its collection and the various ideas it invested in). Through its representation of various overlaid "histories" (the genealogy of epochs and political events, the development of artistic styles, the personal histories), woven around great constants (Nature and the common Origins of civilisation, sentiment, the Enlightenment ideal) and engaging the visitor equally intellectually, aesthetically and emotionally, the Museum transcended its historicist basis, ultimately emerging as an active engagement with myth, and a poetic endeavour.

Focusing on Quatremère de Quincy, four key texts of his are examined, from which his position on the museum can be deduced. His *Rapport* to the *Conseil général* (1800) presented his points of opposition to the

Museum of Monuments, which related mainly to the loss of context and integrity of the works displayed therein. The Letters to Miranda (1796), in specific reference to Rome and its threatened spoliation by the Revolutionary armies, revealed Quatremère's belief in the irreplaceability of original context for the work of art and its historicity, but also, on a second level, introduced elements of considerable ambiguity. The *Considérations morales* (1815) reinforced that position, by equating the moral utility of art with its live relationship to history and context, again, however, interspersed with instances of conflicting ideas. The Letters to Canova (1818) seemed to argue from a completely different viewpoint, enhancing the ambiguity in Quatremère's position on the museum.

A close and contextual reading of these texts reveals that, ultimately, the concerns which lead Quatremère to address the museum in the first place were also centred around the problem of the representation of history in the changing culture, and that the Museum of Monuments, as identified in the previous chapters, was, in many ways, a response to those concerns rather than their cause. Finally, through an examination of numerous points of rapprochement, the conflict between Quatremère and the Museum of Monuments is confirmed as largely circumstantial, while a final difference is identified through this reconciliation, pertaining to the Museum's ultimately poetic character.

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To my two muses, Clio and Anthoula.

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Abbreviations

AMMF	<i>Inventaire général des richesses d'art de la France</i> , Archives du Musée des monuments français, 3 vols (Paris, 1883-1897).
AN	Archives Nationales, Paris.
COURAJOD	COURAJOD, L., <i>Alexandre Lenoir, son Journal et le Musée des monuments français</i> , 2 vols (Paris 1876/1886).
MS	Manuscript.

Introduction

The *Musée des Monuments français* in Paris (1795-1815) has become a widely familiar name in the history of museums, despite the fact that there has never been a single volume dedicated to it this century.¹ More intriguingly, this has remained the case even as the project has been increasingly recognised as a significant early modern museum.² I would suggest that the reason for this is the considerable element of ambiguity involved in the creation and development of the Museum of Monuments, which has prevented it from acquiring the status it deserves. Largely attributed to the efforts of one man - Alexandre Lenoir, its creator, curator and most tenacious supporter - its various unresolved and even conflicting aspects have been mostly left uninterpreted, as the idiosyncrasies of its colourful maker. It is true that Alexandre Lenoir was neither a scholar nor an artist in any proper sense, but rather an amateur with a not negligible sense of opportunism.³ He was born in 1762 in Paris, raised in Alsace by an uncle, and came back to the capital to study painting with the *peintre du Roi*, J.-G. Doyen. Clearly interested in the arts at large, but without any other studies outside Doyen's studio, he also wrote a play which was published in 1786 under the title "Les Amis du temps passé". He remained with Doyen for fifteen years without any real success, and in 1792 he abandoned his career as an artist to take over the guardianship of the Revolutionary depot of *Ancien Régime* artefacts, which he was to turn to the Museum of Monuments three years later.

¹ In the previous century the only such volume that I am aware of is COURAJOD.

² "No account of the dawn of the museum age in France would be complete without it", writes Andrew McClellan, who dedicates chapter 5 to the project in his *Inventing the Louvre: Art, Politics, and the Origins of the Modern Museum in Eighteenth-century Paris* (Cambridge University Press, 1994). There is a large number of scholars who touch upon it in their work, the more recent including Francis Haskell, Edward Pommier and D. Gamboni. It is in the work of Dominique Poulot, however, that the Museum of Monuments has received the greatest and most insightful attention so far, although there as well in a rather fragmentary way. (see bibliography).

³ The standard account of Lenoir's life, written as an extended obituary upon his death, is ALLOU, C.-N., *Notice sur la vie et les travaux d'A. Lenoir* (Paris, 1842); for less detailed and less reverential accounts see MCCLELLAN, op. cit. (note 2), and POULOT, D., "Alexandre Lenoir et les Musées des Monuments français", in P. Nora (ed.), *Les lieux de mémoire, II, La Nation* (Paris, 1986).

The project, which was set up in the former convent of the Petits-Augustins between 1791 and 1816, was not an erudite nor a systematic work in any way. Additionally to Lenoir's own scholarly shortcomings, throughout its life (and emphatically until 1800) the Museum was developing in the most tumultuous and unstable of contexts: the Revolutionary attitude to art and the past, and its consequences.⁴ As such, the Museum was indeed a project deeply characterised by conflict and ambiguity itself, with some aspects determined by circumstance rather than choice or plan while, at the same time, some others being the result of urgent and unquestioned personal choices. But this complete entanglement of the project in the welter of its context is exactly why, I would suggest, the Museum of Monuments was such a crucial and meaningful instance in the history of the institution. Between the often conflicting visions of the various individuals involved in its making - the Ministers, the Committees and, of course, Lenoir - on one hand, and the larger, uncontrolled circumstances, ideologies and concerns of its environment on the other, the Museum emerged as the complex imprint of an entire cultural process. One could retrace in detail the history of the changing regimes of those two decades simply by reading the modifications in Lenoir's various catalogue editions, or by observing the changes in the acquisition policy of monuments.

This is not, however, the aim of this thesis. Instead, what I have attempted to do here is to offer a unified examination and re-interpretation of the Museum of Monuments as a consistently meaningful project, despite - or rather *because* of - its combination of scholarly shortcomings, irresolutions and conflicts. I will be suggesting that the unique fusion of circumstances from which the Museum emerged rendered it not only one of the most eloquent manifestations of the shifting culture at the time, but also allowed it to articulate a fascinating response to the increasingly problematic relationship between culture and its history. In order to achieve this I have introduced a second subject to the thesis: Quatremère de Quincy and his thought on the museum. The great scholar and historian was the most eloquent and erudite of the Museum's opposers, and he was finally the one to

⁴ For a detailed overview of these attitudes see POMMIER, E., *L'art de la liberté: Doctrines et débats de la Révolution française* (Paris: Gallimard, 1991).

achieve its closure in 1816. Furthermore, he engaged at length with the idea of the museum, which he saw mainly as problematic, in the context of his extensive writings on art and architecture. It is my proposal that a closer examination of Quatremère's work on the museum shows that his misgivings about Lenoir's project were largely circumstantial and that, in essence, there was no conflict. This rapprochement is doubly significant: on one hand, offering new insight into - and, to an extent, questioning - Quatremère's celebrated critique against the museum; and, on the other, enhancing the topicality and significance of the Museum's engagement with the relationship between culture and history.

Before beginning the discussion of the Museum of Monuments, however, I would like to briefly map the cultural climate during the years of the project's foundation, specifically in relation to the great problem of conservation and the concept of the museum.

Despite the comparatively modest intentions of those involved in the earlier events of the French Revolution, by the end of 1792 - when the monarchy was overthrown - the revolutionary ideal had become so far-reaching as to encompass a complete change, the famous promise of a total regeneration of the French nation. What started as a political conflict that involved the three Estates and the royal administration, finally became a great crisis where the entire foundations of culture were being questioned. Although the consequences of the Revolution were far reaching indeed, in retrospect not all that much actually changed - that is, not compared to the welter and the promise of the time. However, one of the most important characteristics of the that Revolution was the radicality, almost totality, of the *vision* of change - that is, the extent to which an alternative political, social and cultural order was envisaged, if not actually achieved. Many of the more original and permanent contributions of the French revolution to modern culture arose implicitly, from the possibilities opened up, often unintentionally, during the frantic pursuit of the elusive Revolutionary ideal.

What, by the end of 1792, had become the vision of a total regeneration - the mending of all wrongs in French society by a radical change of the entire culture - carried with it a fundamental ambiguity: on one hand it implied a severing of the links with the past, since so much of the past had been dismissed as problematic; but on the other hand the Revolution demanded a certain historical continuity to escape arbitrariness, to legitimise its existence in the larger scheme of things, to prove itself a "historical necessity", and, ultimately, to confirm the very identity of the French people and the culture which it proposed to regenerate. In the domain of the arts - which is what concerns us here - and specifically the inheritance from the pre-revolutionary era, this ambiguity was at its most acute. The arts of France, from the first Merovingian kings until the Revolution, had been developing in a framework dominated by the monarchy and the church, the two primary structuring elements of culture which the Revolution had challenged. So, broadly speaking, the entire artistic inheritance of the Revolution was suspect because it potentially carried references to ideals which were now proscribed. Every French pre-revolutionary work of art was potentially a symbol of the old order and as such counter-revolutionary and dangerous.

One of the first radical measures of the revolutionary Assembly after the fall of the Bastille (the famous date of 14 July 1789), was the nationalisation of Church property, on the 2 November of the same year, and the subsequent spoliation of the vast wealth of artefacts that were included therein. Usually that meant that they were either sold for profit to foreign collectors, or reconverted to primary material - for example metal was melted and used to make guns, the pages of books and manuscripts were used to make cartridges, etc. This unqualified destruction, however, could not have been sustained for long. So, on the 13 October 1790 - a year later - the Commission of Monuments was created, consisting mainly of Parisian academics and men of letters, who would occupy themselves with the careful assessment of the artistic riches of France, deciding for each case individually what was to be done - that is, whether the works in question were to be preserved in the name of art, or disposed of in the name of the Revolutionary ideal. One of the very first actions of

the Commission of Monuments was the creation of depots for the collection of all artefacts. The two largest in Paris were instituted at the Hôtel de Nesle and at the convent of the Petits-Augustins respectively, the latter decreed on the 15 October. From then on, a perpetual war between pro-conservation and pro-destruction parties was to rage throughout the Revolutionary era, with endless discussions, motions and decrees each contradicting the other.

With the abolition of monarchy and the execution of the king (10 August 1792 and 21 January 1793 respectively) the entire royal property was added to the responsibilities of the Commission of Monuments, and with it an added urgency: the monuments of monarchy represented a much more direct threat than religious images, and provoked the hatred of the people in a way that religious images never quite did; so they became the target of both authorised and spontaneous "vandalism" on a devastating scale. Despite the decree of April 1793 penalising with two years' imprisonment those who, "by malevolence, destroyed or damaged monuments of arts and sciences", the Commission of Monuments was quite overwhelmed. On 4 July, with a decree from the Convention itself (which had replaced the Assembly as the highest governing body on the 10 August 1792) it was required that all symbols of the *Ancien Régime* were to be destroyed within eight days, upon pain of confiscation of the property where such symbols still existed. In the same decree, however stated that a sub-commission of the Commission of Monuments would supervise the operation so that no monument worthy of conservation would be damaged during this process. The Minister Garat saw no conflict in this, suggesting that the removal of the feudal signs was a "restoration" of the monuments and their "restitution in the cult of Liberty".⁵ In October of the same year, however, during an "expiatory ceremony" of a kind that was becoming very popular - this time for the death of Marat (in July) - a whole edifice of paintings and other art from the king's collection was constructed in Fontainebleau and ritually burned, in order to "appease the spirit of this victim of fanaticism".⁶ Still in October (12-25), the Commission of Monuments was forced by the

⁵ TUTEY, L. (ed.), *Procès-verbaux de la Commission des monuments*, vol. I (Paris, 1902-3), p. 350.

⁶ *Archives Parlementaires*, t. LXXVII, Paris 1884, pp. 648-651.

Committee of Public Safety to conduct one of the most famous and extreme acts of revolutionary destruction, the desecration of the royal tombs at Saint-Denis - the traditional burial place of French kings since the sixth century - because "these monuments of idolatry still nourished the superstition of some Frenchmen".⁷ But for the aggressive spirit of the times this wasn't enough to save the Commission from accusations of slackness and of "not having kept pace with the revolution", and, finally, from dissolution and replacement by the Temporary Arts Commission (18 December 1793)⁸. The problems far from ceased with this administrative change - the Arts Commission was faced with exactly the same paradoxical task of conserving the French artistic heritage while destroying all reference to the proscribed ideals.

With the Thermidorian reform in July 1794 (the execution of Robespierre and the end of the Terror) the worst part of the persecution of the artworks was over. On the 31 August the deputy Grégoire presented to the Convention the famous report which was to mark the attitude towards national patrimony by definitively condemning "vandalism" as counterrevolutionary. To conserve and display the monuments of the *Ancien Régime*, wrote Grégoire, was to condemn it to eternal pillory and, thus, to reinforce the people's hatred of the tyrants.⁹ Two more reports in the same vein were to follow in the same year, and in late 1795, Lenoir's plans for a *Musée des Monuments français* at the Petits-Augustins (ongoing at least since 1793), were to be finally approved. Nevertheless, the art of the past still continued to create friction, as the history of the Museum of Monuments itself confirms. Beyond the dilemma between conservation or destruction - which ceased to be a burning issue by 1795 - the new territory of irresolution which opened up concerned the identity of those pieces that were to be conserved. The concept of the "monument historique" had been coined but, as we shall see, far from resolving the

⁷ For a detailed account and references of the whole event see SAINT-GERMAIN, J., *La Seconde Mort des rois de France* (Paris, 1972).

⁸ GUILLAUME, M. J. (ed.), *Procès-verbaux du Comité d'instruction publique de la Convention nationale*, (Paris, 1891-1957), t. III, pp. 180-181.

⁹ *Rapport sur les destructions opérées par le vandalisme et sur les moyens de le réprimer*, Paris, 14 fructidor an II.

problem, its fundamental ambiguity was to perpetuate the confusion beyond the duration of the Revolution.¹⁰

Throughout the vicissitudes concerning the *Ancien Régime* heritage, the idea of the museum had been consistently developing on the pro-conservation side of the conflict. Since the 11 August 1792 - that is, a day after the fall of monarchy - another very significant Commission was operating alongside that of Monuments: it was the *Commission du Muséum*, whose single concern was the Louvre. Throughout the struggle with the art of the old regime the Commission of the Museum was gathering the most recognised masterpieces of painting and sculpture in order to furnish the *Muséum Français* which was to open on the 10 August 1793 - the first anniversary of the fall of monarchy - as part of the grand festival of National Unity. The encounters of that Commission with the problem of counterrevolutionary references in the works at the Louvre were not at all negligible. But it is most significant that almost invariably the problem would be overcome in the name of art: these were works whose legitimation as universally recognised masterpieces had already considerably replaced their inherent character as parts of a certain social and metaphysical hierarchy. In short, the Louvre was dealing in high art - in the least ambiguous of the old regime inheritance. Whereas the largest body of French monuments, mainly sculpture and architectural ornaments from the Middle Ages to the present, were at the heart of the controversy.

The Museum of Monuments was the first project to be realised which dealt with those highly controversial pieces. Nevertheless, proposals for such a museum were ongoing since 1790. The fact that five years had to pass before a project of that kind was finally realised can only testify to the extent of the controversy surrounding the matter. The central and most controversial aspect of these proposals was their reliance on the concept of history. The French monuments in question were not addressed as high art, and therefore

¹⁰ See POULOT. D., "Naissance du monument historique", *Revue d'histoire moderne et contemporaine*, vol. XXXII, July-Sept. 1985.

their conservation could not be justified in those terms, but rather as the newly emerging idea of "monument historique" - their relevance to society and culture still largely unclear but somehow urgently felt.

On the 4 October 1790, for example, F. Puthod de Maisonrouge presented to the Assembly a programme for collecting all nationalised property (still, at the time, only the Church's) in one place, which he called "museum". He proposed this to happen in each city across the country, thus preventing the dispersion and destruction of all those artefacts, which he called both "monuments" and "precious testimonies to history". He was referring primarily to inscriptions, tombs and sculptures - that is, all those problematic works which did not qualify as high art. He defended his proposal as conducive to patriotism, as well as serving "historical truth": "C'est de la vérité de l'histoire qu'il faut s'occuper désormais" and "L'orgueil de voir un patrimoine de famille devenir un patrimoine national ferait ce que n'a pu faire le patriotisme".¹¹ The concept of history also featured highly in the agenda of the comte de Kersaint, who presented his "discourse on public monuments" to the department of Paris on the 15 December 1791.¹² Kersaint urged for the creation of establishments that would ensure the glorification of the Revolution, and the museum was one of them. "Les monuments", he wrote, "sont les témoins irréprochables de l'histoire", so their unification under one roof would ensure the communication of that history as "un succession immense, mais délabrée, obérée mais brillante".¹³ Doyen himself, the original supervisor of all depots, had proposed in March 1791 a museum of *Ancien Régime* statues and monuments in the abbey of St Denis - which he suggested would be a "réunion intéressante pour notre histoire".¹⁴ In May of the same year, elaborating on his earlier proposal, Doyen explicitly mentioned the Petits-Augustins as one of the several places where such a museum could actually be established. There were many other such plans, based on French monuments and history, between 1790 and 1793. As expected, they all

¹¹ *Archives Parlementaires*, t. XIX, Paris 1884, p. 472.

¹² It was published the following year - KERSAINT, A. G., COMTEDE, *Discours sur les monuments publics* (Paris, 1792).

¹³ *ibid.*, p. 42.

¹⁴ AN F17 1032 (15. 3. 1791).

but ceased during the Terror of 1793–4, but they were nevertheless indicative of a changing sensibility, which was to fully flourish after 1795.

Perhaps one of the most intriguing proposals for a museum incorporating "French monuments", however, was one of the earliest: that of Louis G. de Bréquigny, eminent academic and member of the Commission of Monuments. It was presented to that Commission on the 2 December 1790, and it was largely an elaboration of Puthod's recent plan, but with a fascinating twist. Bréquigny suggested that each department of Paris should have one of the aforementioned museums, housed in former churches. Therein should be collected, all those "monuments of the arts and sciences" deemed worthy of conservation, for "public instruction". He proceeded to lay out a standard plan of arrangement for these institutions - chapels for books, nave for statues and mausolea, higher part of the walls for paintings, sacristies for maps, choirs for naturalia and curiosities, and bell-tower for the lodgings of the guardian; also, exceptional architectural ornaments would be removed from their original buildings and incorporated in the museum. Finally, as this was still 1790 and the "dechristianisation" of the later Revolution had not yet happened, it was possible for Bréquigny to make the unusual suggestion that the museum should also continue to provide for religious worship.¹⁵ In Troyes such a museum was actually decreed (although never realised) in the town's cathedral, with the following words: "Ainsi, la métropole du département deviendrait un muséum sacré, où les arts iraient chercher des modèles, la piété des exemples, le goût des leçons, et la religion s'élèverait superbe au milieu des monuments de ses merveilles".¹⁶

I would suggest that this totalising establishment, where instruction in the arts and sciences, taste, and piety would be simultaneously developed in perfect harmony, captured perfectly the mood surrounding the emergence of Lenoir's project. The word "history" was not actually used in Bréquigny's proposal, nor in the museum at Troyes, but it was

¹⁵ TUTEY, op. c it. (note), pp. 265–267.

¹⁶ Quoted in POULOT, D., *"Surveiller et s'instruire". La Révolution française et l'intelligence de l'héritage historique*, Studies on Voltaire and the eighteenth-century, vol. 344 (Oxford: Voltaire Foundation, 1996), p. 148.

clearly not very far. Despite the absence of an operative church, by embracing the historical dimension of its collection the Museum of Monuments was to become the realisation of this vision, ultimately offering a more "total" structure than even Bréquigny had imagined.¹⁷

The structure of the thesis is as follows:

In Chapter 1 the history of the Museum of Monuments will be presented, with a particular aim to show that it was as much a project shaped by Lenoir's personal input as it was by circumstance and external intervention of all kinds. Chapter 2 is a description of the Museum, based on Lenoir's catalogues and other writings, surviving images from a number of sources (including Lenoir's own drawings) and descriptions from visitors. Visitors' reports and criticism, with responses to the Museum from the press and eponymous scholars will be discussed in Chapter 3, showing that the project enjoyed great popularity, while sustaining acute criticism from a small number of scholars. Chapter 4 is a presentation and analysis of Quatremère de Quincy's work on the museum, revealing the conflict in his position, and the concerns and priorities which place him much closer to the Museum of Monuments than it was thought. Chapter 5 is a re-examination and reading of the various layers of the Museum of Monuments in relation to ideas from the broader context of culture; while Chapter 6 is a synthetic interpretative attempt based on the above. The Museum of Monuments is identified as a fundamental quest for identity and order in history, through the medium of art. Through its representation of various overlaid "histories" (the genealogy of epochs and political events, the development of artistic styles, the personal histories), woven around great constants (Nature and the common Origins of civilisation, sentiment, the Enlightenment ideal), and engaging the visitor equally intellectually, aesthetically and emotionally, the Museum transcended its historicist basis, ultimately emerging as an active engagement with myth, and a poetic endeavour. In

¹⁷ Ironically, Lenoir proposed the consecration of a chapel alongside the collection of monuments in his museum, where services would be held for the illustrious dead, as part of his desperate attempts to adapt the project to the sensibilities of the newly restored monarchy and thus save it from closure.

Chapter 7, with the conclusions from the previous three chapters, Lenoir's project and Quatremère de Quincy's concept of the museum are reconciled in their mutual quest for order through history. Finally, however, a distinction is drawn between them - only one which could not have emerged without their initial reconciliation.

Chapter 1

The *Musée des Monuments français*: a history

The Depot

In 1609, a dispute between the monastic order of the Augustins and the Queen, Marguerite de Valois, led to the foundation of the order of the Petits-Augustins, and a vow, on her part, for the provision of a new convent for them. The Queen was to die in 1615, deep in debt, without having completed anything but a chapel - the Chapelle des Louanges. Eventually, after what must have been a hasty and compromised construction, a rather unremarkable building was completed, in the plain style of the mendicant orders (*fig. 1*).¹ Nearly two centuries later, the events of the 1789 Revolution were to pluck the convent from its relative obscurity. About a year after the nationalisation of Church property, on 2 November 1789, a number of religious buildings in Paris were converted to depots for the collection of the vast amounts of precious artefacts. The idea was to secure them against the systematic plundering of the now largely unattended buildings, and to begin the composition of an inventory of the nation's yet-uncharted wealth. The convent of the Petits-Augustins became the largest of these, by decree from the *Comité d'alienation des biens nationaux*, on the 15 October 1790.²

A month earlier, on the 10 September, the same Committee had written to the distinguished painter Gabriel François Doyen asking him to assist in the daunting task of identifying and evaluating the great artistic wealth of the capital, with a particular emphasis on paintings

¹ It is characteristic that in 1816, after the closure of the *Musée des monuments*, the building was condemned to destruction, almost in its entirety, on grounds of structural unsoundness (Vaudoyer report, AN F13 1 115. For more on the convent see FREMY, E., "Le monastère des Petits-Augustins de Paris", *Bulletin du Comité d'histoire et d'archéologie du diocèse de Paris*, April 1883; and THOUROUDE, S., "Le couvent des Petits-Augustins", *L'Information d'Histoire de l'Art*, Sept-Oct. 1964.

² AMMF, vol. III, p.148.

and objects from precious metals.³ Doyen had readily accepted the position, expressing his particular regret for the destruction and loss of masterpieces that had been occurring in the past year, because "les artistes ne peuvent épurer leur goût que par l'étude des ouvrages des grands maîtres".⁴ Doyen had carte blanche to decide what was to be conserved on the basis of artistic merit, and what was to be otherwise disposed of - usually utilised or sold for the value of the raw material. By June 1791 Doyen had accompanied members of the *Bureau de liquidation* in over two dozen Parisian churches, in search of masterpieces, which were then transported to the Petits-Augustins. In December 1791, Doyen decided to leave for St. Petersburg, accepting an invitation from the Empress Catherine II to take up a position as professor at the Imperial Academy.⁵ His departure was quite sudden and unexplained, as the authorities expected him back for over a year before finally, in October 1793, declaring him an *émigré* and confiscating his property.

Well before departing, however, Doyen had assisted Alexandre Lenoir, a student of his for fifteen years, to become the official guardian of the Petits-Augustins depot (*fig. 2*). Doyen used his friendship with the mayor of Paris, J.-S. Bailly, to promote Lenoir to this position. The *Administration des domaines nationaux de la municipalité de Paris* named Lenoir "garde général de tous les effets mobiliers déjà déposés et de ceux qui le seront par la suite au couvent des Petits-Augustins", according him a salary and two assistants of his choice "à se faire aider, pour le placement, l'arrangement et la conservation de tous les effets", on 6 June 1791.⁶ Prior to the commencement of his employment, however, Lenoir had been working at the depot voluntarily for nine months, while lobbying for an official position. He participated in as many conservation-oriented activities as he could, such as managing to accompany Bailly to the Sainte-Chapelle, already in 1790, in view of assessing paintings worth conserving.⁷ It is indicative of the extent to which Lenoir's

³ "Nous vous prions donc, Monsieur, de vouloir bien nous donner vos avis tant sur les tableaux qui se trouvent dans les maisons religieuses supprimées et que vous jugeriez devoir être des chefs-d'œuvre, que sur les objets d'argenterie considérés sous le même rapport"- quoted in STEIN, H, "Le peintre G.F.Doyen et l'origine du Musée des monuments français", *Réunion des Sociétés des beaux-arts des départements*, May 1888.

⁴ STEIN, *ibid.*, p. 254.

⁵ AMMF, vol. I, p. 8.

⁶ AMMF, vol. I, p. 6-7.

⁷ AMMF, vol. I, p. 1-2.

regularisation was a favour, rather than a choice based on merit, that his appointment was heavily criticised by the world of art connoisseurs, who felt that the position should have gone to one of them.⁸

Lenoir embraced his task as guardian of the depot with a zeal well beyond the requirements of the job, which involved mainly the recording and labelling of all pieces arriving in the depot, and the regular preparation of lists for the *Commission des monuments*.⁹ Additionally, he would accompany the Commission to its daily surveys of churches, where inventories were prepared and works chosen for transfer to the depots. At that stage he did not have considerable say in what was finding its way to the Petits-Augustins, but he did occupy himself extensively with the arrangement of the pieces, betraying a vision about the depot which clearly transcended its anonymous and transitory present state. When the engraver Moreau, member of the Monuments Commission, visited the place on the 18 June 1793, he reported that a serious and permanent installation of the works was taking place, with several damaged monuments restored and mounted on pedestals, and even embedded in the walls of the building.¹⁰

Lenoir's intentions were perpetually conflicting with the transitory nature of the depot. Less than two months after his regularisation, on the 26 July 1791, the *Comité d'administration des biens nationaux* of Paris declared the opening of a sale at the Petits-Augustins, of all its effects that were deemed artistically uninteresting; this excluded all paintings, most of which were to be taken to the Louvre and the remaining to the depot of the Hôtel de Nesle; and, also, a few "monumens historiques", that is, sculptures already in that grey area of "historic interest".¹¹ Such sales were to take place continuously, throughout the depot phase of the Petits-Augustins. The additional high-priority transfer of all "chefs-d'œuvre" to the Louvre - after the autumn of 1792 - , as well the regular removal

⁸ AMMF, vol. II, p. 39.

⁹ AMMF, vol. II, p. 6.

¹⁰ "On s'y occupait d'un arrangement sérieux et permanent des monuments en marbre que l'on y a transportés provisoirement... J'y ai vu les tombeaux remontés presque en totalité et scellés en plâtre, un grand nombre de colonnes élevées, rajustées avec leurs chapiteaux et leurs bases, soutenues avec des crampons de fer scellés dans la muraille." Letter to *Commission des monuments*, n. d., AN F17/1036, dossier 3.

¹¹ AMMF, vol. I, p. 7.

of bronze pieces to the foundry, left Lenoir constantly battling to stay in track of his plans, with a constantly changing collection¹².

During this phase, he corresponded furiously with all relevant authorities - for example challenging almost every other order of removal, conjuring up every conceivable excuse - and not always in vain. An interesting such example involves the family tomb of Thou, a bronze monument taken from the Petits-Augustins to the foundry in November 1793, which Lenoir managed to get back, after a letter to the Commune of Paris, where he pointed out how promptly he had complied with recent orders to send 80 paintings from the depot to be burnt in a popular festival, and therefore how he deserved to have his request granted this time.¹³ Not frequently, but significantly, he would take desperate measures, such as the famous whitewashing of the two bronzes by Sarrazin, thus disguising them as plaster, and saving them from the foundry¹⁴. His evasive tactics, however, were more frequently unsuccessful, especially against the *Commission du Muséum*. The project of the Louvre carried enormous significance on both the personal and collective levels, and, as such, the Commission had an effectively unchallenged priority of choice over any piece for it. Still, Lenoir argued and delayed matters considerably. Often a dozen letters would have to be exchanged between himself, the Louvre Commission, and the minister of the Interior, D. J. Garat, before Lenoir finally complied with the initial order, and delivered whatever it was the Commission had demanded. A delightful example of this, from April-May 1793, is the collection of nine letters in the Louvre Archives, where the Commission keeps complaining to Garat that Lenoir is either not there when they send their men to pick up certain paintings, or plainly refuses to deliver them, while Lenoir writes to the minister trying simultaneously to appease him and argue for the reversal of the delivery order.¹⁵ By July of the same year, Lenoir had not yet delivered those paintings.

¹² Courajod lists the dates of these sales.

¹³ AMMF, vol. I, p. 12 (14 brumaire an II).

¹⁴ AMMF, vol. III, p. 153.

¹⁵ MS, Archives du Louvre, Z2: 1793.

Garat visited the depot himself on the 9 July 1793, in the company of Bertrand Barère, deputy of the Convention and member of the *Comité de salut public*, as well as a friend of Lenoir.¹⁶ Perhaps unexpectedly, he seemed to enjoy what he saw - which, considering the report of Moreau, a month earlier, must have been a situation fairly indicative of Lenoir's more permanent plans - but he certainly didn't take any serious notice of it: on the 22nd of the same month, Lenoir received a letter on behalf of the minister, ordering him to deliver immediately not only the aforementioned paintings, but also a large number of other objects urgently required by the Louvre Commission, in view of the museum's imminent scheduled opening. On the same day, a panicked Lenoir replied to Garat with a letter that was to change the fortune of the depot:

Citoyen ministre, d'après la visite que vous fîtes le 9 du présent au dépôt qui m'est confié, la conversation que vous eûtes avec le citoyen Barère et moi, où vous approuvâtes mes opérations pour ne rien laisser sortir je ne pouvais guère compter sur l'ordre que l'on m'adresse aujourd'hui de votre par. Cependant, comme personne plus que moi ne désire offrir à la Nation ses richesses, ne serait-il pas possible sans rien altérer à vos desseins et à vos vœux patriotiques, de rendre public tant de jours qu'il vous plairait dans la semaine les morceaux de peinture et de sculpture dont vous avez pris connaissance et dont vous avez senti la difficulté du transport? J'attends de votre amour pour les arts que vous présentez au public ce plan qui ne peut que lui être agréable et profitable.¹⁷

As a result, on the 31 July, he received an order from Garat to open the depot to the public between 3-18 August, every day morning and evening, for the celebrations of the first anniversary of the abolition of monarchy.¹⁸ The *Fédérés des départements* would be visiting Paris from all over the country for the occasion, and, of course, the much-heralded opening of the *Musée de la République* was set for the 10th. For this occasion two main sections of the former convent were utilised: the church, which was given over to the exhibition of paintings, and the cloisters, where sculptures and architectural fragments were arranged, already with a view to dramatic effect.¹⁹ It is interesting to note, with McClellan, that Lenoir opted here for a carefully "confused" arrangement, showing deliberate disregard

¹⁶ TUETÉY, L., *Procès-verbaux de la Commission des Monuments* (Paris, 1902-1903), vol. I, pp. xlv-xlv.

¹⁷ AN F17*3/24, fol. 55.

¹⁸ "... et de prendre avec la Commission des monuments toutes les mesures d'ordre et de décence qui pourront se concilier avec les facilités que nos frères des départements doivent trouver dans l'examen des objets d'art que le dépôt provisoire renferme. " - 13 thermidor an I, Garat to Lenoir, AMMF, vol. I, p. 11 (13 thermidor an II).

¹⁹ AN F17/1063 doss.3. See also COURAJOD, vol. I, p. i ff.

HUARD, G., "Alexandre Lenoir et le Muséum. Du mois de décembre 1792 et la fin de l'an II", *Bulletin de la Société de l'histoire de l'art français* (1940), pp. 188-206.

for historical context and provenance, with pieces set next to each other so as to clash, in order to create a rich mixture of forms and styles, rather than to give any sense of continuity. At this point, the effect would have not been dissimilar to the great gallery of the Louvre, just across the river, with its eclectic, old-school tapestry of paintings covering the walls from floor to ceiling.²⁰ The opening turned out to be a considerable success, and Lenoir was given permission to keep the depot available to the public until September, same as the Louvre, which was to close for refurbishment after that.

Since June of that year, Lenoir had prepared a catalogue, the *Notice succincte des objets de sculpture et architecture réunis au dépôt provisoire national rue des Petits-Augustins*, which he proceeded to distribute to all his visitors. His explanation for it, "distribuée gratuitement pour mettre les autorités et le public à même de juger"²¹, suggested that his own curatorial work was as much at stake, as was any genuine assisting with the understanding of the monuments. Just before the August opening of the depot, he had sent the catalogue to the *Commission des monuments*, which responded in an unsurprisingly ambiguous manner. On one hand it complimented Lenoir for the setting-up of such an exhibition of "beautiful pieces", but on another it pointed out the fact that certain errors were manifest, and, perhaps most poignant of all, that this Commission was not consulted at any point of this operation.²² To those in the Commission who were against Lenoir already, this could only have added another reason to dislike the enterprising guardian: not only was the catalogue an unauthorised initiative, financed privately by Lenoir, but it also failed to acknowledge the Commission's own work in the compilation of the Petits-Augustins collection, which Lenoir was presenting as entirely due to his own efforts.

Despite the successful interval of this temporary opening - or perhaps all the more for it - Lenoir had managed to displease considerably some of the more crucial authorities. By

²⁰ MCCLELLAN, A., *Inventing the Louvre : Art, Politics and the Origins of the Modern Museum in Eighteenth-century Paris* (Cambridge U.P., 1994), p. 162.

²¹ AMMF, vol. II, p. 59.

²² The Commission wrote to Lenoir that his display "quoique non avoué à raison de quelques erreurs qui y sont répandues, et parce qu'il a été fait sans sa participation, ne renferme pas moins un exposé des beautés dans ce genre [qu'elle] a fait recueillir" - quoted in COURAJOD, vol. II, p. 208.

late-1793, both the Louvre Commission and the minister Garat - the latter, admittedly, before visiting the depot - had made unsuccessful attempts to have him altogether dismissed from the depot.²³ In the end, Lenoir would have to relinquish everything that the Louvre Commission demanded - all the paintings, the classical sculptures, and some of the more precious pieces of modern sculpture. But that was not until 1795²⁴. His first obedient turn, however, coincided with the height of the Terror, from just after the temporary opening of the Petits-Augustins, until the fall of Robespierre the following July (10 thermidor an III). He delivered works from the depot, even if they were paintings about to be burned in ceremonial pyres, at popular "expiatory" festivals. To his credit, it has to be said that he still made an effort to salvage some of the more precious pieces.²⁵

The most interesting event for Lenoir, and the depot, during the Terror was the involvement in the events of Saint-Denis, in the second half of 1793.²⁶ The exceptional artistic wealth contained in the traditional burial place of French kings, renamed the Franciade, was about to be put on sale, when Garat sent Lenoir to remove a number of paintings, which the *Commission des monuments* had deemed worthy of preservation. Lenoir went there on the 13 April, at which point he felt compelled to make notes on the monuments that attracted his curiosity. In the meantime, as the anniversary of the overthrow of monarchy was approaching, Barère presented to the Convention a plea for the effacement of the overwhelming royalist iconography from Saint-Denis. This resulted, on the 1 August, in the Convention declaring the celebratory destruction of the royal tombs in the cathedral, on the day of the anniversary. Between the 6-8 August, fifty-one monuments were already destroyed. That phase of the events culminated, on the 10th, in the erection of a the monumental mount to Marat and Le Pelletier, from architectural and human remains, just outside the cathedral. The new minister of the Interior, J.-F. Paré,

²³ Reugnault, of the *Commission du Muséum*, accused Lenoir of being inappropriate for the job on the grounds of his initial employment by an *émigré* (Doyen, who had fled to Russia) - AMMF, vol. II, p. 39-40; and Garat was only prevented from dismissing him, in June 1793, by the intervention of Barère.

²⁴ In an inventory of August 1795, there are still 133 paintings described as "portraits précieux" listed - AMMF, vol. II, p. 240.

²⁵ AMMF, vol. II, pp. 102-3, 148; COURAJOD, vol. I, p. 18-19.

²⁶ See KENNEDY, E., *A Cultural History of the French Revolution* (Yale U.P, 1989), pp. 206-212 ; SAINT-GERMAIN, J., *La Seconde Mort des rois de France* (Paris 1972); RÉAU, L., *Histoire du vandalisme. Les monuments détruits de l'art français* (Paris, 1959).

urged on, but the Commission of monuments hesitated - an act which was to tilt the already precarious balance against it, and lead to its replacement by the *Commission temporaire des arts*, on the 18 December of the same year. Eventually, between the 12-25 October the destructive feast was resumed and concluded (*fig. 4*).

In all the morbidly colourful extravagance of the exhumations and destruction, one of the most noteworthy points is the perfect complementarity of two apparently conflicting attitudes: on one hand the sensual and emotive fascination with the macabre - the sight of the decomposing royal corpses, the unbelievable smells, the sublimity of the whole atmosphere, simultaneously sacrilegious and elated; and, on the other hand, the attempt at analytic efficiency, through classifications and evaluations, setting aside the precious lead from the tomb seals, as well as all the metallic artefacts for the foundry, while sending the cadavers to the quicklime pits - rather surreally, one for each royal family - , and dividing the stone monuments in those artistically interesting, which were removed for safekeeping, and those only fit for destruction, which duly followed.

Lenoir was present throughout events, accompanying Dom Poirier, who was there as official government representative, to record the proceedings. The former also kept a detailed account, including sketches of the corpses and a combination of the most fascinated and most prosaically efficient comments²⁷.

At the same time, he did his best to salvage as many monuments as he could, under the circumstances. The well-known La Fontaine drawing of Lenoir, single-handedly (but for a faithful dog) defending the tomb of Louis XII at Saint-Denis, could well be more of a contribution to the anti-vandalist mythology of the thermidorian Republic, rather than a reflection of true events. Nevertheless, the monumental tomb of Louis XII was, in the end, saved, together with those of François I, Henri II, Charles VI, and many more smaller pieces, due to Lenoir's intervention (*figs 5, 6*)²⁸.

²⁷ Lenoir's account is reproduced in COURAJOD, vol.I, pp.87-91; Poirier's account is to be found in GUILHERMY, *Monographie de l'église royale de Saint-Denis* (1848).

²⁸ AMMF, vol. I, pp. 13-15.

The first convoy of salvaged works from Saint-Denis reached the Petits-Augustins on the 29 November 1793, with more to follow. Despite the extensive destruction, the ancient cathedral was still full of sculptures and ornaments which Lenoir was hoping to transfer to the depot, thus enriching his collection with some of the most significant French monuments in the capital.

What exactly were Lenoir's intentions for the collection, however, is open to speculation. Despite the obvious effort going into the enrichment and arrangement of the Petits-Augustins into something more permanent, it is clear that his ambitions were not exhausted in the depot itself. Initially he had wanted to be in the much more prestigious *Commission du Muséum*, created in October 1792.²⁹ That having failed, he still entertained the idea of an involvement with the Revolutionary museum par excellence, through a merger of the collection at his depot - of which he would always have to be the expert conservator and curator - and an all-inclusive Louvre. His two publications of year II (1793-4), were, to a large extent, attempts to convince the authorities of his competence and worthiness. One was the first catalogue of his depot, the aforementioned *Notice succincte*, in its second printing of December 1793, and the other was the *Essai sur le museum de peinture*, a proposal for the development of the Louvre. Both of these Lenoir sent to the *Comité d'instruction publique* and the *Commission temporaire des arts* in the summer and autumn of 1794.

In the cover letter accompanying the *Notice succincte*, Lenoir expressed a clear intention for the Petits-Augustins: He would have liked to save from annihilation "des chefs-d'œuvre qui jadis décoraient les temples des fanatiques, les palais du tyran et les maisons de ses coalisés"; and he continued: "J'insisterait davantage sur les antiquités du Moyen Âge et sur la chronologie de l'art en France, trop négligée jusqu'à ce jour."³⁰ Lenoir's expertise was also on show in this publication, alongside the monuments themselves. McClellan points out that at the end of this edition, Lenoir brought up his additional abilities as a restorer of

²⁹ COURAJOD, vol. II, p. 5.

³⁰ AMMF, vol. II, p. 169-70 (19 thermidor an II).

outstanding paintings - still in the depot at the time - making special mention to a *Deluge* attributed to Tintoretto, which he claimed to have found in three hundred pieces, before restoring to its former glory.³¹

Despite the indications in accompanying letters and reports, the *Notice succinte* itself was not chronologically structured. There were 256 numbered entries in the catalogue referring to objects - or, sometimes, groups of objects - in no apparent order. Let us look at what those pieces were: The vast majority were sculptural and architectural fragments from religious establishments, mostly in Paris, ranging in date from the fourteenth century to the very last years before the Revolution. There was also a handful of medieval sculptures, and 19 pieces dated to Roman antiquity. Finally, there were the two famous Michaelangelo Slaves, given to François I during his reign and eventually having found their way in cardinal Richelieu's garden. The main body of the collection was composed exclusively of French pieces from the past five centuries: 104 were fragments (statues, busts, reliefs, etc.), or, less frequently, whole structures of funerary and commemorative monuments; 93 were architectural fragments (columns, friezes, reliefs, etc. and some ornamental statuary); and 32 were autonomous devotional sculptures. There were also six numbers with objects from the early Middle Ages, including statues of the legendary kings of France Childebert and Clovis. With the antiquities and the Slaves - as well as a few other works - swiftly taken to the Louvre, the depot was left with sculptural pieces since the beginning of the French monarchy (identified, at that stage, with the French people), and coming from, on one hand, funerary and commemorative monuments - that is, works centring on an individual personality or a family, almost invariably of royal or aristocratic decent, and mostly funerary - and, on the other hand, the ornamentation of churches, including architectural decoration and objects of worship.

Ten days after the receipt of this catalogue, the president of the *Commission temporaire des arts*, Mathieu, briefly communicated to Lenoir their satisfaction with his work, and ordered

³¹ LENOIR, *Notice succinte*, note on p. 12.

two copies of the publication³². At the same time, the guardian was given permission to transfer to the depot sculptures from Saint-Germain-des-Près and the Hospice de la Charité. A week later, Mathieu wrote again to Lenoir, further expressing his satisfaction and encouragement :

La Commission temporaire des arts voit avec satisfaction l'ordre que tu as établi dans le Dépôt confié à ta garde, et les soins que tu prends pour la conservation des objets de sciences et arts. Le témoignage que te rend la Commission doit être pour toi la plus flatteuse récompense comme le plus puissant mobile pour exciter et augmenter même, s'il est possible, ton zèle civique et ton activité pour la surveillance des objets confiés à tes soins. Reçois les félicitations de la Commission avec autant de plaisir que j'ai à t'en faire part.³³

For all its praise, however, it was not up to this Commission to decide the fate of the depot. The *Comité d'Instruction publique* had already responded to Lenoir earlier in August, rejecting the proposal for a permanent opening, on political grounds : "Il contient trop d'images des tyrans, de leur femmes et enfants, pour en parler aussi publiquement pour le moment"³⁴. It is interesting to point out the comment "for the moment", which clearly indicated that such a project was no longer out of the question, and thus implicitly anticipated the actual opening of the *Musée des monuments* fourteen months later.

On the 26 August, with his usual tenacity, Lenoir counter-responded to the Committee of Public Instruction with a letter that targeted the stalemate of contemporary artistic production, while pronouncing the instructive role of the proposed museum, essential for the project of regeneration of the arts. Furthermore, he argued that the existing state of the Louvre "n'est, sans doute, qu'un très-faible esquisse du Muséum français", on which the foundations for future artistic production would have to be laid. It is there that youth "doit prendre connaissance de l'histoire vivante de différents siècles et des différents âges qui nous ont précédés." He suggested that a re-organisation of the place would have to be seriously considered, possibly through a competition, adding :

C'est pour faciliter les travaux du concours que j'ai essayé de vous présenter un catalogue... du dépôt des Petits-Augustins; c'est pour faciliter l'artiste concurant que j'ai cru l'impression de ce catalogue nécessaire...

³² "Il sera écrit à Lenoir pour lui témoigner la satisfaction de la Commission sur l'ordre qu'il a établi dans le Dépôt dont il est conservateur" - AMMF, vol. I, p. 19 (30 thermidor an II)

³³ AMMF, vol. I, p. 19 (7 fructidor an II).

³⁴ AMMF, vol. II, p. 202 (30 thermidor an II).

[et] que j'ai pensé qu'il était bon d'imiter tous les gardes des dépôts à en publier de semblables; ce moyen instructif sera un guide sûr pour l'artiste de génie, qui, de son cabinet, pourra placer avantageusement dans le plan du Muséum qu'il donnera à la République les monumens les plus beaux conservés dans les dépôts.³⁵

It appears, therefore, that Lenoir was trying to justify his catalogue even beyond the immediate target of the depot opening, by promoting it as an exemplary work for the arrangement of all depots, as well as other collections for the instruction of artists, and, of course, for the proposed competition concerning the new arrangement of the Louvre.

Two months after sending them the *Notice succincte*, and having already received their refusal for a public opening, Lenoir sent the Committee of Public Instruction his *Essai sur le muséum de peinture*³⁶. Unlike the depot's catalogue, which was claiming only an indirect relevance for the Louvre, the *Essai* was a direct and detailed proposal for the great museum's rearrangement. It was also a considerable museological statement, influenced by current trends - most notably Lebrun's *Réflexions sur le Muséum*, published in 1794 - yet quite significant in its own right. In the *Essai*, Lenoir adhered to the popular theme of the "utility" of the arts, whereby the new Republic, the "regenerator of men" was to be strengthened and promoted through a regenerated artistic production. He exalted "cette étonnante révolution qui, après avoir changé la face du monde politique, doit s'étendre encore sur les sciences, les lettres et les arts, et principalement les arts d'imagination dont l'influence est si puissante sur les hommes". This emphasis on the powerful influence of the "arts of the imagination" is quite significant for Lenoir's entire museological opus, and a key principle in the creation of his own museum. Following Winckelmann, Lenoir proceeded to exalt the art of the ancients, and the importance of the study of their works for the proper development of young artists' imagination, as well as the faithful observation of nature. However, Lenoir broke from the influential German's path on two important points : first, he believed that the perfection of the ancients *could* be matched in the contemporary world, as this was the task of the new Republic; and, secondly, he added

³⁵ AMMF, vol. II, p. 203 (9 fructidor an II).

³⁶ AMMF, vol. I, p. 26 (11 vendémiaire an III).

the study of "modern" masterpieces to the necessary instruction of artists.³⁷ Finally, Lenoir proposed the overall arrangement of the Louvre by chronology, so as to promote the comparison of the history of art to that of time - "lier l'histoire des arts à celle des temps". Beginning from the infancy of art, "nous arriverions de siècle en siècle à l'époque où nous vivons et de cette manière nous aurions une histoire suivie de l'art de la peinture."³⁸

Although Lenoir saw the Louvre as, predominantly, a *Muséum de peinture*, he also proposed the establishment of a gallery of sculpture. There, not only the expected classical pieces would be exhibited, but also Egyptian, Etruscan, Indian as well as "modern" ones - that is, the pieces he was collecting at the Petits-Augustins: French medieval, renaissance, and eighteenth-century. The seeming paradox of this proposal - to denude his depot in favour of the Louvre, even of those pieces which currently the Louvre Commission was not interested in - is instantly resolved if one thinks of Lenoir's desire to "graduate" to an expanded Louvre himself.

In that sense, it could be said that the Petits-Augustins, at least in its depot-phase, doubled as a display case for Lenoir's curatorial abilities and artistic expertise, in view of a much-coveted position in the museal mainstream. However, I would disagree with McClellan who sees the depot as merely a tool in Lenoir's self-promotion.³⁹ I would suggest that there was much more to the Petits-Augustins for Lenoir, right from the beginning.

Although there was a certain obviousness in Lenoir's show of expertise in view of the Louvre, there was also a consistency in his movements concerning the depot, which betrayed a vision for an altogether new and independent project. In other words, there was clearly a level on which Lenoir was envisaging the latent possibilities of all those problematic sculptural pieces, regardless of his own long-harboured professional ambitions. The "judgement" which Lenoir was inviting the first visitors of the depot to pass, could not have been exclusively on Lenoir's competence, but also, surely, on the

³⁷ "... modèles invariables du beau dans une collection choisie des restes précieux de l'Antiquité et des chefs-d'œuvre des modernes" - *Essai sur le muséum de peinture* (Paris, 1794), p.6

³⁸ Ibid., p. 12.

³⁹ MCCLELLAN, op. cit. (note 20), Chapter 5.

project itself - on the attraction, interest and altogether viability of a potentially permanent museum of that kind.

McClellan also suggests that circumstances shaped Lenoir's project much more decisively than any of his own plans - at least in the beginning. Strictly speaking, this is true - in the sense that it was not Lenoir's intended plan to have the depot denuded of all works of art-proper, and to be largely left with funerary and commemorative French sculptures of an ambiguous "historical" character. What would have emerged in the Petits-Augustins, had Lenoir been successful in his attempts to keep the bulk of the collection intact, is open to speculation. However, it is worth considering the extent to which Lenoir's response to circumstance was merely inevitable, or whether there was a considerable, albeit adaptable vision at work, as well. As it will become increasingly obvious in this thesis, Lenoir was obviously not alone, with some consistent plan against the authorities, but neither was he a mere pawn in the tide of external events. He was a catalyst, at the right place the right time, to engage with, and manipulate circumstances, adapting to them, to create something that was highly representative, both of his quite imaginative 'take' on things, as well as of the greater concerns of his time. Ultimately, to the extent that it is possible or even relevant to speculate about the way his mind worked, it would make sense that Lenoir was finding interest in those monuments, even as he was still hoping for a position in which they would only play a tangential role.

In October 1794, encouraged by their recent congratulations for his work at the depot, Lenoir asked the *Commission temporaire des arts* permission to restore a number of badly damaged monuments. Most of them were of the sixteenth century, which, Lenoir argued, was the best period of French art; and, he continued, unless drastic measures were taken soon, those pieces were sure to deteriorate further, inflicting a considerable loss on the depot's collection, as well as the arts in general. In a characteristically inconsistent manner, the authorities this time responded negatively. Nevertheless, in November, Lenoir was upgraded from *garde de dépôt* to *conservateur des monuments*, together with other depot guardians in Paris. At the same time, he was given permission for another transfer of

monuments from Saint-Denis to the Petits-Augustins, on the grounds that they would be useful for the chronology of costumes and "even for history".⁴⁰ At the beginning of the following year, he sought to get authorisation for a further transfer of monuments from the abbey, on the grounds that they were frequently demanded from him by scholarly visitors to the depot.⁴¹

Feeling the circumstances to be increasingly favourable towards anti-vandalist projects, and having, most probably, abandoned his hopes for an immediate involvement with the prestigious Louvre, on the 18 July 1795 Lenoir submitted a report to the Committee of Public Instruction, proposing the creation of a museum at the depot of the Petits-Augustins.⁴² Effectively, the report was a long justification of the work he had done on the depot so far, followed by the proposal of measures which would improve things further. After a brief presentation of some of the most important monuments already in the depot, Lenoir went on to defend the measures he'd already taken for their welfare, as well as the setting-up of a display at their best advantage, both for the instruction of artists and for the enjoyment of the public:

La grande quantité de monuments recueillis dans le Dépôt, le besoin d'ordre, tout m'engagea à les replacer autant qu'il serait possible dans leur premier état, toujours persuadé que c'est le seul moyen de les conserver, et que les monuments démontés et oubliés dans un coin sont bientôt perdus et anéantis. En les remplaçant, j'ai eu le soin de ménager les clairs et les ombres de manière à en faciliter le dessin à ceux des artistes que ce rassemblement pourrait intéresser... Pour en donner au public une idée d'un rassemblement aussi curieux, et pour rassurer sur le sort des monuments qu'on croyait perdus, je sollicitai la publicité du Dépôt, sous la surveillance de la Commission des monuments.⁴³

The acknowledgement of the Commission of Monuments here would have served to reinforce the legitimacy of the development that Lenoir initiated at the depot. The report continued with a justification of the publication of his catalogue, at his own expense, "pour en faire hommage aux artistes et aux amis des arts". The centre of the report was the presentation of Lenoir's three exemplary "actions conservatrices": the marble Descent from the Cross from Saint-Laundry, by Girardon, which arrived at the depot in more than one

⁴⁰ AMMF, vol. II, n° clxi, p. 218.

⁴¹ "Souvent elles m'ont été demandées dans le dépôt dont je suis le conservateur par les savants en histoire et en chronologie" - AMMF, vol. II, n° clxxvi, p. 231.

⁴² AMMF, vol. I, pp. 22-31 (30 messidor an III).

⁴³ Ibid., p. 24.

hundred pieces before Lenoir reassembled it; the famous mausoleum of Richelieu from the Sorbonne chapel, which Lenoir's personal initiative alone saved from destruction; and the painting of the *Deluge*, reassembled from three hundred pieces, which he had already mentioned in his *Notice succincte*. This presentation led him to reprise his argument about the necessity of reassembling and restoring - which often meant "recreating" - a number of damaged monuments; the case of François I's tomb, awaiting restoration at the depot, was presented to further strengthen Lenoir's plea. A passionate condemnation of vandalism accompanied the above, rather self-righteously placing Lenoir and his project on the anti-vandalist front, and thus attempting to condemn in advance any potential opposition to it; at the same time, he distributed another compliment, this time to the Temporary Arts

Commission:

La hache des vandales, que le parti de l'étranger avait placée dans la main des misérables soudoyés pour nous plonger dans l'ignorance et nous enchaîner de nouveau, avait passé dans tous les temples, et malgré les soins actifs de la Commission temporaire, la torche de la destruction et du désordre a fait beaucoup de ravages.⁴⁴

However, a more prosaic argument was also included, concerning financial benefits from the stay of monuments at their current place (the depot): "N'eût-il pas mieux valu laisser en place les monuments dont je plaide ici la cause, que de les faire démonter pour les abandonner ensuite à une destruction lente? Là où il n'y a point de dilapidation, il n'y a point de dépenses inutiles".⁴⁵ Finally, Lenoir did not fail to add a personal note to the report, pledging a lifelong dedication to the arts: "J'ai cru devoir augmenter d'activité et me consacrer tout entier au bien des arts; toute ma vie est pour eux."⁴⁶

Two months later, in the last days of September 1795 (6 vendémiaire an IV), Lenoir published and distributed to the relevant authorities a new version of his catalogue, entitled *Notice historique des monuments des arts réunis au Dépôt national*. Unlike the *Notice succincte* of 1793, which was a 28-page list of monuments, this work was 112-pages long, and an altogether more ambitious work, with extensive commentary, including a treatise on

⁴⁴ Ibid., p. 25.

⁴⁵ Ibid., p. 28.

⁴⁶ Ibid., p. 26.

the art of stained glass. There were just over 400 entries in this catalogue, the majority of which were sculptures of the French Renaissance, from the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. Already calling it a "museum" (anticipating its official recognition as such in the immediate future), and in a characteristic absence of timidity, Lenoir heralded the collection at the Petits-Augustins as comparable in grandeur and magnificence to the monuments of Rome, Naples and Florence. Therein, he wrote, lay cenotaphs, bas-reliefs, antiquities, religious monuments, objects of a fanatic cult, materials of history, old Gallic works and the most beautiful "modern" sculptures - all in a "désordre savant", a skilful lack of order.⁴⁷ It is interesting to read this last comment, in view of the forthcoming - and much-advertised - chronological ordering of the Museum.

At this stage, the chronological circuit of the galleries did not yet exist (construction started in 1796, as we shall see further down), and the catalogue reflected the "disorder" which must have reigned in the depot. Nevertheless, there was an evident introduction of the chronological principle in the arrangement of the text, as well as the collection. Unlike the first catalogue, the entries were here set in four groups according to their period, which also roughly corresponded with the position of the actual pieces in the building: "Antiquités" (implying classical), "Antiquités celtiques", "Antiquités du moyen âge" and "Monumens depuis la renaissance des Arts". However, the idea of a dominant chronological sequence was still not evident, as these groups were repeated in the various parts of the building. For example, there were "celtic" and "medieval" antiquities as well as "renaissance" monuments in the church of the former convent, but there was also a "Salle des antiquités du moyen âge" mentioned, as there was one for the "monuments depuis la renaissance des arts"; there was a "Salle des antiquités", but classical pieces also featured in what was described as the "première partie de la galerie", obviously the first room of the cloisters, where the ubiquitous "renaissance" category was present as well; second, third and fourth parts of this "galerie" were finally mentioned, where renaissance, medieval and again renaissance pieces featured respectively. Bearing in mind that within each localised group a historical progression was adhered to (for example, the dates given for the

⁴⁷ LENOIR, *Notice Historique*, an IV, préface, p. vi.

"renaissance" pieces at nos 25-72, in the church, steadily progressed from 1515 to 1723), the idea of a single chronological sequence appeared as the logical and necessary next step - which was indeed the case with the next catalogue, the first *Description* of 1797/an V, just over a year later.

If the collection was already displaying a "historical" bias, the text of the catalogue was less so. The change of the title - from *Notice succinte* to *Notice historique* - and the identification of the collection as "monumens de notre Histoire" once in the text were highly significant yet isolated instances. The main focus of the introduction was still "vandalism". Lenoir firmly embraced its condemnation, and the conservationist turn of the Republic, by calling the museum "un temple expiatoire consacré au bon goût et au vrai génie"; and he continued: "à l'aspect de ces désordres, ces destructions, on se demande quel siècle enfanta ces merveilles, quel siècle osa porter sur eux une main sacrilège, et quel est celui qui conçut le noble projet de réparer les crimes de l'ignorance et du vandalisme." Lenoir's elegiac prose went on to propose that a visit to the museum would inspire a hatred of tyranny, a love of country and sympathy for its past misfortunes, a respect for law, the cultivation of fine arts and, finally, the desire to cry out: "Que je suis heureux d'être né Français!"⁴⁸ In a characteristic manner, this greatly emotional aspect of the work was accompanied by the prosaic: Lenoir believed that the monuments in the museum could also be very useful for the history of dress, "... tout ce qui peut donner des idées des anciens costumes...", so that artists wanting to render period dresses would have the right models to copy from. Covering himself against any potential displeasure with the truly "barbarous" style of some of the earlier works, Lenoir also wrote that these monuments should not be seen *but* as examples of period dress.⁴⁹

On the 21 October 1795, three weeks after receiving Lenoir's new catalogue, the Committee of Public Instruction finally declared the Petits-Augustins a permanent exhibition space, allowing it to be open to the public under the name of *Musée national des*

⁴⁸ Ibid., p. vii.

⁴⁹ Ibid., p. x.

antiquités et monuments français (fig. 7).⁵⁰ Until the minister of the Interior was to issue a decision on the matter, no monument was allowed to be moved from the place. Not everyone was pleased with this action; least of all Lenoir's perpetual rival, the *Conservatoire du Muséum*, which had taken over the direction of the Louvre from the *Commission du Muséum*. They wrote to Guinguené, the director of Public Instruction only a week after the above decree, outraged with the emancipation of the Petits-Augustins:

Ainsi le dépôts provisoires deviendront autant de Musées dont les gardiens se feront une affaire! Ainsi le Muséum se verra privé des objets essentiels au complément d'une collection aussi utile à l'étude et aux progrès des Arts, et conséquemment à la gloire nationale!⁵¹

The new minister of the Interior, Pierre Bénézech, was overall in favour of Lenoir's project, so, for the time being, the Louvre Conservatory's protests amounted to nothing; however, he was to compensate them significantly, in the following year, to Lenoir's renewed aggravation.

Official recognition

On the 8 April 1796 (19 germinal an IV) Bénézech finally sent Lenoir his statement on the Museum of Monuments.⁵² First, he announced that this was not to be a fully autonomous project, but rather a stage in the collection and arrangement of works that, one day, would be reunited in the Louvre, in order to "complete the history of art".⁵³ In the meantime, Bénézech continued, it was vital to make the most of the Petits-Augustins, and, above all, "disposer les objets dans l'ordre convenable et à suivre surtout l'ordre chronologique". The minister complimented Lenoir's zeal and intelligence in his work so far, but urged him to consult specialists for the future development of the museum. He then went on to lift the ban on the removal of monuments from the former depot, explaining at length how the measures he was introducing were to benefit both the Louvre and the Museum of

⁵⁰ AMMF, vol. I, pp. 22 & 34 (29 vendémiaire an IV); see also COURAJOD, vol. I, p. 90.

⁵¹ Letter dated 6 brumaire an IV, in COURAJOD, vol. I, p. 160.

⁵² Ibid., pp. 162-3.

⁵³ This is an interesting point, indicating the extent to which this new phase of the Revolution - with the Directoire having replaced the Convention on the 26 October 1795/4 brumaire an IV- was increasingly sympathetic to "modern" historical monuments, with their implications about national identity, alongside the rapidly legitimised concept of the "history of art".

Monuments itself. The key was that, unlike other depots, there would be a very clear system and plan guiding the transfer of works to and from the Petits-Augustins. This plan was the clear division of categories between the museums, whereby the Louvre could claim everything deemed appropriate for its embellishment that was not "des monumens de notre histoire", which, in turn, would be the specific area covered by Lenoir's establishment. In return, Lenoir was authorised to search for and claim any object appropriate to his museum. Bénézech concluded with an appeal to all relevant parties for consideration and co-operation, making it clear, nevertheless, where priority lay:

Je vous recommande, ainsi que je le recommande aux conservateurs du Muséum national, de ne chercher que le mérite de vos collections et non à entasser des objets qui sont sans caractère dans tel musée et qui en ont un décidé pour l'autre. Il faut aussi faire attention que tout doit tendre au complément du Musée central et non à rivaliser avec lui.

It ought to be mentioned here that Bénézech contributed decisively to the shaping of the Parisian museums during his office. In 1797 he founded the *Musée special de l'École françoise* at Versailles, for works of the French school, including those of living artists formerly in the Louvre, thus allowing the great Museum of the Republic to attain a more timeless and sublime character - not to mention the latter's enrichment by a number of Italian renaissance masterpieces from the former summer palace's collections. At the same time, he gave absolute precedence to the Louvre, strengthening the authority of the Conservatory, thus condemning Lenoir's newly founded museum to lose its remaining paintings and antique sculptures.⁵⁴ In the spring of 1796, shortly after the above letter to Lenoir, he wrote to the Conservatory, confirming the lifting of the ban, and placing at their disposal all statues, vases, antique tombs, precious columns and other objects currently at the Petits-Augustins, which could embellish the collection of the Louvre. He informed them that he had already ordered Lenoir to comply with them, but, on the other hand, that he had authorised him to claim from all other depots any objects which could complete the collection of French monuments; and he continued by stating explicitly his idea about each museum's specialisation:

⁵⁴ AMMF, vol. II, pp. 305-6.

Mon intention est que désormais chaque Muséum spécial ne contienne que des objets analogues au but de son établissement, et qu'ils y soient placés dans un ordre méthodique. Il me semble que l'un de ces moyens doit contribuer à compléter ces collections, et l'autre les rendre plus utiles à l'instruction publique.⁵⁵

In other words, bearing in mind Bénézech's consistent prompting of the three main museums of the capital to occupy each their distinct area of art, this order should not be seen as an action against Lenoir and the *Musée des monuments*, but rather as a step towards the latter's desired specialisation.⁵⁶ However, as expected, Lenoir did not appreciate having to relinquish the antiquities from his museum. Protesting to Bénézech's orders, in late March 1797 (16 ventôse an V) Lenoir wrote that the Museum of Monuments could not be addressed as a depot anymore, wherefrom one might remove objects at will, and that he had already considerably progressed in the organisation of the Elysée, as well as three of the halls in the chronological sequence, so "le moindre déplacement altérait l'ensemble et la chronologie". In obvious frustration, he concluded thus : "Je vous demande, citoyen Ministre, d'annoncer à ce jury [in charge of selecting the pieces to be removed] quelles sont vos intentions sur le Musée des Monuments français."⁵⁷

In late June of the same year (6 messidor an V), Bénézech wrote to Lenoir, explaining the situation once more, in the hope of permanently settling matters between the Louvre and the Museum of Monuments: The *Muséum central des arts* in the Louvre, and the *Musée special de l'École françoise* at Versailles were the two principle museums of the Republic; however, "soyez rassuré", the *Musée des monumens françois* at the Petits-Augustins has its own importance, and its own system of organisation "qu'il conservera et qui assure son existence en le limitant"; the organisation of the three museums was already established; "elle est précise et les caractères distinctifs sont clairement et positivement énoncés"; at the same time that the Louvre Conservatory was given authority over certain pieces in Lenoir's establishment deemed necessary for their museum, Lenoir was given authority to claim any

⁵⁵ COURAJOD, vol. I, p. 164.

⁵⁶ As McClellan points out [op.cit. (note 20), p. 130-1], it was not possible to effect this "specialisation" in any strict sense, especially between the Louvre and Versailles, since the character of the former as the Republic's art museum par excellence forced it to overlap and conflict with the French school collection in the latter. Nevertheless, I would argue that this doesn't challenge the obvious intention of the Minister to have the museums defined on strong classification principles - a tendency further confirmed by his 1796 letter to Lenoir, recommending a thoroughly chronological arrangement for the latter's museum.

⁵⁷ COURAJOD, vol. I, p. 165.

object necessary for his, "dont je recommandois l'intégrité"; "je vous réitère qu'il ne faut point s'écarter ni directement ni indirectement de ces bases organiques"; finally, the main aim remained to create the most perfect and most beautiful *Musée central des arts*, therefore Lenoir had to relinquish all pieces necessary for this cause, resting assured that enough would remain in his museum, both in quantity and in quality, for its appropriate adornement.⁵⁸

Acquisition policy

Throughout the depot years, until 1796, the main body of French monuments finding their way to the Petits-Augustins were from Parisian churches having suffered damages, and often suppressed. The monasteries of the Célestins, the Grands-Augustins, the Minimes, the Feuillans Saint-Honoré, and the Petits-Pères, the chapel of the Sorbonne, and the churches of Saint-Germain-des Prés, Saint-André-des-Arts, Saint-Etienne-du-Mont, the Sainte-Chapelle of Vincennes, Sainte-Genève (later the Panthéon), Notre-Dame, and Saint-Denis, constituted the large majority of places where the monuments in the 1793 catalogue came from⁵⁹. At the same time, Lenoir's initiative was comparatively limited. As the relevant correspondence shows - between 1792 and the first part of 1795 - the transportation of pieces to the Petits-Augustins was in the hands of the *Commission des monuments* and later the *Commission temporaire des arts* - which were themselves answerable to the *Comité d'instruction publique* - cross-referenced by the *Commission* (and later *Conservatoire*) *du Muséum*, which claimed all the appropriate pieces for the Louvre⁶⁰.

But from 1796, Lenoir found himself authorised to seek the pieces which would complete his collection, and although there was obvious ambiguity in that authorisation - did it just refer to pieces already in other depots, or could it include artefacts from the still largely

⁵⁸ Ibid, p. 167.

⁵⁹ See *Notice succincte* of 1793; also reproduced in COURAJOD vol. II, pp. 234-270.

⁶⁰ See the *Archives du Musée des monuments français*; also TUETÉY, L., *Procès-verbaux de la Commission des monuments*, 2 vols. (Paris, 1902-1903), and *Procès-verbaux de la Commission temporaire des arts* (Paris, 1912).

uncharted territory of nationalised *Ancien Régime* property?... and how far exactly did the veto from the Louvre Conservatory extend against his own orders to "complete the history of the arts"? - nevertheless Lenoir was allowed to pursue his cause quite effectively.

Parisian churches remained in the list of places wherefrom acquisitions were made until the end, but there was an obvious expansion of scope, throughout the *départements*. Lenoir visited locations, and received reports from individuals who were interested in selling pieces, which had come to their possession after the massive sales of nationalised property in the previous years. He would always request permission to do so from the authorities, as the funds for these purchases came from the sum allocated to the running of the Museum, but also because it was a specific rule of his guardianship that he should request permission for any initiative at the Petits-Augustins.⁶¹ Whether through private arrangement, or in public sales, he would usually conceal his identity and the purpose of the purchase, in order to attain a better price - usually the mere value of the stone, which was what the original purchaser would have paid for the piece in the mass auctions. In November 1796, for example, he was given permission to buy the tomb of Diane de Poitiers from the château d'Anet, currently owned by a local, who was using it as a trow for watering his animals.⁶² In some cases, however, the opposite was true: when Lenoir expressed an interest in buying the tomb of Abélard at Chalon-sur-Saône, from a certain doctor Boysset (who had, in turn, purchased it merely for the price of the raw material during the Terror), the man only demanded that his name be mentioned in the sculpture's inscription at the museum, as the benefactor without whom this work would not have survived.⁶³

Lenoir also encouraged donations to the Museum. These were usually private commemorative monuments of famous, or just noteworthy individuals, given by the family

⁶¹ For example, Bénézech wrote to him, on the occasion of the museum's recognition : "Quand vous aurez à réclamer des objets particuliers, je vous invite à prendre l'avis du citoyen Leblond ou d'autres hommes instruits dans nos antiquités, *et à m'en faire la demande ensuite*" [my italics], Letter to Lenoir dated 19 germinal an IV, COURAJOD, vol. I, pp. 163-4.

⁶² See, for example, LENOIR, A., *Musée impérial des Monumens français* (Paris 1810), n° 91, p. 191.

⁶³ Ibid., n° 443, p. 195.

of the deceased for display in the Élysée - the Museum's sculpture garden. At the same time, living artists would donate their works, thus serving a double purpose: a promise of posterity for themselves, as well as contributing to Lenoir's historical vision. Pursuing this cause, Lenoir would commission monuments dedicated to important artists as well as other Great Men of France, when he could not acquire any suitable original pieces for his collection.

Besides the various works he commissioned to artists outside the museum, Lenoir was assisted in his constructions and arrangement of the museum by a resident architect, Antoine-François Peyre, employer of the *Bâtiments civils* under the Directory, and son of the sculptor Marie-Joseph Peyre. After 1804, Antoine-Laurent Vaudoyer was added to the resident workforce, which also included the sculptor Pierre-Nicolas Beauvallet. The latter was responsible for the construction of numerous missing pieces and additions to the restored monuments, among which the heavily-vandalised monument to Diane de Poitiers, originally by Jean Goujon, and several details on the Lenoir-designed tomb of Héloïse and Abélard.⁶⁴ Other sculptors and stonemasons were also involved in the extensive works at the museum. However, it was perfectly clear that these men operated strictly under Lenoir's instructions, while he retained full control over "le placement, la reconstruction et la restauration des monumens, l'arrangement des siècles, leur distributions, le style qui leur est propre, les couleurs à donner tant aux monuments qu'aux murailles, et en général tout ce qui peut contribuer à rendre mes portraits exactes", as he wrote himself in a later edition of the catalogue.⁶⁵

The Halls

As soon as he received official permission for the opening of his museum, Lenoir started work on the arrangement and decoration of the cloistered rooms around the main courtyard of the former monastery, which were to constitute the chronological circuit, from the

⁶⁴ See RÉAU, L., *Histoire du vandalisme. Les Monuments détruits de l'art français*, Tome I : Du haut Moyen Age au XIXe siècle (Paris, 1959), pp.394-5 for more details of Beauvallet's work for Lenoir.

⁶⁵ *Description historique* an VIII, p. 8.

thirteenth to the seventeenth centuries; there was also to be an introductory hall, finished in 1799, and an eighteenth-century one, never realised.

Much was made of this chronological sequencing of the collection, a concept which was used almost interchangeably with that of history. We saw earlier that Lenoir was advocating a chronological arrangement already in his proposal for a museum at the Petits-Augustins, sent to the authorities in August 1794, as well as in his *Essai sur le Muséum* of the same year, concerning the Louvre. It was surely significant for Lenoir that, although the Louvre did not adopt a chronological system, a number of critics continued to argue for it, effectively equating it with the truly enlightened spirit. In an unsigned article in the *Décade* journal of early 1795, we read that the national museum would benefit from a "méthode analytique" of display:

L'homme savant, le philosophe, le vrai artiste désiraient voir les tableaux rangés suivant ces différentes périodes du goût des écoles, et ces différentes manières des maîtres. Avec quel plaisir on observerait l'art montant graduellement, dans l'école italienne, de la sécheresse, de la timidité, du goût gothique de Cimabue ou de Giotto, aux grâces de Guide, à l'énergie de Michel-Ange, au coloris de Titien; et dans l'école flamande, du style froid et raide de Jean de Bruges aux sublimes conceptions de Rubens.⁶⁶

Lenoir, in his catalogues, presented the Museum of Monuments as a "forme raisonnée", based "sous les deux rapports de l'histoire et de l'histoire de l'art relativement à France", and he suggested that the visitor "voyagera successivement de siècle en siècle" following "la chronologie de l'art, base principale de mon travail".⁶⁷ As soon as the problem of vandalism was over, Lenoir promoted the project's significance in relation to its "historical" structure, on which he elaborated at length in the introductory sections of the various catalogue editions. The Minister Bénézech's directions to the same effect, in his April 1796 letter to Lenoir, was the official confirmation of the importance of chronology for the project. Further confirmation was supplied by the praise from the various eponymous and anonymous visitors who were, among other things, impressed by the chronological arrangement of the display.

⁶⁶ *LaDécade*, vol. IV, nivôse-ventôse an III, pp. 213.

⁶⁷ *Description* an V/1797, pp. 1-2; also in all the subsequent editions.

The conversion of the cloistered rooms into the Museum's period halls started almost immediately upon the institution's official recognition, in the spring of 1796. The first hall to be completed was the last in the sequence - that of the Seventeenth century - presumably because it demanded the least preparation, the existing building itself being of that century.⁶⁸ Already in 1796, and with just one hall of the actual Museum complete, Lenoir began transforming the garden of the monastery into an *Élysée*, a fascinating commemorative necropolis cum *jardin anglais*, which was not finished until 1799. Work on the Thirteenth-century hall, in the sacristy of the old convent, started almost concurrently with the *Élysée*, but was already completed in 1796. Unlike the Seventeenth-century one, here there was extensive reconstruction and decoration, in order to achieve an effect appropriate to the century's style, for which Lenoir and Peyre collaborated closely.⁶⁹ The next hall to be created, in the winter of 1796-7, was that of the Sixteenth century. According to Lenoir, this was the peak of French renaissance, where the arts had reached as close to perfection as it had ever been achieved since Antiquity - and until their heralded regeneration under the current Republic. Construction on the Fifteenth-century hall begun in 1798. The main aim here was to convey the transitional character of the era, between the Middle Ages and the Renaissance. The Fourteenth-century gallery was the last to be created, with work starting in December 1799. It was never quite completed to Lenoir's satisfaction, although work in it all but ceased after 1805. This hall represented the dramatic shift of style from the primitive "dark" ages, to the richness and elegance of the gothic, introduced to France as an influence from the East, after the Crusades. There was also an Introductory hall to the Museum which, interestingly, was among the last to be created. Nevertheless, although work was not to start on it until 1799, the proposal for such a hall had already reached Bénézech in June 1797⁷⁰. A selection of pieces from all centuries were placed here, forming a panorama of art which Lenoir deemed of particular significance to the whole project.

⁶⁸ This is what McClellan suggests, op. cit (note 20), p. 179.

⁶⁹ See HUARD, G., "La salle du XIII^e siècle au Musée des monuments français à l'École des Beaux-Arts", *Revue de l'art ancien et moderne*, 47, 1927, pp. 113-26.

⁷⁰ Lenoir's letter to the Minister was co-signed by Peyre in his official capacity as architect to the Museum - AN F13 871 doss.1 (26 prairial an V).

A more detailed presentation of the Museum is given in Chapter 2.

The commemorative agenda

Although the kind of pieces which stayed at the Petits-Augustins in the first years were a mixture of sculptures and fragments, in the subsequent catalogues a definite pattern began to form, which became even more pronounced as the years progressed. This pattern concerned the presence of commemorative pieces compared to non-commemorative. The 1793 catalogue showed a fairly even distribution between the two kinds, but by year VIII and the fifth edition of the catalogue, the balance had shifted dramatically towards the commemorative: in 1793, out of 256 catalogue entries 125 were non-commemorative, that is 48.8%, whereas in year VIII that portion had dropped to 28%, 144 out of 513 total entries.⁷¹ At the seventh edition of the catalogue, in 1803, the non-commemorative portion had remained fairly stable at 27% - although this is based on a total of 558 entries when, in fact, 57 of them were marked "supprimé", denoting objects of worship which had been returned to the restituted churches after the Emperor's 1802 decree. With this removal in mind, the percent of non-commemorative drops to 18% - although this obviously cannot be attributed to Lenoir's initiative; what can, however, is the situation depicted in the eighth edition of the catalogue, of 1806, where ten new pieces feature in the Museum, all of which funerary monuments.

Lenoir's investment in personalities went beyond the selection of existing monuments. His own fabrications - whether drastic restorations/recreations or outright inventions - were exclusively monuments to prominent historical figures and important artists and men of letters of France. Already in the summer of 1795, even before the finalisation of the Museum's recognition, Lenoir had begun to erect his fabrications. He created a tomb for Descartes, in the form of a portico with fluted columns originally from the church of the Minimes, where he placed the philosopher's remains, which he had acquired even

⁷¹ A number of catalogue entries include more than one actual piece, most frequently in the case of architectural fragments - such as the columns of a chapel, or sculptural figures from a broken relief - which are listed in groups. I have followed Lenoir's choice of counting these pieces as one exhibit.

earlier.⁷² Alongside his unquestionable initiatives, it is important to note that Lenoir acknowledged the authorities - the Directoire, specifically - as supporters of the commemoration of personalities in the Museum of Monuments:

Le sénat Français a rendu plusieurs décrets en faveur des sépultres particulières et les monuments que j'ai élevés sur mes dessins, et qui contiennent les corps de Descartes, de Molière, de la Fontaine, de Mabillion, de Montfaucon et de Turenne, sont une suite de la reconnaissance en faveur des talents.⁷³

Indeed, in 1798 the Directoire had sent the bodies of Turenne, Molière and La Fontaine to the Museum of Monuments, thus putting an end to the continuing embarrassment surrounding their fate under the Revolution⁷⁴. Complementing Lenoir's intention to construct monuments for the remains, the Minister of Interior, then François de Neufchâteau, wrote to Lenoir shortly after the acquisition, inviting him to "caractériser chaque tombeau par des attributs symboliques des vertus et du génie du grand homme auquel il sera consacré."⁷⁵ On the strength of this ministerial approval, and shortly after it, Lenoir also transported the remains of the philosopher and poet Boileau from the Sainte-Chapelle, arguing that he was a friend of Molière and La Fontaine - completely side-tracking the fact that the church had been recently returned to Christian worship, and therefore there was no conceivable danger to it, or any of its contents⁷⁶. He constructed an urn-like monument for the remains, "un monument simple mais digne de la célébrité que ce poète s'est acquise."⁷⁷

In February 1800, continuing his collection of Great Men against protestations from the municipality and clergy, Lenoir requested permission to transport to the Museum the remains of Pascal and Racine from Saint-Etienne du Mont⁷⁸. On the same day, he wrote to Lucien proposing to bring over from Bourgogne and Champagne the two monuments and remains of the legendary medieval lovers Héloïse and Abelard⁷⁹. The old tomb of Abelard

⁷² AMMF, vol. I, p. 24 (30 messidor an III/18 July 1795).

⁷³ *Description* an VIII, p. 363.

⁷⁴ AMMF, vol. I, p. 141 (27 germinal an VII/16 April 1799).

⁷⁵ AMMF, as above (15 floréal an VII/4 May 1799).

⁷⁶ AMMF, vol. II, p. 427 (5 pluviôse VIII/25 Jan 1800).

⁷⁷ AMMF, vol. II, p. 431 (18 March 1800).

⁷⁸ AMMF, vol. II, pp. 432-3 (24 pluviôse an VIII/13 Feb. 1800).

⁷⁹ AMMF, vol. I, pp. 160-3 (24 pluviôse an VIII/13 Feb. 1800).

came from the abbey of Saint-Marcel-les-Chanon. His body had already been transported to the tomb of Héloïse in the monastery of the Paraclet - where she had been abbess - in 1142. When the monastery had been suppressed in 1792, the above double tomb had been transported to Nogent-sur-Seine, wherefrom Lenoir was to transport it to the Museum. With the Minister's approval, by mid-1801 all the pieces were collected at the Petits-Augustins, and placed in Lenoir's most famous *fabrique*, which incorporated the Paraclet tomb, with a newly-designed arched canopy - largely from the debris of Saint-Denis - and the busts of the lovers, commissioned from Deseine. A lengthy inscription with the history of the lovers, which had been commissioned by the abesse of the Paraclet in 1701, was placed on the side of the tomb.

Apparently at the suggestion of a certain Boulliot from the Directoire in May 1799, Lenoir begun the process of acquiring the remains of the two Benedictine savants, Mabillion and Montfaucon⁸⁰. These were somewhere in a chapel of St-Germain-des-Près, which had become a shop, but no-one seemed to be sure where. When they were finally located, in 1805, the Minister of Interior, Champagny, argued that, since the tombs had long ceased to be in danger, it was unacceptable to try and move them, to which Lenoir responded:

Par mes soins, ces cendres précieuses... *sont devenues la propriété du Musée* [my emphasis]: elles le sont de la France entière, et c'est en les considérant ainsi que l'un de vos prédécesseurs en a autorisé le placement dans des sarcophages à la manière antique et le dépôt dans le jardin Elysée de cet établissement.⁸¹

Once more, the Museum, and its agenda, were shown to take precedent over the issue of welfare of the individual monuments and their original settings.

The tombs aside, there were also other commemorative monuments which Lenoir had constructed from disparate sculptural pieces combined with commissioned busts and other new elements. Around the same time as Descartes' tomb, Lenoir erected a monument to Rouhault, student and friend of the great philosopher, which he described as "(...) le partisan le plus zélé du système de son ami, fondé sur les phénomènes de la nature et non

⁸⁰ AMMF, vol. II, p. 415 (2 prairial an VII/21 May 1799).

⁸¹ AMMF, vol. I, p. 323-4 (17 brumaire an XIV/8 Nov. 1805).

sur les spéculations". This was put together from a column from Sainte-Geneviève, a marble vase, a black marble sarcophagus by Coustou from the Minimes and two caryatides supporting the lot.⁸² In the second edition of the catalogue, the *Notice historique* of 1795, one already found a dozen commemorative busts to artists and men of letters of the last couple of centuries, including some newly commissioned by Lenoir: Fabri de Peiresc, Racine, Rotrou, Quinault, Colbert, Dubelloy, Piron, Boileau, Corneille, la Fontaine, Helvétius, and Montesquieu.⁸³ In the years to come, many more would be added, allocated to the appropriate century, among them: Bullant and Philibert de l'Orme for the fifteenth; Goujon, Pilon, Cousin (the three celebrated sculptors, compared respectively to Myron, Phidias and Praxiteles) and Montaigne for the sixteenth; Poussin ("la peintre des philosophes"), Le Sueur ("le Raphael français"), Sarrazin and Puget ("le Michel-Ange français") for the seventeenth; and Rousseau, Chamfort, Crébillon, Gluck, Drouais and Winckelmann (the only foreigner commemorated in the Museum) for the eighteenth century, which would also include a host of pieces donated by the artists themselves, or their families - such as the bust of architect de Wailly donated by his wife, a monument to Marie-Joseph Peyre donated by his son (also a sculptor, at work in the Museum), and a relief of actress Elisa Joly donated by her husband.⁸⁴

Lenoir would emphasise the celebratory tone of the commemorative aspect of the Museum by including epitaphs on the pieces themselves and by composing eulogies in the catalogue. The most striking must have been the one to the painter Drouais, who had died tragically young in 1788 and whom Lenoir claimed as a friend. His bust was a copy of the original in Rome (where the artist was buried), commissioned to Michallon, and Lenoir wrote an impossibly lyrical eulogy extending over four pages in the catalogue. It is worth quoting in

⁸² *Notice historique* an IV, at no. 314. At the Bibliothèque National in Paris there is a copy of the first edition of the catalogue, the *Notice succinte* of 1793, which includes a handwritten supplement (Lenoir's?) with the numbers 257-514 ; the monument to Rouhault with the above description appears there at no.338 [the numbers of the catalogue entries were not standardised until the third edition of the catalogue, the first *Description* (year V/1797)].

⁸³ *Notice historique* an IV, at nos. 76-87.

⁸⁴ For details on these commissions and donations see GUIFFREY, J., "Busts commandés à Michallon et Deseine", *Nouvelles Archives de l'art français*, 1880-1881; FOUCART, B., "La fortune critique d'Alexandre Lenoir et du premier Musée des Monuments français", *L'Information de l'Histoire de l'art*, Nov-Dec 1969; also POULOT, D., "Alexandre Lenoir et les Musées des Monuments français", P. Nora (ed.), *Les lieux de la mémoire*, II. La Nation, 2 (Paris, Gallimard, 1986), pp. 497-531; and POULOT, D., *Musée, Nation, Patrimoine* (Paris, 1997), pp. 290-293.

part, in order to convey the tone which, on a certain level, was precisely what Lenoir was attempting to convey through the whole commemorative aspect of the Museum:

N'ayant pu suivre mon ami jusqu'au tombeau, j'ai cru devoir, pour ses contemporains et pour le soulagement de mon âme, lui ériger, au milieu des monuments de notre histoire, le même monument qui lui fut consacré par ses dignes émules (...) Ô Drouais! fils tendre ami fidèle, reçois l'encens de celui qui t'élève aujourd'hui ce monument au milieu des beaux-arts. Mère sensible, et vous, parents chéris, consolez-vous! ceux qui aima viendront ici honorer sa mémoire, et déposer des fleurs au pied de son image; et déjà l'immortalité a consacré son nom dans les siècles à venir.⁸⁵

The commemoration of great artists also occurred, of course, through the display of their work. Although the first edition of the catalogue (1793) acknowledged very few artists, from the third edition (1797) onwards Lenoir not only mentioned the artist next to each piece (so long as they were known, or even assumed), but also included in the publication a list of "Artistes cités dans cet ouvrage". This section covered three pages and listed nearly 80 names. The greatest artists of France were to be further celebrated as part of the unexecuted plan for the decoration of the three courts, which included the erection of a Corinthian colonnade with 19 niches, each holding the bust of a great man of the arts and letters, with a statue of Fame in the middle bearing the inscription: "À la mémoire des hommes célèbres en France".⁸⁶

The cult of personality which was clearly at work at the Museum of Monuments, found further expression in the "personalisation" of the original monuments in the collection. Since the passing of the original Revolutionary rage against all things *Ancien Régime* - and, more so, with the passing of the Revolution altogether - it became increasingly viable to consider predominant figures of the royalist past as actual characters, rather than abstract hate figures. François I, whose memory was meant to have been forgotten with his ashes (as Lenoir was proudly stating in 1794), found himself increasingly remembered as an enlightened ruler; and along with him, a considerable number of personal histories begun to be woven into the greater narrative of the Museum. These included, for example, the charismatic Diane de Poitiers, loved by both François I and Henri II, pious yet artistic and

⁸⁵ At no. 355 of the catalogue, from the third edition (the first *Description* an V/1797) onwards.

⁸⁶ LENOIR, *Compte rendu de l'état actuel du Musée des monumens français...* (n.d.), p. 6.

seductive⁸⁷; the talented Philippe d'Orléans, with an entire ballad of his printed by Lenoir in the later catalogues, to accompany his monument⁸⁸; Charlemagne, in whose statue one saw simultaneously the man, the victorious hero and the savant legislator.⁸⁹ This investment in personality was another strand of the greater cultural shift away from traditional meanings and hierarchies towards the historicist paradigm, which the Museum of Monuments manifested so well.

Soon, the justification for the Museum's new acquisitions took for granted the Great Men agenda and the character of the institution as *locus par excellence* for the re-presentation of national history through the stories of its illustrious personalities. Among the many examples, one of the most eloquent was the tomb of the chancellor Michel de l'Hôpital, from Étampes, which Lenoir proposed to acquire in May 1800. He wrote for permission to the Minister of the Interior, Lucien Bonaparte, with the following argument:

Le monument de ce vertueux magistrat *est fait pour tenir une place dans le Musée que je dirige* [my emphasis]. Qui pourra voire froidement la statue de l'Hôpital auprès des tombeaux des princes Lorrains, des Médicis et des Valois, que ce grand homme a tant de fois combattus avec courage pour défendre les intérêt du peuple, dont il s'était déclaré le père?⁹⁰

The placement of de l'Hôpital's monument next to those of the royals he conflicted with, in pursuit of his cause as champion of the people, was a perfect opportunity for the Museum to emphasise its character as, simultaneously, historical narrative and celebration of Great Men; so much so that Lenoir felt compelled to say that the tomb was simply *made* for it. This argument must have been convincing enough for Lucien, because he approved of the transportation, which took place that summer⁹¹. Similarly, in March 1803 Lenoir requested the tomb of constable Olivier de Clisson "pour le réunir, dans le Musée, à celui de Du Guesclin, son émule; c'est là que ces deux monuments, placés auprès de celui de Charles V, recevront mutuellement un nouvel intérêt"⁹².

⁸⁷ See, among other sources, BRIÈRE, G., "Le tombeau de Diane de Poitiers et sa restitution au château d'Anet", *Bulletin de la Société de l'Histoire de l'Art Français*, 1966.

⁸⁸ First in the *Description historique* ..., an VIII, p. 183.

⁸⁹ LENOIR, *Compte rendu de l'état actuel du Musée des monumens français...* (n.d.), p. 2.

⁹⁰ AMMF, vol. I, p. 174 (3 prairial an VIII/23 May 1800).

⁹¹ AMMF, vol. II, pp. 444-5.

⁹² AMMF, vol. I, pp. 306.

In his pursuit of historical personalities, Lenoir would often exchange other pieces already in the collection, which he considered "useless" for the Museum. The mayor of Magny consented to the transportation of the Villeroy tombs to the Petits-Augustins in 1801, in exchange for a statue of the Virgin and two columns of black marble, in order to decorate the altar of the Saint-Gervais church. Lenoir was granted the Minister's approval for this transaction, having stated that the sculptures in question were not contributing in any way to the Museum.⁹³ Another of the many examples was the portico from the château of Anet, purchased from its current owner (having been privately sold after nationalisation) in exchange for "douze statues en marbre et autre débris de même nature, *tous objets de dévotion* [my emphasis]", which, as the Minister wrote to Lenoir in his letter of approval "par vôtre [Lenoir's] lettre du 8 de ce mois, vous annoncez *être inutiles au Musée* que vous dirigez, et d'aucune mérite sous le rapport de l'art [my emphasis]."⁹⁴ Lanzac de Laborie recounts that when the parish priest of the Petits-Pères requested the return of the statues of a Virgin and a St. Augustin to his church (in line with Napoleon's recent policy of Church-appeasement) Lenoir responded "avec le plus bon sang-froid du monde" that the two statues were of no use to the arts, and had thus been exchanged for a Diane de Poitiers.⁹⁵ Vanuxem also lists a considerable number of pieces which were either sold or exchanged by Lenoir between 1795 and 1800, all of them "objets de dévotion", that is, representing Christ, the Virgin or saints, and not recognisably by an artist of note.⁹⁶

It was no wonder that a number of people, the architect Peyre and the painter Lavalée among them (both actually employed there), understood the Museum more as a Pantheon to the nation's Great Men than a museum of French Art.⁹⁷ It appears, therefore, that the commemorative agenda of the Museum was at least as important, if not more so, than the

⁹³ AMMF, vol. I, p.251-2 (24 fructidor an IX/11 Sept. 1801).

⁹⁴ AMMF, vol. I, p. 153 (15 brumaire an VIII/6 Nov. 1799).

⁹⁵ LANZACDELABORIE, L. de, *Paris sous Napoléon*, vol. VIII : *Spectacles et Musées* (Paris, 1913), p. 347-8.

⁹⁶ VANUXEM, *La sculpture religieuse au Musée des monuments français*, in *Position des thèse de l'Ecole du Louvre (1911-1944)*.

⁹⁷ See AMMF, vol. I, pp. 69-70 for Peyre's description, and Lavallée's article in *Semaines critiques* 13, 1 messidor an V, p. 161.

abstract rationalist chronology of artistic styles. What is interesting about the monuments through which the celebration of personalities occurred, is that they operated interchangeably, and sometimes simultaneously, on several levels: sculptures of unknown artists and of no perceived artistic merit (such as certain "medieval" and "thirteenth-century" pieces) participated in the commemorative agenda through their depiction of the fabled first rulers and heroes of the French nation; at the same time, other sculptures of later kings, religious figures, or fictional and symbolic figures (such as the Three Graces by Pilon) were explicitly not there as depictions, but rather as representations of the artist behind them; and, of course, there was a large number of pieces for which both of these conditions were true. Even more interesting is that this multiple commemorative focus of the monuments would also vary with the changes of regime and public sensitivities - like the tomb of François I, which started off as a piece exclusively presented for the artistry of its creator, Philibert de l'Orme (and, thus a perfect sample of the renaissance of the arts in the sixteenth-century), but then additionally became a commemoration of the King himself as enlightened ruler and protector of the arts.

We shall be returning to the significance of the commemorative agenda in Chapter 5.

The catalogues

In the meantime, Lenoir was continuing to publish new editions of his catalogue, which became a crucial part of the Museum. Lenoir was by no means original in the idea of producing such publications in the first place - this was an already established trend in a number of collection of the time.⁹⁸ Nevertheless, I would suggest that their importance was particularly enhanced in his project, being at once more extensive and more ambitious in their scope. I would, therefore, disagree with Poulot, who writes that Lenoir's catalogues were more a compilation of dates and other facts rather than the "philosophical" history which he seemed to be hoping to present therein.⁹⁹ The various *Descriptions*

⁹⁸ See POULOT, D., '*Surveiller et s'instruire*': la Révolution française et l'intelligence de l'héritage historique', *Studies in Voltaire and the Eighteenth Century* (Voltaire Foundation: Oxford, 1996), p. 326.

⁹⁹ POULOT, D., *Musée, Nation, Patrimoine 1789-1815* (Paris: Gallimard, 1997), p. 312.

which Lenoir produced were only partly an attempt to establish his antiquarian erudition - which was, in any case, limited and much-criticised. On that level the catalogues did resemble compilations of information with encyclopedic pretences. However, this informative aspect was only part of the effort to enhance the experience of the Museum and communicate the multi-layered aspects of its significance.

In January 1797 (an V), appeared the *Description historique et chronologique des monumens de sculpture réunis au Musée des Monumens français*, the third edition of the catalogue, but first since the transformation of the depot into a museum. With 240 pages, this publication was more than twice the length of the second edition - the *Notice historique* of just over a year earlier. It is here that the complete chronological sequencing of the collection made its appearance for the first time. Although only two of the halls had taken shape (those displaying two contrasting characters of French art, "l'art naïf et minutieux du XIII^e siècle et l'art fastueux du XVII^e"¹⁰⁰), the pieces were arranged in the text according to the envisaged plan: the important even in their absence "monumens antiques" (by now in the Louvre), were followed by the handful of "celtic" and "medieval" pieces, and then by each century from the thirteenth to the eighteenth. Most significantly, this was the edition where the numbering of the entries became standardised - a feat which Lenoir did not fail to advertise. One read in the very first page of the publication: "On prévient les amateurs que les numéros des Monumens indiqués dans cet ouvrage, sont fixés invariablement; ce qui n'avait pas été possible de faire dans les éditions précédentes." The chronological sequence was now confirmed and fixed, as the objective representation of history of which it was aspiring to be - at least on its first level of operation. It is interesting to note that even when the Introductory hall was set up, the selection of pieces from all centuries which adorned it remained numbered and ordered in the catalogue according to their period; that is, they were still listed with the monuments of the relevant century despite the fact that they were not actually in the equivalent hall.

¹⁰⁰ *Description*, an V, p. 2.

The catalogue's introductory sections, the "Avant-propos" and "Introduction", were to become increasingly expansive and important to Lenoir for the presentation of his views on all matters relating to the Museum. In this edition, the first *Description historique*, the chronological principle had finally taken over from the issue of vandalism as the initial focus of the exposition. In the Preface the project was declared "un Musée chronologique et particulier de ces monumens et de ceux de l'histoire de l'art relativement à la France", and Bénézech credited as a primary supporter of this "forme raisonnée", which Lenoir had been advocating in the first place. In the ten-page introduction - which was to expand to 34 pages by the eighth edition of the catalogue - the key ideas of Lenoir's theory of history were presented. As Édouard Pommier points out, this was the very mainstream theory of a cyclical development, where the "grands siècles" represent the perfection of the past - classical Greece being the archetype - as well as the hope for the future.¹⁰¹ Lenoir made this very clear, by opening his text thus: "Les arts éprouvent des révolutions comme des empires; ils passent successivement de l'enfance à la barbarie et retournent peu à peu au point d'où ils étaient partis." Furthermore, "le goût des arts est un sentiment inséparable de l'homme en société et leur pratique est nécessairement liée à l'existence des grands gouvernements"¹⁰².

Lenoir begun the history of France by identifying under the name "Celts" the fabled ancestors who came upon French soil ("la Gaule") after travelling far and wide in the world through a spirit of conquest.¹⁰³ The celtic druids, influenced by Egyptian priests in a number of ways, were responsible for those first monuments which had a character "sacré et uniforme, comme ceux des Égyptiens". In that light, suggested Lenoir, the Venus of Morbihan was nothing other than an image of Isis. Following largely Winckelmann's model, Lenoir proposed Hadrian as the ruler who "placed art on the throne", responsible for one of the first major civilising influences on France. The advent of Christianity, was

¹⁰¹ POMMIER, E., *L'art de la liberté: Doctrines et débats de la Révolution française* (Paris: Gallimard, 1991), pp. 374-376.

¹⁰² *Description* an V, p. 9.

¹⁰³ I have availed myself throughout this account of Dominique Poulot's own summary of Lenoir's historical narrative - see POULOT, D., *Musée, Nation, Patrimoine 1789-1815* (Paris: Gallimard, 1997), pp. 314-318. Poulot's references to Lenoir's text are from the *Musée des Monumens français* of year VIII, effectively identical to the text in the *Description*.

the next major influence, with Clovis the legendary first Christian ruler. This development was encouraging for the arts although it was also responsible for the massive destruction of the monuments of antiquity. Charlemagne and Frédégonde were singled out of that early period as important rulers for the arts. The former was described as a "soleil bienfaisant" who introduced the "lombard" style to the country - a style that was to remain dominant until the Crusades. With the death of Frédégonde the artists apparently fell into inaction under a series of indolent rulers "uniquement occupés de leurs plaisirs".

After the Crusades "l'architecture arabe" became the dominant style, bringing an unprecedented wealth of colours, ornaments and "des emblèmes de la mythologie magique et mithriaque" to French art. The progress between the thirteenth and fifteenth centuries was dramatic, building up to the renaissance of the sixteenth century. Although the fourteenth century still offered "un dessin sec et aride [et] des figures dont les expressions sont insipides", the fifteenth century had already achieved "une exécution grande et soignée", with "gothicism" rapidly disappearing from design. The tomb of Louis XII - the centrepiece of the Museum's Fifteenth-century hall - manifested according to Lenoir how "l'art, à cette époque, commençait à sortir de l'enfance et à prendre une forme raisonnée". Still, French art paled in comparison to Italy, where Leonardo, Michaelangelo and Raphael "étonnaient l'Univers". This situation was to change with the advent of the sixteenth century and the enlightened rule of François I, under whose patronage the genius of such fabled artists as Germain Pilon, Philibert de l'Orme, and the three Jeans - Bullant, Goujon, Cousin - were to bring about the French Renaissance.¹⁰⁴

Immediately following this peak, however, came a steep degradation, which was due both to inherently artistic reasons and to socio-political ones. The balance between the two, and thus the exact pitch of Louis XIV's interpretation, did vary across regimes in the catalogues - most notably in the first 1815 edition, celebrating the restitution of the Bourbons, where the causes of artistic decline were almost exclusively attributed to the artists themselves

¹⁰⁴ Poulot suggests that Lenoir was a pioneer of the invention of "Renaissance" as an époque of civilization, alongside the literary historian Ginguené. The two men knew each other well, and must have forged the expression simultaneously - see *ibid.*, p. 317

rather than the context of absolutist monarchy. At the same time, Lenoir always identified during the reign of Louis XIV certain beneficial influences to the arts, such as Colbert, "le mécène de la France" alongside the encouraging "volonté du souverain". Nevertheless, these were not enough to prevent the inevitable. The decline of style which had begun under Vouet and Lebrun in the closed circles of the academies was totally exacerbated during the reign of Louis XV, when "Van Loo et Boucher furent apôtre d'un goût si dépravé que l'art et l'enseignement tombèrent dans une entière dégradation". In order to emphasise the extent of debasement of the arts during the recent past, Lenoir later announced that "les hommes éclairés préfèrent les sculptures qui ornent notre salle du XIII^e siècle".¹⁰⁵ It is interesting to note, with Poulot, that Lenoir's critique of this academic art as encompassing "trop de facilité" and of being a mere "métier", was a direct echo of Quatremère de Quincy's attack on academism of 1791, as was the subscription to the concept of "enthousiasme" as the founding stone of all sincerity - and thus value - in art.¹⁰⁶ But as the main principle of this historiography was cyclical, the future for France could not have been more promising:

Quelle carrière brillante s'ouvre aujourd'hui pour nos peintres et nos statuaires! (...) Nous sommes enfin arrivés au terme où l'art libre et dégagé de toutes ces erreurs va renaître et s'asseoir auprès de la vérité. L'esprit philosophique qui reprend son empire va nécessairement porter les artistes à l'imitation simple de la nature dans sa perfection, à la représentation exacte des vertues morales et vraiment républicaines, et propager par là l'enseignement et le bonheur public. C'est ainsi que parlaient les artistes philosophes dans les beaux jours d'Athènes. (...) Vient nous a ouvert la carrière du vrai beau dans les arts dépendants du dessin; les systèmes de la vieille école sont oubliés; travaillons à surpasser, s'il se peut, les Grecs, anéantissons le siècle de Colbert, et dérobons à la postérité tous les talens à la fois.¹⁰⁷

What is most interesting about Lenoir's otherwise unremarkable take on history, was its adaptability. Far from being an exclusively Revolutionary construct, this cyclical/"grands-siècles" theory which rationalised the prediction of a golden near-future, presented an account of history which would suit any regime. Furthermore, the determinist linking of art and state worked both ways, so any regime which could show an interest in the arts, successfully promoting individuals and institutions, would be making its mark as an enlightened, and therefore legitimate state.

¹⁰⁵ *Musée des Monumens français*, 1810, p. 316.

¹⁰⁶ See POULOT, op. cit. (note 103), p. 319.

¹⁰⁷ *Description*, an V, pp. 17-18.

Another important innovation of the first *Description* was the presence of a list of artists featured in the Museum, "Artistes Cités", placed between the Preface and the Introduction of the catalogue. Although a considerable number of works remained anonymous - mostly the earlier medieval and "gothic" pieces - the decision to draw attention to those artists who were known was significant. With the official emphasis of the project on the collective historical/stylistic relevance of the objects, the latter no less than defined by their deficit of established "artistic" value (hence not claimed by the Louvre), Lenoir's gesture towards the recognition of the individual artistic creativity behind each work was a significant step towards the aesthetic legitimisation of the sculptures. The eponymous reference to the creators of the monuments was to remain an important feature of the catalogues and a constitutive part of the commemorative agenda of the Museum.

Until the closure of the Museum in 1816, there were to be nine more editions of the catalogue: in years VI, VIII, X, XI, 1806, 1810, two in 1815, and the final in 1816. Their overall structure largely followed that of the first *Description*, but there were some additions and modifications. It was not until the third *Description* (an VIII), for example, that the description of each hall made its appearance, heading the listing of the relevant monuments. These increasingly extended sections fused a more specific historical interpretation of each century (after the more general narrative of the Introduction) with the decor of the actual hall. Perhaps the most significant kind of modification which occurred from one edition to another related to the changes of regime which, during the whole life of the Museum, were no less than six. The most distinctive instance of these was manifested across the last three catalogues, which appeared in rapid succession over the course of a year. The first 1815 edition, in the first three months of the year, celebrated the recent restoration of the Bourbon monarchy and was dedicated by Lenoir to "la protection d'un roi chéri, régénérateur et si longtemps désiré". All mentions to Napoleon were removed, and there were several pages entitled "Notes" in the end, with additional comments on the monuments of Louis XII, Anne de Bretagne, François I, Henri IV and Louis XV. This edition had to be removed in haste after the 20 March, when Napoleon returned to power

for the Hundred Days. All references to the monarchy were duly removed from the second 1815 edition, and the opening "Observations de l'éditeur" were an extended eulogy of Napoleon, as opposed to the monarchy. The acknowledgement of the king's support changed to that of "un Gouvernement éclairé et puissant". Furthermore, in the heading of this edition Lenoir had replaced his own newly-acquired (and much-awaited) title as *chevalier*, conferred to him by the king, with the more prosaic "conservateur des objets d'art de la Malmaison" - the latter a reminder of Lenoir's close relationship with the Empire. Finally, in 1816, a virtual reprint of the first 1815 edition appeared, to mark the second reinstatement of the Bourbons.

In other words, Lenoir was extremely keen to show his project as perpetually topical. It is true that, on a certain level, these modifications were barely-concealed politicking. But rather than thinking of them as merely Lenoir's gestures in order to ingratiate himself with the various authorities, I would suggest that it would be more accurate to see them as part of the greater effort to accentuate the Museum's relevance and importance across regimes - for the whole nation and its people throughout history, regardless of contingencies.

Two more innovative features of the catalogue, which were present in all editions, are worth mentioning here. The first is the inclusion of anecdotal material for the personalities represented by the monuments, to the extent that they were available and that the times allowed for attention to be drawn on them. As it would have been expected, this practice really flourished after the Revolutionary decade, when it was no longer dangerous to address the royal associations of the historical figures. Nevertheless, already in the first *Description* Lenoir had begun exercising this project of the "personalisation" of the figures, through the inclusion of such material for some of the unambiguously commemoration-worthy of the personalities - for example, the young painter Drouais, for whom, as we already saw, Lenoir composed a lengthy epitaph to accompany the monument he had constructed for him.¹⁰⁸ Also, from the second edition of the catalogue (the *Notice historique* of an IV/1795), Lenoir would include various treatises and

¹⁰⁸ Ibid., pp. 196-200 (no. 355).

informative appendices in the publications, analysing issues of stained-glass painting, historical costume and the changing fashions of the beard, as well as including the whole report on the Saint-Denis exhumations in some editions.

Lenoir himself wrote on the catalogue's importance:

Ce petit ouvrage que nous offrons, doit servir de guide à l'ami des beaux Arts qui voudra visiter notre Muséum. Sans lui il ne peut jouir que d'une stérile admiration; c'est avec lui qu'il pourra aggrandir ses idées, se livrer à des sublimes méditations, et y puiser ce noble enthousiasme qu'inspire le vrai, le bon et le beau.¹⁰⁹

It is clear that Lenoir thought of those publications as far more than mere "sterile" records. Between the philosophico-historical exposition of the introductory sections, interpreting French art from Clovis to Drouais via the Goths and the Sarrazins, the increasing emphasis on the personalities represented by the monuments (including the artists thereof), the evocatively descriptive texts for each hall/century, and the various additional treatises the catalogues were meant to enhance and expand the visitors' experience, in order to encourage them on the discovery of "the true, the good and the beautiful", no less.

Lenoir's desire to produce a largely independent publication, which would communicate the Museum's agenda beyond the Museum itself, was most clearly manifested in a separate publication project, entitled *Musée des Monumens français ou description historique et chronologique des statues (...) des hommes et des femmes célèbres, pour servir à l'histoire de France et à celle de l'art, ornée de gravures et augmentée d'une dissertation sur le costume de chaque siècle, par Alexandre Lenoir, fondateur et administrateur du Musée*.

Independently from the twelve editions of the catalogue itself - with a misleadingly similar title - and concurrently with them, this was an illustrated description of the Museum, with his own drawings and those of other artists, such as his regular collaborator Percier.

Overlapping considerably with the catalogue, it was interspersed with what Courajod calls "de nombreuses digressions à propos de l'histoire de l'art".¹¹⁰ The real emphasis,

¹⁰⁹ First appeared in the *Notice historique* (an IV), p. viii, and in all subsequent catalogue editions.

¹¹⁰ COURAJOD, vol. II, p. 214.

however, was on the images, which attempted to reproduce something of the experience of the Museum in print. He begun these publications under the title *Collection des Monumens de sculpture réunis au Musée des Monumens français* in an VI, in instalments, the first appearing on in 8 nivôse (December 1797) and the second on 13 floréal (May 1798). The publication was interrupted after six instalments, having reached 72 pages with approximately 20 illustrations. Lenoir picked up his idea again in 1800, adopting the *Musée* title, and was concluded in 1821, five years after the closure of the actual Museum.

An unfinished project

As we have seen, by the year 1799 and the end of the Revolutionary decade with Napoleon's coup (9-10 November/18-19 brumaire an VIII), the Museum of Monuments was still under construction: while four of the rooms and the Elysée were already formed, work on the Fourteenth-century and Introductory halls was just beginning. Furthermore, Lenoir was continuing to make increasingly ambitious plans for the Museum, including the creation of an eighteenth-century hall, the monumental decoration of the main entrance, and the entire redevelopment of the three courts of the former monastery. Even the parts which were already formed, were not, strictly speaking, finished - in the sense that work never quite ceased in the Museum. There were always additions and adjustments in process, and, until the end, there were a handful of sculptors, restorers and architects, as well as plain workmen, employed by Lenoir. In March 1802, for example, Miss Mary Berry, upon visiting the place, wrote in her journal that "the ancient sculptures damaged by vandalism" were still in the process of being restored, others, destined for the Elysée garden were not quite set in place, and that "a large number of workmen were employed by M. Le Noir in the vast galleries"¹¹¹. An equally significant part of the ongoing development of the museum was the continuing acquisition of pieces and the construction of sculptural assemblages dedicated to noteworthy personalities, designed by Lenoir himself.

¹¹¹ See *Voyage de Miss Berry*, Paris 1905, entry of 25 March 1802, p. 59.

The nominal *raison d'être* of the collection which had formed the basis of the Museum - offering sanctuary to controversial and persecuted monuments of the *Ancien Régime* - had all but ceased to exist by the official opening of the Museum. From 1795 the attitude towards artistic heritage was changing dramatically, predominantly through the legitimization of the notion of "national patrimony" and all its implications for the identity of the newly-defined French nation. By the end of the Revolutionary period, the removal of sculptures from their original settings could no longer be justified in relation to the safety of the pieces alone. A reversal of emphasis had become necessary in the argument for the Museum, where the collection was no longer presented as a means for the survival of the removed pieces, but had instead become in itself sufficient cause for such removals.

I would like to propose that the kind of rhetoric which Lenoir had used before the official recognition of his Museum, in late 1795, was clearly focused on the conservation of monuments from vandalism and neglect, and, thus, the partial repair of the damages done to the artistic wealth of the nation. The themes of national identity and the art-historical significance were already present, but at that stage they played a supporting role, serving to justify the very need to preserve those controversial works in the first place. After the recognition of the Museum, and the marked change of the Revolutionary outlook, the necessity to preserve those works as national patrimony was largely taken for granted. In that light, the argument focused increasingly on the necessity for the collection as a whole, and the important contribution the Museum itself was making, above and beyond the independent value of the pieces it contained. In other words, whereas before the issue was to convince why these pieces were worthy of sanctuary, and therefore why such a depot-sanctuary was needed, after the institutionalisation of the Museum the issue became to decide which of the pieces still out there would have to be brought in to support and fulfill the project's agenda.

As we saw in the first part of this chapter, the report which Lenoir had submitted to the Committee of Public Instruction in July 1795 (messidor an III), catching the anti-vandalist wave of the period, concentrated on the contribution of the depot, as well as his personal

efforts to the salvation of works of art, with detailed examples. We also saw in the preface of the *Notice historique* of late-1795 (an IV) how the Museum was heralded by Lenoir himself as a "temple expiatoire" of the mindless destruction of works of art from so many centuries. But as soon as the character of the operation changed from temporary depot to museum, the issues at stake inevitably changed, as well.

Bénézech's letters of 1796, concerning the recently inaugurated Museum of Monuments, were a clear manifestation of the decisive shift of focus from the salvation aspect of the project, to its identity as a national cultural institution. In his own words, both to Lenoir and to the rival Louvre Commission, the Minister stated as a primary goal the enrichment of the Museum of Monuments, so that the history of the arts which it was presenting might be completed. In the third article of his letter to Lenoir, he authorised him to search for and claim any object appropriate to his Museum¹¹². Furthermore, he elaborated on the principles of selection and display of the objects for this institution, defining its character as distinct from the Louvre and Versailles, and thus ensuring - at least in theory - that there should not be a conflict of interest between the three. In short, Bénézech had not only confirmed the legitimacy of the Museum as an autonomous institution, by identifying it as an operation in the service of the arts, but had also sanctioned its enrichment, in view of the "completion" of history. Essentially, therefore, Lenoir was doing nothing more than taking the Minister to his word when he pursued the expansion of his collection. The letter to the Louvre Conservatory, on 2 April 1797, was one of the many examples where Lenoir testified to this. As a response to their continuing demands of works for the Louvre, Lenoir wrote:

Le Minister, Citoyens, par sa lettre du 19 germinal an 4 art. 2, m'autorise à remettre à votre disposition les antiques que vous réclamez, l'art. 3 de la même lettre m'autorise à revendiquer auprès de vous les Monumens qui appartiennent à l'histoire de France et à l'histoire de l'art *pour compléter le Musée des Monumens français* [my emphasis]¹¹³.

¹¹² "Vous pourrez aussi rechercher et réclamer les objets caractérisés pour votre Musée et le compléter." - Bénézech to Lenoir, 19 germinal an IV (April 1796), in COURAJOD, vol. I, p. 163; and "Mais j'autorise, d'un autre côté, le conservateur à revendiquer, dans les autres dépôts, les objets qui peuvent compléter la collection des Monuments français" - Bénézech to the *Conservateurs du Muséum des Arts*, in COURAJOD, vol. I, p. 164.

¹¹³ MS, "Lettre de Lenoir réclamant les monumens qui appartiennent à l'histoire de France pour le Musée des monumens français, 13 germinal an 5", Archives du Louvre, Z2.

The concept of "completion" was encountered throughout the arguments in support of Lenoir's project - both his own and those of others. The idea that there was a specific sequence which could be constructed through the acquisition of enough appropriate pieces, is the more obvious aspect of this. However, underlying the encyclopedic vision of a fully-represented chronology of French sculptural art, were implications of a greater completeness and unity, extending through history onto a metaphysical level of universal legitimacy. I would argue that this deeply implicit network of ideas was the "hidden strength", so to speak, of the project, which rendered it important on a number of levels, and won it continuous support and approval. Admittedly, it might seem paradoxical to talk of support and approval when the project was often under attack, and Lenoir had to work hard, not always successfully, to achieve his goals; not to mention that, in the end, the Museum was actually closed. But any seeming paradox is dissolved when the necessary distinction is made between the specific, short-term attitude, and the more general and long-term.

Beyond the exhibits themselves, and the commemorative aspect of the agenda, Lenoir's plans for the further development of the Museum included ambitious constructions in the three courts of the former convent, incorporating the largest architectural fragments which Lenoir had ever proposed to acquire - the facades from the chateaux of Anet and Gaillon. Lenoir was also projecting two more halls for the expansion of the chronological circuit. In 1809 he wrote about a "salle primitive", which would represent the eleventh century "époque qui nous présente peu de monuments des arts [et qui] serait unique en Europe". This hall would be furnished with sculptural and ornamental pieces from the abbey of Cluny, as well as from the demolished cathedral of Cambrai, the remarkable dome of which was to be placed, independently, in the garden.¹¹⁴ Already in 1800 he envisaged a contemporary hall which was to be, initially, the much discussed but never executed eighteenth-century. By 1809, however, and despite the absence of one for the eighteenth-

¹¹⁴ AMMF, vol.I, pp. 390-393.

century, he conceived of the contemporary hall as a "Salle des faits héroïques de Napoleon le Grand, Empereur des Français".¹¹⁵ Another variation of this hall was projected in the 1810 edition of the *Musée des monuments français*, entitled "Dix-neuvième Siècle, Voyage en Égypte de l'Empereur et Roi Napoléon Ier", and containing "les bustes des généraux et des hommes qui sont distingués sous les ordres de l'Empereur. Le bust de Sa Majesté serait à la tête; des bas-reliefs représentant les principaux faits de ses victoires Égypte en feraient la principale décoration"¹¹⁶. Finally, in 1811, a manuscript of Lenoir's suggested that he was also envisaging a gallery of stained glass.¹¹⁷

Despite accusations that Lenoir had actually provoked the destruction of Gaillon in order to acquire its fragments¹¹⁸, two consecutive Ministers of the Interior, between late 1799 and 1801, gave him their full support for the transportation of both the Gaillon and Anet pieces.¹¹⁹ Lenoir wrote, in 1801, that no ambition, no interest had guided him to this enterprise but the desire to make "quelque chose de grand, de beau, *autant pour l'avantage de nos arts que pour l'utilité de mon pays*"[my emphasis].¹²⁰ Once the ambitious transportation was completed - the Gaillon fragments had required three linked barges to sail up the Seine, the whole process favourably reported in the *Journal des débats* of 19 vendémiaire an XI - Chaptal wrote a congratulatory note to Lenoir:

Les artistes vous devront de la reconnaissance pour la conservation d'un monument aussi précieux, et le Gouvernement vous doit en même temps des témoignages de satisfaction pour la manière sage et économique avec laquelle vous avez exécuté une entreprise qui paraissait devoir être beaucoup plus coûteuse et difficile.¹²¹

¹¹⁵ AMMF, vol.I, p. 383.

¹¹⁶ *Musée*, 1810, p. 277.

¹¹⁷ MS, Archives du Louvre, Z 62-63.

¹¹⁸ See LÉON, P., *La vie des monuments français* (Paris : Editions Picard, 1951), p. 82.

¹¹⁹ Detailed accounts of the project, including a *Rapport historique* on Anet and *Pièces justificatives* for the expenses of its purchase and transportation, in *Compte rendu* op.cit., pp. 7-8; also AMMF, vol.I, pp.154-7 (Acquisition, transportation and reconstruction at the Museum of French Monuments of the fragments from Anet and Gaillon).

¹²⁰ AMMF, as above, p. 155.

¹²¹ *ibid.*, p.158 (24 pluviôse an X/4 Feb. 1802); further congratulations by Chaptal at AMMF, vol. III, p. 53-54 (3 ventôse an X/22 Feb.1802).

The end of the Revolutionary regime might have signalled more favourable conditions for Lenoir's Grands Hommes agenda, but it also brought with it the problem of returns. After Napoleon's favourable turn towards the church, in late 1800, a large number of religious establishments begun demanding the return of sculptures and ornaments removed during the past decade. Between 1802 and 1809 Lenoir had to return 63 pieces to various churches¹²². At the same time as sending works back to their places of origins, however, Lenoir was instructed by the authorities to relinquish a considerable number of pieces for the decoration of various other church and state buildings, in their post-Revolutionary refurbishment. This contributes significantly to the thesis that the "restitution" argument against the Museum of Monuments was rather superficial, and that a "musealisation" of the pieces involved had irreversibly and necessarily taken place in the greater context of culture, dictating the disposal of great numbers of those pieces in equally "museal" ways - that is, outside their original situations.

In November 1804, Denon, as general director of museums, wrote to Lenoir: "Je suis chargé, monsieur, de décorer avec magnificence la chapelle du pape - vous avez des Anges en argent et en bronze qui viennent de l'église de Jésuites du Jésus. Je vous pris de me les envoyez de suite."¹²³ Similar examples abound: religious statues by Girardon, Mazières and Slodtz were taken to the Invalides for the decoration of the dome¹²⁴; pieces of a mosaic were removed in order to decorate the throne room of the Palais de l'Institut¹²⁵; a statue of the Tiber was requested for the decoration of the town hall¹²⁶; and, most notably, the pieces transported to the empress Josephine's palace at Malmaison, where Lenoir was employed together with Denon, to develop and decorate the residence and gardens¹²⁷.

Furthermore, with the change of regime, certain monuments took on different significance,

¹²² LANZACDELABORIE, op. cit. (note 95) p. 354; for the 1802 returns, by far the most in any single year, see AMMF, vol. I, pp. 279-288; see also AMMF, vol. III, pp. 127-129 for a report presented to the Minister of Interior, in 1809, of the monuments returned by Lenoir to various churches; and AMMF, vol.III, pp. 221-236 for a recapitulation of all the objects removed from the depot/Museum between 1792 and 1817.

¹²³ AMMF, vol. I, p. 317 (16 brumaire an XIII/6 Nov.1804); and AMMF, vol. III, p.89.

¹²⁴ AMMF, vol. I, p. 316.

¹²⁵ AMMF, vol. I, p. 328.

¹²⁶ AMMF, vol. I, p. 411.

¹²⁷ AMMF, vol. I, p. 364 (1807) & p.387 (1809), vol. III, p. 109 (1807); on Lenoir's involvement at the Malmaison, see DE LESCURE, *Le château de Malmaison* (1867); and HUBERT, G., "Josephine, a discerning collector of sculpture", *Apollo*, July 1977.

and became more appropriate for institutions other than a museum. An example is Turenne's tomb: in 1800 it was no longer impossible to honour such a prominent military figure of the *Ancien Régime* officially, and so his tomb was taken from the Museum of Monuments to be placed at the Invalides. Lenoir, as expected, resented the loss of such a name from his collection and fought the move vigorously, with his highly imaginative arguments albeit without success¹²⁸.

As we have already seen, even as Lenoir was being instructed to give up pieces from his collection, he was also being authorised to make further acquisitions, in the name of the "completion" of that collection. It is important to note, however, that not all of Lenoir's proposals were approved. In the summer of 1801, Lenoir proposed to transport to the Museum the de Guise tombs from the Collège de ville of Eu. The prefect of the Seine-inférieur, Beugnot, wrote lengthy letters to both Lenoir and Chaptal, the Minister of Interior, protesting against this:

Les tombeaux n'ont pas à souffrir, rien ne motive un tel déplacement. Paris est trop riche. Si l'on continue, il n'offrira bientôt plus que des avenues de tableaux, des magasins de statues, et la France sera dans une ville. C'est une chose affligeante que la légèreté avec laquelle un artiste distingué par ses connaissances projette de dépouiller un département, comme s'il n'était pas aussi la France, comme s'il n'était peuplé de barbares n'y ayant ni sentiment, ni goût.¹²⁹

Beugnot still held on to the argument that, since the tombs were not threatened by destruction, there was no longer reason for their displacement - an act which would only result in the impoverishment of the church. However, as it was already mentioned, an altogether different line of argument was at work for the Museum of Monuments, no longer a "negative" one - about the prevention of destruction - but a "positive"/constructive one, about the creation of continuities and associations, relevant not only to Paris, but to the whole of the nation. Nevertheless, Chaptal, although he had authorised a number of equally "unnecessary" acquisitions for the Museum, found himself in agreement with the

¹²⁸ He wrote to Lucien Bonaparte, still Minister of Interior, arguing that the military hero's tomb would be completely out of place in the Temple of Mars, which was the Invalides, because the sculpture on it showed Turenne dying, a position altogether inappropriate for a sanctuary of the god of war... See AMMF, vol.I, p.191 (Lenoir to Lucien, 18 fructidor an VIII/5 September 1800).

¹²⁹ AMMF vol. III, p.17 (3 fructidor an IX/21 Aug. 1801).

prefect, and categorically refused Lenoir's request¹³⁰. In a similar case, between January 1801 and March 1802, Lenoir had been trying to acquire the tomb of the count d'Ennery, by the contemporary sculptor Houdon. Despite Lenoir's varied arguments and repeated attempts, which included the artist himself pleading with Chaptal, the latter flatly refused, seemingly without further explanation, and the tomb was never transported.

Chaptal had authorised Lenoir to proceed with numerous acquisitions between 1800 and 1802. Further to the ones already mentioned, there were the tombs of the Thou family and Le Batteux, from Saint-André-des-Arts¹³¹, that of Philippe Desportes, and the funerary statues of Rouville and his wife, from the abbey of Bon-Port¹³², as well as the mausoleum of the Villeroy from the church of Magny¹³³ - none of which were in any way more endangered, or more necessary for the Museum, or less important for their churches, than the de Guise or d'Ennery monuments; yet all the former gained approval of transportation to the Petits-Augustins, whereas the latter did not. The ambiguity of Chaptal's position on Lenoir's requests is interesting as yet another example of the absence of established policy, or even fixed ideas over any length of time, concerning the Museum of Monuments, and the extent to which this betrays the strength, rather than weakness, of the project.

A case illustrating this continuing state of ambiguity and confusion surrounding "French monuments", which never really settled in France throughout the Museum's life, is that of the constable Anne de Montmorency's mausoleum, from the church of Emile (formerly Montmorency, renamed during the Revolution, after Rousseau's opus). In view of the damage the church and its contents had suffered during Revolutionary uprisings, the *Conseil de conservation* had requested the transfer to the Louvre of the mausoleum (a work in coloured marble by Jean Bullant), in November 1796. The municipality of Emile, however, opposed the stripping of their church, and, despite the pressing demands of the *Conseil* to allow for "the most beautiful columns of *verd antique* in the whole of France" to

¹³⁰ AMMF vol. III, p. 20 (9 vendémiaire an X/1 October 1801).

¹³¹ AMMF vol. I, pp.238-240 (May-Sept. 1801).

¹³² AMMF, vol. I, pp.245-246 (Aug.-Sept. 1801).

¹³³ AMMF, vol. I, pp. 188-189 (Sept. 1800) & pp.251-252 (Sept.-Oct.1801).

be transported to the Louvre, they managed to convince the Minister to cancel the removal.¹³⁴ Nevertheless, two years later, with Neufchâteau as Minister of the Interior, the Louvre was suddenly allowed to claim those precious columns, just as Lenoir was authorised to transport the rest of the tomb to the Petits-Augustins. At the inevitably renewed protestations from Emile, Neufchâteau replied that the transportation of the tomb was decreed because "il doit *compléter* la collection des monuments qui sont rassemblés dans le Musée des monuments français [my emphasis]".¹³⁵

Once more, the vision of a complete collection, with all its implications, won the day - and it would continue doing so, seemingly paradoxically, even at the eve of the Museum's closure. In 1812, with the first (unexecuted) proposal for the closure of the Museum already made, Lenoir was authorised to make a significant acquisition from the Notre Dame of Soissons, involving the four tombs of Saint-Drausin, Catherine de Bourbon, Marie de Bourbon and Louise de Lorraine d'Aumale.¹³⁶ In the following year he also acquired a monumental sculpted mantelpiece from the Hôtel d'O, by Germain Pilon, placing it in the Élysée in the form of a fountain, as well as various architectural fragments from the convent of the Grands-Carmes.¹³⁷ Negotiations for further acquisitions continued until the very same year of the Museum's closure.

Lenoir's letters to people in power during the various attempts to rescue the museum from closure also presented the Petits-Augustins more as a developing project than as an established institution.¹³⁸ In his final appeal to the king, after having returned the royal tombs to Saint-Denis and after the royal order for closure of the 24 April 1815 (which was not implemented until several months later), Lenoir proposed the transformation of the Museum of Monuments to

¹³⁴ AMMF, vol. I, p. 67-69 (Nov-December 1796).

¹³⁵ AMMF, vol. I, p. 131 (10 nivôse an VII/30 Dec.1798). See also CRIPPS-DAY, "Le monument funéraire du cœur d'Anne de Montmorency", *Gazette des Beaux-Arts*, 2, 1928; and BEAULIEU, M., "Le tombeau du connétable Anne de Montmorency...", *Revue du Louvre*, 1964.

¹³⁶ AMMF, vol. I, p. 416.

¹³⁷ AMMF, vol. I, p. 419.

¹³⁸ See, for example, the letters to Josephine in early April 1811, AMMF, vol. I, pp. 405-415.

un Musée de l'art français, en conservant aux Petits-Augustins les monuments qui n'ont plus d'asile, et en faisant contre-épreuve ou mouler toutes les statues des rois qui retourneraient à Saint-Denis, et les autres pièces destinées être restituées, essentielles cependant à la chronologie de l'histoire de France ou à celle de nos arts.

Alternatively - and this, he wrote, was his preferred option - he proposed to "sanctify" the museum, by creating a chapel, to the reine Marguerite, and establishing a chaplain, who would say a daily mass to the memory of all those whose mausolea would still be in the museum:

Cette institution sainte et religieuse calmerai les âmes inquiètes qui, en admirant notre musée éprouvent cependant une espèce de gêne ou de mécontentement de ce qu'il est composé des monuments dus à la piété de nos pères. Par cette proposition que je hasarde, la morale, l'utilité et l'economie, tout serait satisfait, et Paris posséderait réellement un Westminster plus riche, plus beau et plus complet que celui de Londres.

Finally, he also proposed to change the name of the institution in order to lose all Revolutionary associations - although he did not actually mention alternatives.¹³⁹

At that stage, Lenoir would have wanted to present the Petits-Augustins in the most favourable light possible, and it is highly illuminating that he would have chosen to do so by emphasising the potential of the Museum over its established merits. It was obvious that the Revolutionary origins of the project were the key reason for wanting to close it. So he aimed at the dissociation of the Museum from the particular episode of its birth, focusing instead on the wider significance of the project in the context of French history and culture. I would suggest that Lenoir's great error was the failure to realise precisely *how* significant the project was in that context, without having to find recourse in political specificity, which resulted in the different "colouring" of the Museum with each change of regime. Going from Revolution to Condorcet and Empire, and then to the restituted Monarchy twice, via the spell of Napoleon's Hundred-Day resurrection, resulted in such a rapid succession of changes to the Museum's allegiances (largely through the various editions of the catalogue), that, by the end of it, could only have been perceived as comic.¹⁴⁰ Nevertheless, I believe that Lenoir's actions betrayed a deeper and more

¹³⁹ *Supplique à Louis XVIII*, s.d. (fin 1816), AMMF, vol. I, pp. 438-9.

¹⁴⁰ For a detailed list of all twelve editions of the Museum's catalogue see Appendix A.

significant concern beyond mere politicking in order to keep his project afloat. As I have already suggested earlier, I would disagree with the view that sees Lenoir as a mere opportunist largely improvising with the Museum of Monuments. The flurry of activity - actual and proposed - which characterised the end of its life was not a mere response to the moves for closure, but also a manifestation of Lenoir's continuing vision for the place.

Additionally, in 1815, as part of the attempt to convince about the importance of his project, Lenoir proposed the adoption of a systematic acquisitions' policy. He was to be authorised to travel throughout the country in order to collect "tous les monuments de l'histoire de la monarchie française que la Revolution a déplacés et laissés à l'abandon."¹⁴¹ This proposal could not, of course, have been approved, as the Museum was closed a few months later. It indicates, however, Lenoir's belief - repeatedly confirmed, despite the closure - that the Museum of Monuments, or *a* museum of monuments, was a legitimate and necessary institution for the nation, which the authorities were bound to support, as they had, essentially, done so far.

Transfer Proposals

One of the most significant phenomena testifying to the success of the concept behind Lenoir's project - and one largely underestimated by historians - is the wave of transfer proposals for the Museum, submitted to the authorities throughout its life.

Already in July 1796 (18 messidor an IV), less than a year after its official opening, the Minister of the Interior (Bénézech) received a proposal from the architect Biarez, to transfer the Museum of Monuments to the Notre-Dame of Paris¹⁴². Biarez, a government surveyor of monuments, criticised the current location at the Petits-Augustins as a "too restricted and altogether inappropriate" exhibition space. On the other hand, the great cathedral of Notre-

¹⁴¹ From the Preface to to 1815 edition of the Museum's catalogue.

¹⁴² AMMF, vol. I, p. 52-54 (18 messidor an IV).

Dame was a much more imposing space, both in terms of its history and of its actual configuration, and thus better suited for hosting such a museum:

Ne conviendrait-il pas de consacrer à cet usage le monument de Paris le plus propre à cet effet, vaisseau recommandable par son antiquité et sa construction gothique, prêtant tout à la fois à l'exposition des monumens à y placer et au caractère qu'exige un cénotaphe? En considérant le genre des monumens à y placer, on pourrait y adapter tous les tombeaux qui méritent d'être transmis à la postérité, soit par reconnaissance pour ceux en l'honneur de qui ils ont érigés, ou pour la gloire de ceux qui les ont exécutés. Ainsi, tous les monumens qui portent un bon caractère gothique mériteraient sous ce rapport d'être conservés.

As it is already evident from this extract, the significance of a national museum of monuments was strongly emphasised in Biarez's proposal. Further on, he wrote that the commemoration and celebration of great men of the nation, both of the Republic and of the arts, was an act indistinguishable from the exercise of the people's liberty, and therefore such a museum was a credit to the Republic. However, the commemorative aspect of the museum was not all; Biarez confirmed Lenoir's thesis that such a visual history of French art was very important for the education of artists. The transfer of the Museum to the Notre-Dame would be especially beneficial for those artists who would come to study, as they would have much more space and light to compare the monuments successfully and to draw them from different angles, than in the current situation at the Petits-Augustins.

Bénézech had to reject Biarez's proposal on the grounds that the transfer would be too costly and, at the time, all funds were needed for the completion of the major refurbishment of the Louvre¹⁴³. However, it is important to note that he otherwise approved of it, and implied that, had the financial constraints not been in place, he would have decreed it.

Four years later, in February 1800 (pluviôse an VIII), the *Conseil des bâtimens civils*, received a proposal by Bonet, a former member of the Convention, which recaptured the main principles behind Biarez's earlier proposal, for the transfer of the Museum of Monuments to the Notre-Dame. Bonet began by praising Lenoir for the chronological display of the Museum, which he saw as a successful application of, and expansion on, the theory of Winckelmann.

¹⁴³ Ibid., p. 53.

C'est par des recherches aussi pénibles que multipliées qu'il est parvenu à redresser une foule de particularités historiques, et à jeter un nouveau jour sur l'authenticité de plusieurs de ces monuments; enfin, c'est à son esprit d'analyse qu'on doit l'idée de la classification par siècles, idée simple et heureuse qui met en pratique pour les ouvrages de notre ère la théorie de Winckelmann pour les ouvrages des anciens¹⁴⁴.

However, just like Biarez, he found the building of the Petits-Augustins too narrow and fragmented to allow the necessary space for a proper overview of the monuments, and an appreciation of the unity of the display. But Bonet went further than that. He also disapproved of some of the recently completed, quite "theatrical" gestures of Lenoir: "Les façades extérieures du cloître, les galeries, le jardin présentent l'effet d'une décoration qui pourrait avoir quelque succès au Théâtre, mais dans la réalité l'homme d'un goût sévère regardera peut être deux fois". In contrast, the interior of Notre-Dame, offering a majestic and noble setting with a simple, unified layout, would be ideal for the Museum. If, he asked, we cannot but be ceased by amazement and admiration upon entry to the cathedral as it stands today, what kind of experience might not await us if it were to be transformed into a magnificent museum? Bonet's submitted proposal went on to give details of the arrangement of the monuments in the cathedral, following the chronological principle, but also placing great emphasis on the unity of the spectacle.

The reply from the *Conseil des bâtimens*, in the person of Petit-Radel, was somewhat different to the one Biarez had received from the Minister for his own, very similar proposal, four years earlier. Petit-Radel did not actually approve of the Notre-Dame as a potential setting for a museum of French monuments, finding it too large and daunting a space for this purpose : "... le genre et la grande étendue de l'église de Notre Dame absorberait et les masses et les détails de chacun d'eux, sans parler de la bigarure insupportable à l'œil que le tout produirait"¹⁴⁵. Instead, he suggested that the church of Saint-Sulpice would be much more appropriate, with its pleasant proportions, its ample light, and its "heureuse disposition". The matter, however, was not taken any further.

¹⁴⁴ AN F13 507: BONET, *Projet de transférée dans le ci-devant Eglise de Notre-Dame de Paris le Muséum des monumens français placés dans l'Eglise des Petits-Augustins*.

¹⁴⁵ AN F13 507, 12 floréal an VIII.

Within 1800 there are two more proposals for the transfer of the Museum of Monuments. The first was by Fontanes, again favouring Notre-Dame, and, like the previous ones, getting no further than its initial submission to the relevant authorities. This proposal recaptured the theme of the museum as place of commemoration and celebration of Great Men of the nation:

Cet édifice contemporain des premiers âges de la monarchie française réclame naturellement les cendres de tous les grands personnages qui l'ont illustrée. Il deviendrait pour nous ce que l'abbaye de Westminster est pour l'Angleterre.¹⁴⁶

The second proposal of transfer in the same year was to become a cause of great upset for Lenoir. It came from a certain Norvins, not a consequential figure himself, but it had managed to gain the backing of the Minister of the Interior, at the time the First Consul's brother, Lucien Bonaparte. Norvins proposed the transportation of the entire collection of the Museum to the gardens of Mousseaux, in Paris, where the monuments would be strewn along natural scenery, in order to form a vast sculptural parc¹⁴⁷. Lenoir, having gained the support of various "men of taste", including the unlikely Fontanes, argued in vain the enormity of the expenses (more than eight million *livres* - when the entire annual budget for the Museum had been less than twenty thousand), and the risks of the move. Lucien decreed the transfer on the 29 vendémiaire an IX (October 1800), asking Lenoir to prepare the plans for the Musée de Mousseaux. This favourable assignment, however, did not abate Lenoir's opposition to the project. So, when Lucien departed suddenly for Madrid, to take-up the Spanish throne, Lenoir renewed his protests to the First Consul, and finally succeeded in saving the Museum at the Petits-Augustins. In February 1801, Chaptal, the new Minister of the Interior, cancelled Lucien's decree, invoking financial reasons¹⁴⁸.

¹⁴⁶ AMMF, vol. I, p. 185.

¹⁴⁷ Ibid., pp. 194-205.

¹⁴⁸ Ibid., p. 227

Lenoir, as was expected, saw all of these transfer proposals as a threat, not only because he had already heavily invested in the building - in 1796 having started, and by 1800 having completed a considerable part of his extensive plans - but also because he felt that, should such a drastic change occur, he might become marginalised and lose control over what he saw very much as his own project. If the Museum was moved from its original location into a more high-profiled site, it would inevitably be entering a new phase of its existence, rupturing the continuity from its depot-origins, which had been a constant reminder of Lenoir's personal contribution to the project, and a reinforcement of his identification with it. However, although the obvious common motive behind the proposals was a discontentment with the Petits-Augustins, and the kind of exhibition space available therein, their most significant implication was the full endorsement of the concept of such a museum. Beyond the direct acknowledgement of the debt to Lenoir, or even the critique of certain of his choices, the importance of the complete acceptance of the institution *per se* cannot be overemphasised.

Until just over a decade earlier, the possibility of such a museum was not entirely conceivable; and even when iconoclasm, with all its implications, became the great issue against which the Museum of Monuments was largely defined, still, the character which such an institution ought to take was far from self-evident. With this in mind, I would like to propose that it was a key moment for the history of the institution of the museum as a whole, when the Museum of Monuments overcome its legitimisation as a place of sanctuary for certain ideologically ambiguous artefacts, and acquired an autonomous identity, with a creative role in the developing cultural identity of the nation through the representation of history.

Beyond this significant acceptance of the need for a museum of monuments in the first place, what further emerges from the transfer proposals is that such a museum's ideal character was essentially identified with the specific project at the Petits-Augustins. The main aspects of the museum, as outlined in the proposals, were, effectively, reiterations of Lenoir's agenda. On one hand, the chronological division of the display, and at the same

time the possibility of an overview of the entire collection, for the articulation of a history of the arts and the education of artists, and, on the other hand, the appropriately atmospheric setting for the commemoration and celebration of great men of the nation, were, as we have already seen, among Lenoir's primary concerns. Although Lenoir was thinking more practically and was, therefore, justified in his outright opposition to a transfer of the Museum, the greater implications of the transfer proposals were not only a compliment to his efforts and his vision, but also a confirmation of the Museum's significance.

The end - and after

Although the Museum of Monuments was not ordered to close until 1816, a proposal for its closure had been approved already in 1811. On the 24 February, modifying and expanding on the decree which had ordered the return of certain tombs to the re-christianised Pantheon/Sainte-Geneviève, the Minister Champagny decreed the closure of the Museum, and the transportation of the entirety of its funerary monuments to Saint-Denis, in order to:

(...) rendre à la religion les mausolées que la religion fonda, rendre à eux même leur caractère primitif, les rétablir dans leur harmonie naturelle avec tous les souvenirs qu'ils doivent consacrer, et sans les dérober à l'admiration publique, associer leur présence aux cérémonies funèbres et au spectacle du culte divin.¹⁴⁹

This proposal had the full backing of the Emperor, and it would appear that only an administrative error delayed its immediate implementation - the delay then being further extended because of the greater political circumstances;¹⁵⁰ and perhaps also Lenoir's frantic campaigning against it, as we saw above. On the 17 May of the same year Vivant-Denon, by then director general of museums, wrote a letter to Montalivet, the new Minister of Interior, in support of the closure of the Museum of Monuments. He said that he rejoiced at the prospect of joining at Saint-Denis "cette immense quantité des tombeaux des grands familles et des hommes illustres que l'on admire en ce moment au Musée des monuments

¹⁴⁹ AMMF, vol. I, p. 405.

¹⁵⁰ See Note in *ibid.*, and also AN F IV 4126 and LABORIE, *op. cit.* (note 95), p. 358.

français, tel que Descartes, Corneille, Racine, Molière, etc.", and that such a collection would then "aurait quelque ressemblance avec le Sépulture de Westminster, où la cendre de Newton repose dans la même enceinte que la dépouille mortelle des rois."¹⁵¹ It is highly significant that for the rest of the pieces from the Petits-Augustins - those not relevant for display in a church - Denon proposed the inauguration of a hall of fifteenth-century French sculptors in the Louvre.

With the Bourbons firmly reinstated after the Hundred Days, the decisive moment in the fate of the Museum of Monuments would have to have been the appointment of Quatremère de Quincy as perpetual secretary of the Academy, in early 1816. Being perhaps the single most eloquent and erudite opponent of the Museum, outspoken against it since 1800, he did not hesitate to act immediately upon admission to office. He was behind - and probably actually dictated - the two decrees which sealed the Museum's fate: that of 14 April, ordering the immediate restitution of all monuments to their churches and to the various families they had originally belonged; and of 18 October, giving the building over to the École des Beaux-Arts.

What I would like to point out at this stage is that throughout the process of the Museum's closure a more or less similar project was invariably envisaged in its place. In other words, even though the necessity for some kind of museum of monuments was not explicit during this process, nevertheless the essence of the project was effectively taken for granted. Whether in the Louvre, in another "Fifteenth-century hall", or at Saint-Denis-turned-Westminster, the idea was that the kind of grouping which Lenoir had first introduced made perfect sense. Even Champagny's seemingly worship-oriented argument was largely musealised, requiring that the monuments which Lenoir had brought together from numerous churches should actually stay together, retaining the crucial "admiration publique" in their magnificent spectacle. Furthermore, the initial decree which Champagny was elaborating on stated that reinstated pieces would be "in the order of centuries" - accepting, that is, the principle of chronology as the *sine qua non* of such a collection. In

¹⁵¹ Ibid. (LABORIE), p. 359.

other words, even as the Museum of Monuments was being closed, the museums and galleries of national monuments which were to emulate it throughout the nineteenth century were being envisaged.

The Museum of Cluny, created from Alexandre du Sommerard's personal collection of loosely-defined medieval artefacts in an old abbey, with the assistance of Lenoir's son, Albert, headed the list of such projects, being in many ways a direct quote from the earlier project. The baron de Barante, on the occasion of the Museum's inauguration in the summer of 1834, indicated the extent of the debt to Alexandre Lenoir: "L'hôtel de Cluny remplacera [...] ce musée des Petits-Augustins qu'on a eu tort de détruire [...] Déjà la Société des Antiquaires de France a demandé à [y] tenir ses séances comme elle les tenait au Musée des Petits-Augustins."¹⁵² This was undoubtedly the ultimate vindication for Lenoir, who died on the 11 June 1839. His contribution to the arts had already been largely recognised - having become a minor authority on the gothic, publishing and lecturing on the subject - but was now complete, with the public affirmation that it had been a mistake to close his *magnum opus* in the first place. A decade before the Cluny, however, already in 1824, Denon's vision of a "gothic" gallery at the Louvre was realised by his successor, the comte de Forbin. Eighty-four pieces from the Petits-Augustins were arranged in five rooms which composed the Angoulême gallery. The collection was then further augmented with medieval and renaissance pieces bought individually from various sources. Lenoir also lived to see Louis-Philippe's decision to convert the palace of Versailles into a Museum of French history, where artists were commissioned to represent episodes that Lenoir himself had attempted to invoke in the halls of the Petits-Augustins, which had remained neglected from artists in centuries - such as the baptism of the legendary king Clovis, the entry of Charles VIII into Naples, etc.¹⁵³ The name *Musée des Monuments français* itself was to be re-used for the museum of casts envisaged by Viollet-

¹⁵² Quoted in POULOT, op. cit. (note 84), p. 524. For a further discussion of the Cluny's debt to Lenoir see ERLANDE-BRANDENBURG, A., "Le musée des Monuments français et les origines du musée de Cluny", in Deneke & Kahsnitz, (eds), *Das Kunst und kulturgeschichtliche Museum im 19. Jarhundert* (Munich, 1977).

¹⁵³ See HASKELL, F., *History and its Images: Art and the Interpretation of the Past* (Yale University Press, 1993), p. 250.

le-Duc in 1879, but not executed until later, in the old palace of the Trocadero.¹⁵⁴ Unlike their original predecessor, all the above museums survive today.

The legacy of the Petits-Augustins was very significant - and the above three institutions are only the most obvious examples from a long list of project which were inspired in various degrees from Lenoir. The dismantling of the Museum itself, however, was a great anticlimax. Although the immediate reinstatement of the monuments to their places of origin was the essential reason for the Museum's urgent closure, it never quite happened. Except for a comparatively small number of prominent monuments which were promptly taken to Saint-Denis and the new Père Lachaise cemetery, major administrative conflicts, indecision and confusion kept considerable parts of the collection on site for 25 years. The demolition of most of the old convent and its replacement by the new Beaux-Arts building started very tentatively in May 1820, with the architect Debret in charge. Eventually only the old church, with Lenoir's addition of the Anet façade, the Chapel des Louanges, the sacristy and part of the cloister, were to survive (*fig. 40*). But it was not until 1832, when Durban took over the project, that actual halls of the former Museum begun to be demolished and the new edifice taking over.¹⁵⁵ In fact, the Petits-Augustins continued until that date to be visited by the curious and interested as the remains of the Museum of Monuments. Upon the commencement of Debret's works in 1819, and well after 1832, a large part of the collection remained on site, piled into the courtyards, making a mockery of the whole rhetoric for the Museum's closure. Among the many who deplored the situation, de Guilhermy was the most eloquent, who visited the old Museum and lamented the ruinous condition of the monuments, thrown "like rubble stones" in the open, exposed to the cruelty of the elements. Whereas once these pieces were salvaged in order to display the creative progress of time, now they were senselessly abandoned to its destructive powers.¹⁵⁶

¹⁵⁴ See POULOT, op. cit. (note 84) and ENLART, C., "Deux musées historique de l'art français: Petits-Augustins et Trocadéro", *Bulletin de la Société historique du VI^e arrondissement*, 1907.

¹⁵⁵ See CARNAC, Ph. & MARMOZ, C., "L'École nationale des Beaux-Arts", *Monuments Historiques* 102, April 1979.

¹⁵⁶ GUILHERMY, de, *Musée de sculpture au Louvre*, *Annales archéologiques* 1852, vol. XII, p. 18; see also LÉON, P., *La vie des Monuments français. Destruction. Restauration* (Paris: Picard, 1951), Chapter III.

The majority of pieces from the original Museum of Monuments found their way to other museums. But even the limited returns to churches and cemeteries was a mere gesture of reinstatement, since the situation to which the monuments were "returning" was fundamentally altered. Réau discusses in some detail the confusion and inaccuracy involved in those transfers, and although he might not be entirely accurate himself, he paints an evocative picture of the operations and their consequences.¹⁵⁷ Contemporary witnesses confirmed that the much-advertised reinstatement was effectively a sham. Montalembert wrote that rather than returning to the Saint-Denis all of what properly belonged to it, like the basin which was left in the court of the new École des Beaux-Arts building, royal tombs from all over the country were amassed there instead. The abbey, he complained, had been turned into "un véritable musée de bric-à-brac". This extremely poignant remark summed up the situation, highlighting the inevitability of the essential musealisation heralded by the Museum of Monuments and by no means expired with it. Saint-Denis and Sainte-Geneviève, the new père Lachaise cemetery, the Louvre and Versailles, were all partaking of the museum-like aspect which had become a necessary part of the changing culture and its new sensibilities.

¹⁵⁷ RÉAU, L., *Histoire du vandalisme. Les Monuments détruits de l'art français*, 2 vols (Paris, Hachette, 1959), vol. 2, p. 70ff.

Chapter 2

The *Musée des Monuments français*: a description

The entrance to the Petits-Augustins was at number 14 rue de Petite-Seine, on the left bank of Paris. This opened onto a small court, beyond which extended the main residential part of the monastery, concealed behind a colonnade. Immediately to the right of the court was an entrance to the church - this intended for easy access of the devout to their place of worship without crossing into the monastic part of the compound (*figs 8, 9*). This doorway, with the later superimposition of the façade from Anet, became the main entrance to the Museum, opening directly into the Introductory hall (*fig. 10*).

Salle d' Introduction

According to Lenoir, this was the most interesting space in the whole museum, and the first of its kind in Europe, as it brought together under one roof masterpieces of the most celebrated French sculptors throughout the centuries, being, as such, at once useful for the arts and for the study of history, but also a glorious spectacle for the enjoyment of the public (*figs 11, 12*). As Lenoir later summarised it:

Cette pièce contiendra des monumens de tous les siècles, chronologiquement placés, l'artiste et l'amateur verront d'un coup d'œil l'enfance de l'art chez les Goths, ses progrès sous Louis XII, et sa perfection sous François Ier, l'origine de sa décadence sous Louis XIV, et sa restauration vers la fin de notre siècle.¹

Having received the minister's approval for the creation of this hall in 1797, Lenoir submitted to the *Conseil des bâtimens* a more detailed proposal in October of that year². A portico with four columns supporting a "pyramide Egyptien" was to be added to the understated entrance of the former church. Inside, the construction of sixteen large

¹ *Description*, an VIII, p. 9.

² AN F13 871 (17 vendémiaire a VI).

columns along the walls would create niches for the placement of sculptures, as well as for doorways to the cloister, which flanked the length of the hall on the southwest. The hall was to be further adorned, with pediments, cornices and the installation of stained glass in the windows; the roof timbers would also be decorated. The Council approved the proposal in its entirety, except for the plan for the "Egyptian" portico, which was abandoned. No alternative was constructed at the time, but in 1802 Lenoir transported an ornate wall from the château d'Anet, which he planted over the doorway to the Introductory hall, thus giving the Museum's entrance an appropriately grand facade.

The monuments in the Introductory hall covered the whole chronological range of the Museum, from the precious antique pieces - which Lenoir had to forward to the Louvre eventually, but continued to list in the catalogue because of their key role as "archétypes" (*figs 13, 14*) - to contemporary busts and reliefs. The later centuries (sixteenth and seventeenth) featured prominently, with some of the larger and most impressive pieces. Being the former church this was the largest and tallest space in the building, and Lenoir's decorative interventions clearly aimed to accentuate the elevating character of the display. The great marble monuments of the Renaissance played a significant role in the setting of the visual tone of the hall. The overview of French art from its origins to the present was executed more as a celebratory vista, a dazzling composite painting - or *coup d'œil* - rather than as a didactic sequence. It is highly significant that, despite Lenoir's initial proposal for a chronological arrangement of the pieces in this hall, he never actually executed it. Instead, the monuments were arranged for maximum visual effect, offering interesting contrasts and juxtapositions as well as comparisons, such as the arrangement of a fragment from a Roman altar to Jupiter from the reign of Tiberius, found under Notre-Dame of Paris, placed next to the statue of legendary king and queen Clovis and Clotilde of the sixth century, next to Lenoir's wonderful *fabrique* to queen Blanche, representing the thirteenth-century, and also to a contemporary (eighteenth-century) great relief of the miracle of St. Philip from the portal of the saint's church in Roule. Generally, Lenoir invested in the aesthetic experience of the whole to carry the conceptual significance of the display, rather than laying it out in a literal, encyclopedic way. This was one of the most consistent

principles across the Museum, but nowhere more manifest than on the Introductory hall and the Élysée.

Here are some of the most prominent monuments in the Introductory hall:

The seventeenth-century tomb of Richelieu (no. 174 in the catalogue), by Girardon on Lebrun's designs, was the piece which had caused Lenoir's much-celebrated injury, while he was trying to protect it from the revolutionaries sacking the chapel of the Sorbonne. It was nevertheless considerably damaged, and Lenoir had to restore it at length. At fourteen feet long, in white marble, it represented the dying cardinal in the arms of Sorrow, with the figures of Religion and History mourning on either side.³ Also from the seventeenth century and equally impressive in scale and execution was the mausoleum of Mazarin (no. 187), by Coysevox. It represented the cardinal kneeling in prayer and behind him an allegorical figure bearing his coat of arms. The life-size figures of Fidelity, Prudence and Abondance, in bronze, were seated at the base of the marble cenotaph which bore the cardinal's statue. Other notable pieces from the seventeenth century in this hall were the monument to Louis XIV by Guillant, depicting the monarch as a ten-year old with his mother and father, the striking pyramidal tomb of the house of the Orléans-Longueville by Anguier, and a half-scale model of the relief from the triumphal Porte Orientale of the Louvre by Cartelier.

The elaborate funerary column and urn with the hearts of Henri II and Catherine de Medici, carried by the celebrated Three Graces by Pilon (no. 111), was from the sixteenth century, as was the tomb of the constable Anne de Montmorency and his wife (no. 449), by Bullant. The latter belonged to the majority of monuments which had been damaged during the Revolution and had required various degrees of restoration from Lenoir. In this case, the original bronze statues of the constable and his wife had been taken to the foundry, so Lenoir replaced them with a group of allegorical figures in white marble from Anet, representing Charity and the Apostles. The most impressive monuments of the sixteenth century in the Introductory hall were probably those to Diane de Poitier, a composition of

³ *Description*, an X, p. 255.

Lenoir's (no. 466 - discussed shortly), and the tomb of François I (no. 99). The latter was actually the most celebrated sixteenth-century piece in the whole Museum, occupying the position of honour in what had been the chapelle des Louanges, a hexagonal chapel opening off the east wall of the church (*fig. 15*). The monument was erected in 1550 on designs by Philibert de l'Orme. The reclining statues of François and his wife Claude, depicting them in a realistic state of death, were by Pierre Bontemps and "plus fortes que nature" according to Lenoir. They were placed on a platform decorated with a relief frieze depicting the battles of Marignan and Cerisoles. The great vault covering the monument was by Pilon, composed of elaborate arabesques and statues of *putti* extinguishing the flame of life. Of the various reliefs incorporated in the vault Lenoir singled out the one "ingeniously representing" the immortality of the soul through an allegory of Christ conqueror of shadows. Sixteen fluted ionic columns of man-height supported the entablature over which were placed five figures in marble representing the king and queen in full regal costume, and their three children.

Considerably damaged by the "vandals", but also by the necessary dismantling during its transportation to the Museum, François' tomb was one of the first works to be reassembled by Lenoir. He was pleased to announce in the catalogue that "je viens de rendre ce précieux monument qui avait été mutilé par des barbares, à son état primitif, en le faisant restaurer d'après des dessins que j'en avais faits dans ma jeunesse".⁴ Lenoir considered this piece an exceptional example of stylistic accomplishment, "most in harmony with our national character and civilisation", while also having the added significance of commemorating a king famous for his enlightened patronage of the arts. However, the extent to which the actual commemorative value of the monument was emphasised varied widely through the Museum's life. In the early days, Lenoir had to argue that by reassembling the piece he was not concerned with the king and his morals, which he was forgetting along with man's ashes, but rather with the progress of education and the arts.⁵

⁴ Ibid., p. 190.

⁵ Report to the *Comité d'instruction publique*, 18 July 1795, AMMF vol. I, p. 26.

Notable from the sixteenth-century in the Introductory hall was also the funerary column bearing the heart of Henri III, by Prieur, the mausoleum of the chancellor Michel de l'Hôpital and the tomb of Villier de l'Isle-Adam, the latter two also notable for the extent of Lenoir's restoration.

The fifteenth, fourteenth and thirteenth/medieval centuries did not have much of a presence in the Introductory hall, being thought of as eras less of individual works than of a greater decorative style. It was the relevant three halls that were by far the most atmospheric and meticulously decorated in the Museum, conveying the "character" of each century as a whole. Still, for the sake of the overview, there were some distinctive pieces from these more "primitive" epochs in the Introductory hall, such as the stone tomb of Pierre d'Orgemont, chancellor of Charles V, from the fourteenth century and the impressive tomb of queen Blanche, from the thirteenth. Also, the few albeit highly significant "archétypes antiques" and celtic monuments - archetypes in their own right - were here. The antique pieces, twenty-one in total (nos. I-XXI), were mainly smaller architectural fragments in marble, funerary stele and a variety of other bas-reliefs. They were largely Roman, but there were also a few Greek pieces - the funerary stele - with inscriptions which Lenoir meticulously copied and analysed in the catalogue (*fig. 14*).

The celebratory overview of the Introductory hall provided an ideal context for Lenoir's creative restorations and fabrications. One of the most imposing such pieces, right upon entrance to the hall, was the aforementioned monument to Diane de Poitiers, an assemblage of different fragments: The kneeling statue of Diane at the top of the sarcophagus was originally in front of the *prie-dieu* of the chapel in the chateau of Anet. Next to it Lenoir placed a little dog sculpture, symbol of fidelity, and the figure of Eros seated on a pile of books, writing her history. Between the black marble sarcophagus carrying the sculptures and the pedestal he placed four sphinx heads, symbols of the eternal mystery of femininity and wisdom. Enamel portraits of François I and Henry II, the most prominent men in her life, were also added. The cenotaph was supported by four wooden caryatides by Pilon,

originally from the reliquary of Sainte-Geneviève.⁶ The tomb of François I itself was originally designed by Philibert de l'Orme, but sculptures by other sixteenth-century masters were then added to it by Lenoir, who also performed considerable redesigning in parts while he was reassembling the monument.⁷ Similarly with the monument to chancellor Michel de l'Hôpital: the kneeling statue was from the church at Chamouteux, whereas two other sculptures were by Pilon from Saint-André-des-Arts; also a bust of the Chancellor's son was added, as well as a bas-relief of the Judgement of Solomon at the base.⁸ In this hall was also displayed probably the most drastic of Lenoir's fabrications, the monument to reine Blanche of Castille, composed entirely of disparate sculptural debris.⁹

Salle du XIIIe siècle

The Thirteenth-century hall was set up in the sacristy of the old church, its two doorways opening onto the Introductory hall (*figs 16, 17*). Unlike the other four Museum rooms, which were strung around the main cloister and each only accessible through the cloister corridors, one came upon the Thirteenth-century hall without a break, directly from the Introductory one. The immediacy of the transition between the two spaces was played to full effect through Lenoir's decorative effects. From the large, bright and celebratory first hall, one found oneself into a much smaller, dark and distinctly funereal room. The tall and airy wooden ceiling of the former church suddenly transformed into low and heavy stone vaults. The uninterrupted vistas across the first space, encompassing some of the most gloriously ornate marble pieces of the whole Museum, were substituted with half-obscured glimpses of roughly hewn stone statues, recumbent on their sombrely aligned tombs. It could be said that with this meticulously accentuated contrast Lenoir was aiming to kick-

⁶ See BRIÈRE, G., "Le tombeau de Diane de Poitiers au Musée des Monuments français", *Bulletin de la Société de l'Histoire de l'Art français* (1966).

⁷ See nos 83-118 of Album Lenoir vol.III, drawings of general views and details of the monument, among which some construction drawings for additional ornamentation etc.

⁸ *Description*, an X, p. 240.

⁹ See no. 25, Album Lenoir vol. II.

start the chronological circuit, assisting the visitors to abandon themselves to the experience that was opening up before them.

The investment in atmosphere, characterising the whole project, was nowhere more pronounced than in the Thirteenth-century hall. From the heavy painted vaults of the ceiling - dark blue with golden stars - to the various roughly-hewn architectural fragments embedded in the walls and those decorating the openings, as well as the imposingly dim light from the small stained windows and the "sepulchral" lamps, the main aim here was to convey an overall impression, rather than focus the visitor's attention in any way. In his attempt to present as vividly as possible the character of "un siècle aussi éloigné", Lenoir wrote that he had searched for and made use of all the details which would compose such a picture "avec les couleurs les plus vraies". Indeed, he continued, this was a task he undertook for every hall of the Museum.¹⁰

The varying levels of light in each hall were a major feature of the whole project. Lenoir wrote:

La lumière sombre qui éclaire ce lieu est encore une imitation du tems; magie par laquelle on maintenait perpétuellement dans un état de faiblesse des êtres que la superstition avait frappés d'effroi; car j'ai observé que plus on remonte vers les siècles qui se rapprochent du nôtre, plus la lumière s'agrandit dans les monumens public, comme si la vue du soleil ne pouvait convenir qu'à l'homme instruit.¹¹

Artistic production in this era was described at best as "timid", and at worse "barbarous", the style being in a dormant, undeveloped state, with the artists operating under a heavy veil of ignorance and superstition, merely copying precedent, rather than genuinely creating. Consequently, the pieces in this hall were of uniform anonymity, representing the general stylistic shortcomings, yet great emotional power of an era steeped in mysticism as well as mystery, to contemporary eyes. In the post-revolutionary era, and especially during the recently restored monarchy, this emotional power would be explicitly translated as profound Christian piety in Lenoir's catalogue.

¹⁰ *Description an X.*, p. 124.

¹¹ *Ibid*, p. 123.

The tombs of the first dynasties from Saint-Denis were displayed here, as well as other funerary pieces and architectural fragments judged sufficiently primitive by Lenoir to fit the context. The recumbent funerary statues (*gisants*) of Childebert (+ 358), Pepin le Bref (+ 741), Hugues Capet (+ 996), Philippe le Gros (+1131), Louis IX and his two sons Louis de France (+ 1262) and Jean (+1247), Béatrix de Bourbon (+ 1383) and a variety of other royals of the second and third dynasties (Carlovingian and Capetian), were all to be found here. Chronological consistency was clearly not the issue here, but rather the ideological coherence of a particularly vague yet significant era - the sprawling field of the middle ages, where the roots of the nation and all things French lay. Less about an actual century than any other hall, this was the most elusive and even conceptual of all spaces, presenting style mostly as atmosphere and general "feel" rather than anything specific. Invented decorative pieces played an important atmosphere-enhancing role here, such as the capitals in the "Lombard" style and the hanging lamps designed by Lenoir, as well as the relief portraits of the tragic and extremely popular medieval lovers Héloïse and Abelard. Lenoir commissioned the latter from Deseine in 1799, and placed them above the two doors of the hall, accentuating its emotional appeal. Original fragments were also highly prized, such as the eleventh-century fragment of mosaic pavement from Saint-Denis, depicting the twelve signs of the zodiac. In the catalogue, Lenoir related this piece with a relief in Notre Dame depicting an antique planetary calendar, which, he wrote, Dupuis had described so "savantly" in his seminal book *L'Origine de tous les cultes ou religion universelle* (1795). Lenoir went on to wish that he was given permission to take mouldings of this and other similar fragments in order to unite them in the Museum. "Ce serait rendre au citoyen Dupuis l'hommage qui lui est dû", concluded Lenoir, because such pieces "prouvent évidemment que le christianisme n'est qu'une suite des anciens cultes, dont on a défiguré les principaux personnages".¹²

¹² Ibid., p. 142.

Salle du XIVe siècle

The Fourteenth-century hall was separated from the cloister through a light colonnade framing an entrance (*figs 18-20*). This and the Fifteenth-century hall were the most immediately available, in terms of visual and physical access from the cloister and courtyard, thus offering yet another contrast from the highly introverted, nearly concealed Thirteenth-century one. Lenoir explained in the catalogue that during this century, the artists who had travelled to Asia with the crusading Louis IX brought back to France "un nouveau genre de decoration, et introduisivent particulièrement dans l'architecture le goût arabesque". As a result, elegant and slender ogive arches replaced heavy, depressed vaults and before long majestic temples, in imitation of mosques, arose on French soil; and their interiors, charged with gilt and brilliant stained glass, displayed the greatest luxury¹³. The decoration of the room was, therefore, appropriately opulent, with columns and arches featuring a forest-like iconography which was considered the origin of gothic style; the ceiling was a light blue, with golden fleur-de-lys in a lozenge-grid, and the walls and floor were covered with a colourful mosaic.

This was one of the most popular halls, both because of its decorative ebullience, and because of its apparent success in conveying the style of the century: "la salle la plus unifié (...) présente l'ensemble le plus parfait, et transporte le plus aisément les spectateurs dans le siècle dont elle porte le nom"¹⁴. Most pieces were either from Saint-Denis, or from the Sainte-Chapelle - the latter having also been the origin of most of the fragments for the architectural decoration of the hall. The centrepiece was the mausoleum of Charles V and Jeanne de Bourbon, once more an assemblage by Lenoir, as the king's statue came from Saint-Denis, and the queen's from the Célestins, while the restored wooden coffer they lay on was from the Sainte-Chapelle, and the four Corinthian columns, from Maubuisson, supported a monumental stone tabernacle of uncertain origin.¹⁵ Around the walls of the

¹³ *Description an VIII*, p. 161ff.

¹⁴ BIET & BRÉS, *Souvenir du Musée des monumens français* (Paris, 1821-1826), pl. xvii.

¹⁵ Discussed in MCCLELLAN, *Inventing the Louvre : Art, politics, and the origins of the modern museum in eighteenth-century France* (Cambridge University Press, 1994), p. 183.

hall , in purpose-built niches, stood an array of kings and princes, more of which lay below, in *gisants* from tombs at Saint Denis and elsewhere. In the niches were also statues of the apostles from the Sainte-Chapelle, astonishing in the "naiveté de leur expression et la simplicité de leur execution". Nevertheless, the statues managed to represent the clothing of the epoch with surprising accuracy, giving "une idée exacte des étoffes et des broderies que l'on employait à cette époque, étoffe assez semblable, pour la finesse de la fabrique, aux schals des Indes que nous connaissons, et apportées alors en France par les croisés."¹⁶

Salle du XVe siècle

One would have caught a glimpse of the Fifteenth-century hall even before entering the Fourteenth-century one, to which it was adjacent and equally open to the cloister through a highly ornate Corinthian colonnade from Saint-Père at Chartres (*fig. 18, 22*). Although still not fully accomplished, retaining certain gothic mannerisms, most of the motifs of the high renaissance style were identified as already forming in this century. In many ways this was considered the most remarkable century for the progress of French art, since it manifested most clearly the shift from the earlier styles to the height of Renaissance accomplishment. Lenoir wrote that the artists of the fifteenth century begun to "lier les calculs de l'esprit à une exécution grande et soignée".¹⁷ As a result, "gothicisme" gave way to a higher style. This was apparently owed largely to genius of Raphael and his work in the Vatican, which was seen by travelling Frenchmen and brought back to France. As Paris possessed very few original palaces or mansions of this century, Lenoir found himself "engagé à développer, dans mon quinzième siècle, l'art, le goût, le luxe et l'éclat qu'exigeait sa décoration et à donner aux amis des arts le portrait d'un siècle presque inconnu dans la capitale". To achieve this, he visited repeatedly the châteaux of cardinal d'Amboise in the countryside, whose master sculptor, Jean Juste had been sent to Rome to study the "arabesques de Raphael".

¹⁶ *Description* an X, p. 146.

¹⁷ *Description* an VIII, p. 177ff.

Lenoir covered the ceiling and walls of the Fifteenth-century hall in such arabesques - which, despite the name, were considered one of the most characteristic motifs of the decorative sophistication of the Renaissance. The whole decoration of this hall, wrote Lenoir, was an elaboration on the style of Louis XII's tomb, with added flourishes of "archétypes que j'ai levés moi-même tant à Chartres qu'à Blois, etc."¹⁸ Colour was particularly opulent in that era, so Lenoir covered the room in "les fonds violet et bleu, les encadremens dorés et la legende carminée". The light from the windows was filtered through stained glass from the church of the Minimes at Passy, allowing a comfortable, but not yet brilliant illumination of the room. The central piece of this hall was the aforementioned tomb of Louis XII and Anne de Bretagne, which, apparently, Lenoir's initiative alone had saved from the Saint-Denis festival of destruction in 1793. The tomb was badly damaged, so Lenoir "felt justified", as he wrote, in performing a drastic restoration, which involved, among other things, dividing the monument in three pieces.¹⁹ (*fig. 23*) Two other important pieces in this hall were also the product of creative restorations. For the mausoleum of brothers Philippe and Charles d'Orléans, Lenoir had the statues taken from a larger family monument at the Célestins, and incorporated in a new construction of Corinthian columns and frieze, which featured an original relief of the death of the Virgin from Saint-Jacques-la-Boucherie.²⁰ (*fig. 24*) Two completely different versions of the mausoleum of Renée d'Orléans Longeville, in Lenoir's drawings, testify that little more than the recumbent statue was original.²¹

Salle du XVI^e siècle

The decoration of the Sixteenth-century hall was intended to accentuate the celebratory character of the display - in view of the height of achievement of French art - as well as accurately represent the relevant style of that century (*fig. 26*). With the major assistance of the inspired patronage and policies of François I, in whose court Leonardo da Vinci himself

¹⁸ Ibid.

¹⁹ LENOIR, *Musée* vol.1 (1800), p. 100.

²⁰ AMMF, vol. II, p. 367, and , *Musée*, as above, vol. II, p. 105.

²¹ See nos 47-48 of the Album Lenoir vol.II, at the Louvre *Cabinet des Estampes*.

was invited, by mid-century a proper renaissance of the arts had been achieved. Once more, in order to render the "portrait" of the century accurate, the decoration of the hall was inspired from a variety of sources:

Pour peindre ce siècle brillant comme il convenait, j'ai levé des plans dans les monumens bâtis par les Lescot, les Bullant, les Philibert, etc. et j'ai enfermé dans mon cadre tous les détails que j'ai recueillis afin de fixer les yeux des connaisseurs sur le siècle connu dans les arts sous la dénomination de *siècle de renaissance*.²²

The sources for Lenoir's decor, however, were not exhausted in the visual arts, but also included descriptions from historians and poets. The emblems of chivalry, for example, as described in contemporary texts - representing religion, country (*patrie*), friendship and love - were also incorporated in the highly elaborate ornamentation of the ceiling. Complex arabesques, salamanders and quasi-mystical entwined numbers (*chiffres enlassés*) covered the latter, as a confirmation of the artistic accomplishment of the era. A classical portal, designed by Peyre, marked the monumental single entrance to the hall from the cloister. Original stained glass from Vincennes covered the large windows which, in accordance with Lenoir's analogy of amount of light to *lumières* of each era, allowed for the ample illumination of this room. In contrast to previous halls, all the works here were carefully identified as the creation of a particular artist. Art, at this stage of accomplishment, was invariably the product of individual genius - as opposed to the anonymity and collective character of the less sophisticated, first centuries. The maturity of art was clearly linked to the emergence and perfection of identifiable personal styles, within the greater trend of the style of the epoch. Germain Pilon, Jean Goujon, Jean Cousin, Pierre Bontemps and Barthélemy Prieur were the most prominent artists celebrated here. Lenoir, in his catalogues, did not hesitate to compare them to archetypal sculptors of ancient Greece, such as Phidias, Praxiteles, Myron and Lysippos. In the spirit of Grands Hommes commemoration, several of those masters had individual memorials erected to them by the curator, usually consisting of funerary stele adorned with reliefs of their portraits and casts of some of their work. Prominent pieces here included the urn containing François I's heart, by Bontemps, from Saint-Denis; the tomb of admiral Chabot by Cousin, from the

²² *Description an X*, p. 181-2.

Célestins, creatively restored by Lenoir; and statues of Henri II, Catherine de Medici and François I by Pilon.

Salle du XVIIe siècle

The Seventeenth-century hall was supposed to be the least decorative and most personality-oriented of the halls, where almost exclusively commemorative monuments found their place either as representative of the figure they depicted or of the artist who created them (*fig. 27*). Lenoir designed a new marble floor for it and he had two doorways opened at either end of the room onto the cloister, to serve as entrance and exit.²³ Stained glass from the church of Saint-Gervais and the convent of the Feuillants was installed in the large windows. The seventeenth century was supposed to be "plus grand dans les lettres que dans les arts", as Lenoir wrote in the catalogue. However, this did not stop him from singling out artists like Anguier, Coysevox, Le Sueur ("le Raphaël français"), Poussin ("le peintre des philosophes"), Puget ("le Michel-Ange français") and Sarrazin, celebrating them both through their work and their marble busts, commissioned for the purpose.²⁴ Personalities like Henry IV, France's most popular king and symbolic of the nation's triumphs, were also commemorated in this hall. On the other hand someone like Louis XIV initially found his place in the hall as the bronze cast of the famous equestrian statue at Place Vendôme by the celebrated Girardon, and only later, with the change of political affinities, did his commemoration as a significant ruler of France enter into the Museum's agenda.

The verdict on seventeenth-century style seemed to have been rather ambiguous from the outset, even outside the vicissitudes due to the change of regime. Lenoir followed accepted opinion when he identified a decline of art from their previous renaissance, due to overelaboration of style and general degradation of principles, but the extent of that decline

²³ Two of Lenoir's drawings of floor-patterns survive at the Louvre Archives, Cabinet des Estampes, Album Lenoir, vol. I, nos 10-11.

²⁴ See GUIFFREY, J.J., "Bustes commandés à Michallon et Deseine", *Nouvelles archives de l'art français*, 1880-1881.

seemed to fluctuate considerably from one instance to another. For example, in the introductory text to the relevant hall, in the catalogue, Lenoir spoke of a "striking degradation" of the arts because of the abandonment of natural models and of the "beau idéal". The artist, "en s'éloignant dans son dessin du caractère surhumain et de sentiment profond qui naît du génie, devient un homme ordinaire et un simple ouvrier".²⁵ This debasing "professionalisation" of artistic creation was anathema to art, resulting in the production of vastly inferior works to the ones created by the freely inspired work of genius. On the other hand, however, Lenoir did not hesitate to celebrate a number of artists of the era as true masters, and to identify a number of works as worthy of display in the Introductory hall - such as the tomb of Mazarin by Coysevox, which he called a "masterpiece", or the monument to Richelieu by Girardon, or the unusual pyramidal family monument of the Orléans-Longueville, by Anguier.

It would seem that in this hall Lenoir was trying to balance a number of often contradicting factors, which included the necessity to prove this era inferior to the Renaissance yet somehow laying the ground for the imminent, late-eighteenth-century regeneration of the arts, with obviously accomplished and significant artists at work, yet still in a context of restraint and even degeneration.

... XVIIIe ?

Lenoir always envisaged an Eighteenth-century hall, which was never executed. There were various eighteenth-century monuments in the Museum, but the most prominent representation of the contemporary century, as we already saw in the previous chapter, came in the form of purpose-made commemorative pieces commissioned by Lenoir, and those donated by families and artists seeking, quite literally, a place in history. Descartes, Boileau, Racine, Molière, La Fontaine, Mabillion, Montfaucon and Turenne were all here, among many others, once again relaxing chronological accuracy for the sake of ideology. These monuments found their place in either the Introductory hall or, more often, in the Élysée, which came to be seen as the closest to a (largely) eighteenth-century

²⁵ *Description*, an VIII, p. 259.

commemorative hall the Museum had. However, in the catalogue, Lenoir included an Eighteenth-century section where those pieces were listed, following an introduction to the century's artistic accomplishment.²⁶ For the earlier part of the century, Lenoir identified an exacerbated decadence, largely due to Charles Lebrun who climbed on the academic throne and surrounded himself with inferior artists. Not much later, however, the winds of regeneration already begin to blow, single-handedly, it would seem, through the work of Vien, whom Lenoir celebrated by writing:

(...) un génie bienfaisant est descendu du midi de la France avec la rapidité de l'aigle, pour arracher le voile épais qui cachait à nos yeux les plus productions de l'antiquité, et restaurer, par ses leçons et ses modèles, toutes les parties qui composent l'art du dessin.²⁷

At the end of the Eighteenth-century section in the catalogue, he concluded the description of the halls with a characteristic *cri de cœur* to young artists, recalling his own experience as a student of painting:

Élèves, oubliez les perfides systèmes dont j'ai été moi-même la victime; marchez à l'immortalité avec vos habiles maîtres, travaillez avec eux à réparer les erreurs du dix-septième siècle, et que la fin du dix-huitième, par vos études savantes et vos productions sublimes, fasse époque dans l'histoire de nos arts.²⁸

Cloître & Cours

Beyond the halls themselves, Lenoir paid much attention to the development of the cloister galleries which connected them, in order to make the transition from one to the next equally meaningful as the experience of the halls themselves. Although he clearly relied on contrasts in the development of each epoch, he simultaneously undermined that distinction in the transition between them. By maintaining the theatricality of the experience between halls, even if the mood in each was different, he conveyed a sense of the continuous flow of time. The coherence of the chronological chain as a whole was thus sustained, even as the particular character of each link was manifested. Significant monuments were also displayed here, confirming the role of the galleries as equally important spaces of the

²⁶ Ibid., pp. 315-367,

²⁷ Ibid., p. 315.

²⁸ Ibid., p. 367.

Museum. Those monuments sometimes belonged to the transition between centuries - the lives of those commemorated or their artists straddling centuries - but once again the emphasis was on an integrated aesthetic effect, with chronology a means rather than an end. In the gallery between the Fourteenth- and Fifteenth-century halls, for example, one found the mausoleum of Gabrielle d'Estrées, one of Lenoir's creative restorations, which belonged to the sixteenth-century.²⁹ (*fig. 18*) In the same gallery was a statue of Adam from the Notre-Dame of Paris, attributed to the mid-thirteenth century. The tombs of Pierre de Navarre and his wife Catherine d'Alençon, however, were appropriately of the early fifteenth century. Similarly appropriate were the two mausolea of Louis de France, son of Charles V, and his wife Valentine de Milan, of the first decade of the fifteenth century. Both were quite impressive pieces in white marble, while the latter had added significance as the commemoration of a particularly sympathetic historical figure: the tragic wife who died of inconsolable sorrow after her husband's death.³⁰

Appropriate decoration was also added to the cloister galleries, most notable being the closing off of certain openings with stained glass. By blocking the view to the outside, the gaze was concentrated on the gallery itself, which was made even more dramatic by the restricted, coloured light streaming through the decorated glass. As was the case with several original ornamental fragments incorporated by Lenoir in his Museum, some of these windows served both to enhance the background decoration and as exhibits themselves. The ones in the gallery between the Sixteenth- and Seventeenth-century halls, for example, enjoyed a considerable status in the collection, being the original *vitreaux* from the châteaux d'Écouen executed from a cartoon by Raphael. In contrast to the Christian/sepulchral character of the previous gallery, with several tombs and religious statues, this one was clearly a more celebratory/ commemorative one, aligned with over a dozen busts of Great Men (*fig. 28*). Those represented some of the important figures of the seventeenth but mostly of the eighteenth century - the latter men of letters and philosophers, alongside the few artists who deserved commemoration, such as, famously,

²⁹ On the d'Estrées tomb see HUARD, G., "Le tombeau de Gabrielle d'Estrées au Musée des Monuments français", *Bulletin de la Société de l'Histoire de l'Art français* (1932)

³⁰ See Lenoir's comments in *Description* an VIII, p. 181.

Drouais. This presence of the eighteenth century, doubtless coupled with Lenoir's inclusion of an "eighteenth-century" section in his catalogue, encouraged a number of visitors to speak of an actual Eighteenth-century hall, despite the fact that Lenoir never did execute his intentions of actually constructing one.³¹

The role of views - the *coups d'œil* - was very important throughout the Museum, manipulated by Lenoir to communicate various concepts and moods appropriate to the display. The Introductory hall, bringing together works from across history in one great picture upon entry to the Museum, suggested the unity of French art across and beyond history, as an essential, timeless identity. The cloister galleries, on the other hand, as elongated perspectives affording glimpses in spaces beyond, were largely about movement and change, offering a sense of process simultaneously linking and dividing. The open spaces of the Museum compound - the three courtyards, the cloister and the garden - and the way they related to the building and the street, provided an ideal setting for the elaboration of *coups d'œil*, which Lenoir was clearly aware of (*fig. 25*). He wrote:

Sans être architect, l'art m'est autant familier qu'il doit l'être un peintre qui compose lui-même les fonds de ses tableaux (...) De la salle d'introduction du Musée, donnant sur la rue, on vera le jardin Élysée; ce qui donnera du mouvement à l'architecture et produira un perspective agréable.³²

Furthermore, his plans for the development of the three courts, and the drawings accompanying it, show a consistent occupation with views within and across spaces, framed by the purpose-erected colonnades and facades, incorporating art, commemoration and nature in a single unfolding spectacle (*figs 29-32*).

Arguing that the Museum must not only represent the progress of the arts, but that of architecture as well, Lenoir planned to have the first court, upon entrance to the convent complex, decorated in the style of the sixteenth-century, featuring pieces from the château of Anet; the second court would be of the fifteenth century, with fragments from the

³¹ The two remaining rooms around the cloisters, shown blank in the plan of Biet, of 1815, were shown appropriately developed with the necessary openings in Lenoir's projected plan for further development of the Museum - including the three courts - of 1801-2.

³² *Musée des monuments français* (Paris, 1810), p. 215.

château of Gaillon, and the third would represent the fourteenth century, with "Arabic and gothic" arches from an unidentified demolished church in Paris.³³ The full design of the three courts was not executed, but Lenoir did receive Chaptal's approval for the transportation of the Anet and Gaillon fragments, which he proceeded to erect in the aforementioned courts. The portico from Anet, by the legendary Philibert de l'Orme, was placed over the entrance to the Introductory gallery - the main entrance to the building itself - and is one of the very few parts of the whole edifice to remain in place today. Right across from it, still in the first court, a monumental hemicycle would be erected, also incorporating wall-fragments and columns from Anet, with sculptures by Jean Goujon. All around the court, nineteen niches would be constructed, containing busts of "artists and illustrious men of the French nation", and in the centre of the hemicycle a column would stand, bearing a statue of Fame and the inscription "A la mémoire des hommes célèbres en France". Even in its projected, unexecuted, form the court-project manifested most eloquently one of the central issues on the Museum's agenda: the articulation of a narrative structured on the progress of the arts, and the situation therein of the nation's identity formation, represented by outstanding individuals across the centuries.

The courts' development was never realised, but the Élysée garden at the northwestern end of the site was completed in 1799. Lenoir's own drawings as well as those of various artists who visited the Museum testify to the importance of *coups d'œil* in the Élysée, and the play between concealing and revealing of the monuments amidst the luscious natural setting.

Élysée

The Museum's large northwestern garden was reached through a sequence of three courtyards - the first one being the entrance court, where, upon entry from the rue des Petits-Augustins, one found the entrance to the Introductory hall on the right. From that first court, and across the remaining two - all of which were to be further decorated

³³ See LENOIR, *Compte rendu de l'état actuel du Musée des monuments...* (n.d.[1801/2]), p. 4-6.

according to Lenoir's great unexecuted plan - one caught a glimpse of the Élysée straight ahead. Having finished the circuit of the cloistered halls, the visitor exited the cloister from an opening on the only undeveloped side of the quadrangle - where the Eighteenth and Nineteenth century halls were envisaged to be - finding oneself in the second court, and thus turning right to access the garden. The character of the Élysée was more openly commemorative and contemplative than the rest of the Museum, lacking the rigorous chronological sequencing and emphasis on the development of style, which rendered the halls more obviously "historical".

Lenoir started developing the garden already in 1796, but it was not completed - to the extent that anything in the Museum was "completed" - until 1799. His initial request for 454 saplings turned down as extravagant, Lenoir had to make do with 164 pines, cypresses and poplars which he proceeded to plant in the garden behind the old monastery.³⁴ More than forty pieces of sculpture were carefully staged among them, "posés çà et là sur une pelouse verte, s'élèvent avec dignité au milieu du silence et du tranquillité", as Lenoir himself wrote in the catalogue. The majority were commemorative monuments and tombs largely fabricated by Lenoir (columns, sarcophagi, busts, etc.), but also decorative pieces scattered around - like the cinerary urns placed on the walls enclosing the garden - in order to give to this pleasant space "la douce mélancolie qui parle à l'âme sensible".³⁵(figs 33-36)

The concept of the *coup d'œil*, the perspectival view, was important throughout the Museum, but nowhere more so than here: "De la verdure et des arbres feront les fonds du bâtiment et laisseront encore des percées propices à multiplier les point de vue."³⁶ In the spirit of the "jardin anglais", Lenoir envisaged the monuments in perfect pictorial balance with the flora, generating the appropriate mood:

³⁴ The detailed list survives in AN F17 2410. Among other information and insightful commentary on the Élysée, it is reproduced in POULOT, D., "L'Élysée du Musée des monuments français: un jardin de la mémoire sous le Premier Empire", *Dalhousie French Studies*, 29 (1994), pp. 159-168.

³⁵ *Description* an X, p. 16.

³⁶ *Ibid.*

Ces monumens, dans mon Élysée, sont placés sur le bord des allées à la manière des Anciens; je les ai posé sur une pelouse en forme de coline; des pensées, des fleurs de toutes les espèces caressent les tombeaux, le cyprès même près d'eux paraît quitter sa teinte lugubre et s'éclaircir.³⁷

One found here, among others, the Lenoir-designed tombs of Molière, La Fontaine, Descartes, his disciple Rohault, and Boileau, all in rather simple classical designs of sarcophagi and urns on columns (*figs 41-42*). There was also the monument to Montfaucon, which was an assemblage of hieroglyphs, Egyptian figures, Greek reliefs, figures surviving from the late Empire period and debris taken from monuments dating from the earliest ages of the monarchy - a collage which Lenoir found befitting for his illustrious predecessor as the latter dealt with the history all these periods equally successfully.³⁸ Some other noteworthy pieces, with varying degrees of intervention by Lenoir, were: the lavishly ornate tomb of Dagobert I, which Montfaucon wrote about in admiration, and which was constructed by Louis IX in the twelfth century for his predecessor and founder the Saint-Denis abbey, six centuries earlier;³⁹ the fountain of Diana the huntress from Anet, residence of Diane de Poitiers, with a "groupe magnifique" in marble by Goujon representing the goddess seated on a stag accompanied by her two dogs;⁴⁰ and the beautifully ornate column bearing the heart of Anne de Montmorency, the glorious constable of François I, whose tomb was also in the Museum, in the Introductory hall.⁴¹(*fig. 34*)

Two monuments, both Lenoir's *fabriques*, were particularly interesting in the Élysée. In his own words:

(...) nous voyons sur le penchant d'un colline, auprès d'une plantation de rosiers, de myrtes et de cyprès, s'élever majestueusement une chapelle antique dont les voûtes en ogives allongées couvrent religieusement les cendres d'Héloïse et Abélard (...) Sur le plateau du terre qui sert de base aux urnes immortelles de nos célèbres poètes, on voit un monument à quatre faces s'élever au-dessus des autres tombeaux: composé de quatre niches, il renferme les bustes de Molière, de La Fontaine, de Boileau et de Racine.⁴²

³⁷ Ibid., p. 330.

³⁸ *Musée*, vol. 5 (Paris, 1806), p. 200.

³⁹ *Description* an X, p. 100.

⁴⁰ Ibid., p. 235.

⁴¹ Ibid., p. 203.

⁴² *Musée*, p. 198.

The latter piece was an additional tribute to the four greats of seventeenth-century French letters, all of which also had individual tombs or cenotaphs erected to them in Élysée (with the exception of Racine). Lenoir justified the creation of such a composite monument through the friendship which had bound the men together beyond their roles as "greats": "une amitié égale réunissait souvent ces hommes illustres dans une maison commune qu'ils occupaient à Auteil".⁴³

As far as the tomb of Héloïse and Abélard is concerned, if a single monument had to be chosen to represent the Museum of Monuments, it could arguably be this (*figs 37-38 & 43-44*). Lenoir elsewhere referred to it as having *le plus grand intérêt*" and devoted to it three pages in the catalogue, at no. 515.⁴⁴ Combining the historical and stylistic curiosity of the *Middle-Ages à la Lenoir* with the highly popular theme of the famous tragic lovers in the idyllic setting of the garden, this construct perfectly fused the themes of the Museum. We already saw in the first chapter how Lenoir fabricated the monument from pieces of the original tombs of the couple in Saint-Marcel de Châlons-sur-Seine and the monastery of the Paraclet, adding an extraordinary gothic canopy of his own design.⁴⁵ He wrote that this construct exemplified the style of the twelfth century, with the characteristic clover shape of the arches and the oculi. The reliefs on the tomb's sides, representing the Holy Fathers of the Church, and the pose of the reclining statues, with joined hands and slightly inclined heads, were also characteristic of the period. The statue of Abélard was original, but that of Héloïse was a random *gisant* of the period, on which Lenoir had added the face of the heroin, also carved by Deseine. It is worth noting that Lenoir had given the sculptor the woman's skull to work from, so the greatest possible likeness could be achieved. Finally, Lenoir had an inscription in Greek carved on the monument, reading: AEI ΣΥΜΠΕΠΛΑΕΓΜΕΝΟΙ, meaning "forever joined".

⁴³ *Description an X*, p. 331.

⁴⁴ *Description*, 1803, pp. 102-104.

⁴⁵ It is worth noting that in the *Album Lenoir*, vol. I, at the Louvre Cabinet des Estampes, six drawings are dedicated to this monument (nos. 88-93), depicting four variations of the design: the executed one, with the rosettes, the busts by Desein and inscription (no. 89); a second version, without the busts, inscription or rosettes, but with the gryphons in the four corners much accentuated and a continuous decorative band around the canopy (no. 88); a re-working of the second version with stained glass fitted in the arches of all but one side of the monument (no. 91); and a fourth, larger version still closed off with stained glass, but also showing four and three arches on each side of the canopy respectively, rather than three and two as in all the previous versions (no. 92).

This monument was a source of great admiration by the visitors, being, as we shall see in the following chapter, arguably the most frequently mentioned with emotive admiration in the Museum.

Lenoir intended for the Élysée to inspire in the souls of the visitors a "holy respect" for the personalities and the virtues represented there. He referred to it in the catalogue as a "lieu auguste" and "bois sacré" and he envisaged that the monuments placed therein "attireront les regards du philosophe et élèveront l'ame du poète et du peintre".⁴⁶ In this place of poetic immortality, as Poulot calls it, one could "supposer ces restes inanimés recevant une nouvelle vie pour se voir, s'entendre et jouir d'une félicité commune et inaltérable."⁴⁷ Although the Élysée was also enjoyed by the residents of the area independently of the museum, as a characterful and peaceful urban park⁴⁸, it played a crucial role in the unification and completion of the whole scheme at the Petits-Augustins - to which all the above mentioned aspects contributed in different and important ways.

The extended description of the Museum's development and its description in the previous two chapters have highlighted the emerging complexities of the project, which will be further discussed and interpreted in Chapters 5 and 6. In the following chapter I will examine the responses to the Museum by various visitors, as an essential source for the understanding of its perceived character.

⁴⁶ *Description an X*, p. 337.

⁴⁷ POULOT, op. cit. (note 34), p.164.

⁴⁸ See POULOT, D., op. cit. (note 34); and POULOT, D., '*Surveiller et s'instruire*'. *La Révolution française et l'intelligence de l'héritage historique*, Studies on Voltaire and the eighteenth-century, vol. 344 (Oxford: Voltaire Foundation, 1996), p. 405.

Chapter 3

The *Musée des Monuments français*: responses

The authorities

Lenoir's continuous proposals for acquisition of artefacts, the commissioning of new ones, and the further development of the building, were met with varied responses from the authorities, which included approval and praise, but also refusals and criticism. The Museum of Monuments was never a project like the Louvre which, although it also incurred criticism, was nevertheless unambiguous and high-profiled in its legitimacy. Lenoir's project did not rely on any established categories for its justification; the concepts supporting it were being developed in the greater context of culture even as the Museum itself was being shaped. Consequently, ambiguity was encountered at every step, concerning every aspect of the operation: the reasons which could justify, or not, the removal of certain sculptures from their original settings for the "completion" of the collection, the cost of restoring a certain piece and not another, or the significance of certain pieces which were acquired for the Museum by means of exchange of others deemed less significant.

However, my proposal is that, within this realm of short-term ambiguity - which was reflected most acutely in specific decisions and arguments - there was a clearly discernible movement towards the acceptance and encouragement of the greater agenda of the Museum. Leaving aside the apparently wholesale dismissal from a particular group of scholars, there was no *essential* opposition to Lenoir's project from the authorities, at any given point. There was considerable circumstantial adversity, involving financial issues, personal sympathies, political interests, as well as hesitation, in view of the novel and often drastic nature of the operations. But the greater issues which the project engaged with were

never really in doubt, and always won over the specific losses, considerable as these may have been. The Museum of Monuments was suppressed in an attempt to eradicate the final traces of Revolutionary vandalism, and to restore the resulting damage. But, of course, the real "damage" from the Revolution amounted to much more than such "traces" as a collection of displaced tombs. The deep cultural shift which this great uprising participated in, was well on its way; and, even as steps to eradicate it were being taken, leaps which confirmed and enhanced it were performed. The closure of the Museum, far from contradicting this, was actually the ultimate testimony to it. When the specific institution was closed, the ideas behind it were at their most popular - and continued to be, influencing a great number of projects, starting from the *Musée de Cluny*, and the Angoulême gallery at the Louvre - a direct vindication of the Museum of Monuments, since a great number of objects from the latter found their way in the two former, rather than being returned to the original settings, as was argued to be the issue behind the closure, in the first place.

The Visitors

The Museum of Monuments remained popular with the public throughout its life. Two articles from Parisian journals of 1797, just as the Museum was beginning to take shape, indicated the quality of its appeal. The *Semaines critiques ou gestes de l'an V* praised "l'ordre, l'art, la lugubre magique que Lenoir a mis dans la distribution de ce musée". The article continued in a typically lyrical tone:

Il semble que sa main puissante soutient les siècles sur les bords de l'abîme, les range chacun à leur place et leur défend de s'anéantir, pour montrer leurs arts, leur grands hommes, leur tyrans et souvent leur ignorance.¹

The Thirteenth-century hall received particular attention in this article, perhaps because, at this early stage, it was the only properly "atmospheric" one to be completed. In April of the same year, the journal *Clef du cabinet des souverains* published a praise for the Museum of Monuments by a certain "F. P." who, Édouard Pommier says, is no other than

¹ Reproduced by Lenoir in the *Description* of anVI, avant-propos, pp. 7-10.

F. Pommereul, author of the treatise *Des institutions propres à encourager et perfectionner les beaux-arts* (1796).² The author of the article claimed that, although not all the pieces in the Museum were masterpieces, they did deserve to become known so that one could understand "la pensée qu'il [the artist] a voulu rendre"; even if Art viewed these monuments indifferently, History reclaimed and embraced them. The article went further to suggest that such a project should be expanded into "un véritable musée de sculpture française", by reuniting under one roof the most important medieval and renaissance "monuments historiques" now scattered in the provinces.

The Museum's "forme raisonné" as a chronological circuit, on one hand, and its "curious" character appealing to sentiment and imagination on the other, were the most important features which impressed the public - both positively and negatively. It is fascinating to note the variety of visitors' responses concerning these two different aspects, where the Museum was judged as overly rational and ordered by some, while others found it not enough so. Such was the case, for example, of J. Pinkerton, in 1802, who greatly approved of the principle of chronology, calling it "the most natural and instructive method", but found that it was not adhered to rigorously enough in the loosely structured halls of the Petits-Augustins.³ The *Journal des bâtiments civils* late in the same year, however, found no such fault, congratulating Lenoir on his "heureux arrangement"⁴. Having visited the Museum in its very last days, in 1816, William Stevenson wrote that he could not "indeed sufficiently express" his admiration for Lenoir's "able and learned classification". But he was equally full of praise for "these correct and splendid illustrations of human character and of national genius". And he concluded:

To Mons. Le Noir is the stranger indebted for the opportunity of tracing, with a unique facility, the progress of the imitative powers, from the earliest ages of the French Monarchy down to the present times. These form at once a regular and complex climax of perfection in Art, and a most interesting series of historical elucidation.⁵

² POMMIER, E., *L'art de la liberté: Doctrines et débats de la Revolution française* (Paris: Gallimard, 1991), p. 377.

³ PINKERTON, J., *Recollections of Paris in the years 1802-3-4-5*, vol. I (London, 1806), pp. 201-203.

⁴ *Journal de bâtiments civils*, 12 nivôse an XI.

⁵ STEVENSON, W., *Journal of a tour through part of France, Flandres and Holland... made in the summer of 1816* (Norwich, 1817), p. 146.

Whereas Mercier, writing in 1797, found that the chronological arrangement severely detracted from the unique charm of the collection and, in fact, even from its intellectual merit, since he considered that the place was "no longer the universe of a thinker but merely the cabinet of an amateur".⁶ Coming full circle, on the opposite end of this view was Bonet - one of those who considered a museum of monuments too important a project to be left to Lenoir and the Petits-Augustins and proposed to have the collection moved to the Notre-Dame; for him, the existing display was a "mélange" which had "aucun espèce d'analogie avec l'ordonnance simple, noble et majestueuse que devrait offrir un pareil Muséum"⁷.

Napoleon and Josephine themselves had been impressed by the Museum - a fact which Lenoir, as expected, never failed to advertise. Napoleon first visited the Museum in December 1800 with Josephine, and was so impressed that he reputedly exclaimed "Lenoir, you transport me to Syria!".⁸ Francis Haskell suggests that what Bonaparte was referring to was the popular theory, which Lenoir adhered to, that the gothic style had Arabic origins.⁹ Such was the attention to decorative detail lavished by Lenoir on the construction of the halls as well as on the arrangement of the monuments, that the very origins of the styles he was representing seemed to come alive around the First Consul. Considering the significance of origins for Lenoir and his project - as we shall see further on - it is no wonder that the curator embraced this alleged comment as a supreme praise. Josephine visited again on the 8 April 1807, for a specially prepared torchlit walk¹⁰. Lenoir described how the halls were all lit according to the scheme of progressive enlightenment, which he had followed in the construction of the windows for the availability of natural light. As well as candles and lamps inside the halls, Lenoir described how he had placed torches behind the vitraux, on the outside, so that coloured light of

⁶ MERCIER, L.-S., article in the *Journal d'économie publique, de morale, de politique*, later to appear independently as a pamphlet entitled *Réflexions... sur le dépôt des petits Augustins, dit le Musée des monumens français* - we shall be returning to this fascinating text in the following chapter.

⁷ BONET, *Projet de transférée dans le ci-devant Eglise de Notre-Dame de Paris le Muséum des monumens français placés dans l'Eglise des Petits-Augustins*, AN F13 507.

⁸ See LENOIR, A., *Description*, seventh edition (Paris 1803), p. 113.

⁹ HASKELL, F., *History and its Images : Art and the interpretation of the past* (New Haven & London: Yale University Press 1993) p. 243.

¹⁰ Reported in the *Journal de l'Empire*, 27 April 1807.

controlled intensity would stream into the spaces, setting the appropriate mood and producing "le plus grand effet"; and he continued:

Sa Majesté a vu ce musée avec le plus grand intérêt; elle a surtout admiré la disposition des monuments et leur classification. Chacun d'eux a été pour elle un livre historique et un traité de morale sur lequel elle s'est entretenue longtemps avec l'administrateur. En examinant les monuments de François I, d'Anne de Montmorency et celui du cardinal de Richelieu, Sa Majesté a montré la connaissance la plus approfondie des arts.¹¹

By then Josephine had become one of Lenoir's most avid supporters, employing him for the ornamentation of the park at Malmaison, which he proceeded to redesign "à l'anglaise". He made extensive plans for numerous constructions, some of which were actually built - such as the Temple of Love (one of the most celebrated buildings in the park), a sepulchral *fabrique* (all English gardens required a tomb), and various copies of Roman sculptures skilfully synthesised and placed around the grounds. It is significant that he also regularly provided original pieces to the Empress, which he picked out while collecting for his Museum.¹²

There were other eponymous visitors to the Petits-Augustins who were captivated by the spectacle set up by Lenoir. Two of them require special mention because of their own prominent contribution to the history of museums: Sir John Soane and Wilhelm von Humboldt. The great English architect expressed his admiration for the Museum as being itself one of the first "modern" monuments of France, and for the Élysée, which he identified as an important predecessor of the Père Lachaise cemetery.¹³ The prominent German intellectual, instrumental in the foundation and development of the Altes Museum in Berlin, visited in 1799 and praised Lenoir's project highly, especially in relation to the communication of history. As Elke Harten points out, it is impossible not to speculate that this encounter played a part in the formation of the great Berlin project, twenty years later.¹⁴ Humboldt was impressed by the coherence of the project and that the visitor was

¹¹ *Musée*, 1809, pp. xv.

¹² For more details on Lenoir's involvement at the Malmaison see DELESCURE, *Le château de Malmaison* (Paris, 1867); and HUBERT, G., "Josephine, a discerning collector of sculpture", *Apollo*, July 1977.

¹³ See FEINBERG-MILLENSON, S., *Sir John Soane's Museum* (Anne Arbor, UMI, 1987), pp. 140-141.

¹⁴ HARTEN, E., *Museen und Museumsprojekte des Französischen Revolution: Ein Beitrag zur Entstehungsgeschichte einer Institution* (Berlin : Freie University Dissertation, 1989 - microfilm edition), p.179.

able to pursue "in one continuous view" the progress of the arts across several centuries. This is an excellent way, he wrote, to communicate the continuity of history and to see how things "join together", something which the "dead letter of history" can only deliver incompletely, in bits and pieces. Humboldt's emphasis on the coherence of the project, and its supremacy in the communication of history over the written word, is highly significant and I will be returning to it in Chapter 6.

Without the intellectual depth of Humboldt's comment, it nevertheless appears that the issue on which the vast majority of reviewers coincided was their understanding of the Museum as a unified spectacle, over the independent connoisseurship-like appreciation of each piece. Almost invariably their accounts emphasised the narrative aspect of the project, locating the significance of the collection in its capacity to be addressed as a varied albeit coherent whole. Dominique Poulot has already pointed out that the way the visitors reported their experience of the Museum was impressively in line with Lenoir's own analysis of the Museum's scheme in the catalogues. The curator's tracing of the progress and decline of art in France - which was outlined in Chapter 1 - and the host of assumptions accompanying it in terms of causes and modes of manifestation, found their way faithfully in the visitor's own accounts.¹⁵ Here are just three examples of the many. J. F. Reichardt wrote:

En pénétrant dans la salle principale on aperçoit une série de monumens de l'époque gauloise à nos temps modernes, disposés dans l'ordre chronologique, de façon à permettre d'embrasser d'un coup d'œil les phases successives de l'art national. Sur cette salle centrale s'ouvrent d'autres salles, consacrées chacune à une siècle (...) L'architecture de chaque salle est elle-même de l'époque; l'exactitude chronologique est respectée jusque dans le style, la forme et les caractères des inscriptions indicatrices.¹⁶

Madame Rees Van Tets, having visited the officially closed Museum in 1819, recalled an earlier visit and wrote similarly:

D'abord on entrait dans le portail (...) ensuite on entrait dans la salle du treizième siècle; tout était analogue, l'architecture, les vitres peintes grossièrement, les monuments qui dataient du commencement de la monarchie. Suivait le quatorzième, puis le quinzième siècle. Le seizième, où l'art avait fait de si grands progrès, est riche en beaux monuments, enfin les dix-septième et dix-huitièmes s'y trouvaient aussi. Dans

¹⁵ POULOT, D., *"Surveiller et s'instruire". La Révolution française et l'intelligence de l'héritage historique*, Studies on Voltaire and the eighteenth-century, vol.344 (Oxford: Voltaire Foundation, 1996), pp. 450-451.

¹⁶ REICHARDT, J. F., *Un Prussien en France en 1792: Strasbourg, Lyon, Paris* (Paris 1892), p. 183.

le jardin qui était fort joliment arrangé, on voyait plusieurs tombs célèbres telles que La Fontaine, Descartes, Boileau, Molière, etc.¹⁷

Furthermore, visitors seemed to experience this chronological narrative as more than a didactic, encyclopedic construct addressed to their intellect alone. A sense of dramatic involvement, stimulating the imagination and engaging the emotions, infused the accounts of the Museum even as they were discussing the chronology. For example, K. G. Berkheim devoted a single page of his travel memoirs to the Museum of Monuments, and his intentions were clearly to describe the novelty of the institution set up as a chronological progression. Nevertheless, he wrote that one could not but enter the Thirteenth-century hall "avec un saint respect", while the increasing elegance and magnificence displayed in the Fifteenth- and Sixteenth-century halls filled one with great pleasure.¹⁸ Similarly, we read in an anonymous article in the *Athenaeum* journal of 1807 a description of the transition between the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries in the Museum:

En sortant de la salle sombre et humide où s'élèvent tristement les grossiers monuments du treizième siècle, on entre avec plaisir dans un long cloître où l'on respire un air plus pur; et à quelques pas de là on trouve à gauche la salle du quatorzième siècle qui d'un côté est ouverte sur le cloître, et d'autre éclairée par de longues croisées gothiques dont les vitraux sont ornés de peintures.

J. Pinkerton, with a strongly antiquarian taste, agreed that "the most natural and distinctive method would have been to arrange the whole according to the respective centuries in which the monuments were erected". He criticised the execution of the Museum, however, for lack of rigour, finding the Introductory hall especially unsuccessful as "a mass of confusion". Although he clearly failed to see Lenoir's point in this panoramic composition, he still felt compelled to compliment the project as a total experience:

Hence is a favourite resort of many, especially during the hot weather, when the shade, the gloom, and the coldness of the marble render this recess particularly agreeable. The cloisters enclose a small; and on advancing towards the west, a garden of considerable size appears, planted with weeping willows, and other trees, interspersed with several interesting monuments. (...) Upon the whole, the Museum of National Monuments is one of the most interesting in Paris, and may be very often revisited with fresh amusement and instruction.¹⁹

¹⁷ REES VANTETS, *Voyage d'une Hollandaise en France en 1819* (Paris, 1966), p. 27.

¹⁸ BERKHEIM, K. G. DE, *Lettres sur Paris, 1806-1807* (Heidelberg, 1807), p. 261.

¹⁹ PINKERTON, J., *Recollections of Paris in the years 1802-1805* (London, 1806), pp. 192-207.

The emotive aspect of the Museum's experience was expressed most strongly in relation to the commemorative agenda, and the visitors' relations to specific personalities. It is significant that the most noticed monuments were the ones which Lenoir himself distinguished in his catalogue, attempting to bring them to life, so to speak, through biographical details and anecdotes, as we have already seen.²⁰ There was, for example, François I, the great patron of the French Renaissance, with his magnificent tomb - largely by Philibert de l'Orme, with contributions by other greats, such as Bontemps and Ambroise, and elaborated during its reconstruction by Lenoir - in the impressive hexagonal chapel off the Introductory hall; and his wife Diane de Poitiers, a figure of great romantic import, represented by her monument in the Introductory hall which Lenoir had put together for her from a number of different pieces, which included the portraits of her two famous husbands (key source of her popularity), François I himself, and Henry II. The tomb of Richelieu, in the Introductory hall as well, attracted the popular imagination on three different levels: firstly as a representation of the famously powerful and rich man, himself a great patron and collector of the arts; secondly as a magnificent marble sculpture by Girardon which, despite being of the later seventeenth century, still displayed artistic genius in its composition of allegorical mourning figures surrounding the great cardinal; and thirdly as one of the most famous feats of Lenoir's salvaging campaign during the Terror, when he saved the monument almost single-handedly from the vandals, at the chapel de Sorbonne in 1793. And, of course, the tomb of Héloïse and Abelard, perhaps the most original of Lenoir's *fabriques*, which never failed to attract and move the visitor in its idyllic position in the Élysée.

W. D. Fellowes wrote an account of his visit to the Museum in July 1815, and, as Dominique Poulot points out, of the eight pages he dedicated to it, four and a half were entirely given over to Henry IV, Jeanne d'Arc and Héloïse, including full copies of the inscriptions on their monuments and details from Lenoir's catalogue. His personal comment on the tomb of the medieval lovers was brief but powerful: "Je n'oublierai jamais le genre de sensation que je ressentis devant le monument vraiment intéressant d'Héloïse et

²⁰ For the most frequently mentioned pieces, see also POULOT, *Surveiller...*, op. cit. (note 15), p. 420.

Abélard". He also carefully copied the verses of Mary of Scots, composed upon her departure from France, and the epitaph of Agnès Sorel, both inscribed by Lenoir in the relevant monuments (not actually possessing a monument of Mary, he had the verses carved on the walls of the Introductory hall).²¹ Again about the medieval lovers' tomb, John Carr wrote: "L'aspect de ce monument précieux a ravivé en moi les impressions que le beau récit des malheurs de ces amants par Pope avait souvent excitées en moi".²² Ann Plumptre, having lived for three years in France and after repeated visits to both the Louvre and the Petits-Augustins expressed the general mood most eloquently, in 1810:

The fabled gods and heroes at the Louvre, while we regard them with the highest admiration as models of perfection in the art of sculpture, yet cannot produce the same effect upon the feelings as is experienced in contemplating these monuments of departed worth and greatness. We admire the beautiful proportions, the exquisite symmetry of the Apollo and the Diana, yet no emotion of sympathy for the original is excited in the bosom; but who can contemplate the tomb of Heloise and Abelard without a sigh!²³

Obviously inspired by Lavater's extremely popular writings of the time, visitors would also attempt to match what was known of the historical figures' personalities - or even simply surmising them by their deeds - with the facial features and expression on their effigies.²⁴ A. H. Niemeyer, after observing the statue of Charles d'Anjou, wrote: "jamais le physiognome ne décèlera dans l'expression l'homme impitoyable qui fait décapiter sur le marché de Naples le jeune Conradin âgé de seize ans"; and he then proceeded to cite parts of the Sicilian Vespers.²⁵

One of the most interesting responses to the Museum, alongside that of Humboldt, came in the form of an article published early in its life, in October 1797, in the *Journal d'économie publique, de morale, de politique*. It later appeared independently as a pamphlet entitled *Réflexions... sur le dépôt des petits Augustins, dit le Musée des monumens français*, and is particularly interesting for our discussion. The author was Louis-Sebastien Mercier, and

²¹ FELLOWS, W. D., *Paris during the interesting month of July 1815. A series of letters addressed to a friend in London* (London, 1815), pp. 131-38.

²² CARR, J., *The stranger in France* (London, 1803), p. 247.

²³ PLUMPTRE, A., *A narrative of three years residence in France* (London 1810), i. 25 & i. 30.

²⁴ For a summary of Lavater's work and influence, see HASKELL, op. cit. (note 9), pp. 151-155.

²⁵ NIEMEYER, A. H., *Beobachtungen auf Reisen in und ausser Deutschland* (Berlin, 1822-1826); quoted in POULOT, *Surveiller...*, op. cit. (note 15), p. 429.

he was contrasting the two phases of the Museum, as a jumbled depot, and as an ordered exhibition. He wrote that he had enjoyed enormously the earlier phase, where "cette collection manifique confuse" allowed the meditative imagination to contemplate "la mort et le temps comme les véritables et paisibles souverains de l'univers". At that stage, the Petits-Augustins offered a unique and most curious spectacle, most imposing and novel, appealing at once to the eye and to the imagination. Saints, mythological heroes, virgins and kings, vases, columns and urns, all thrown together without order, as if by chance, gave to the museum "l'image irrégulière, mais frappante de la confusion des siècles." And he continued:

C'était la véritable miroir de notre révolution , quels contrastes, quels rapprochemens bizarres, quels jeux du sort et du caprice, quel singulier chaos!... non jamais le hazard n'a jetté sur le globe un plus grande scene tragi-comique que cet amoncellement imprévu et précipité qui aurait donné du génie à l'imagination la plus froide, oh!.

Arranged in a chronological order, however, the pieces had become mute and the museum no longer the universe of a thinker, but merely the cabinet of an amateur. It is worth quoting Mercier's text in some length, for the inspired condemnation of rational classification and order, as an enemy to real experience and imaginative contemplation :

O douleur! O regrets! Cette précieuse confusion n'existe pas, ce grand spectacle dramatique est effacé, tous les contrastes piquants ont disparu, la classicomanie qui n'a pas d'yeux, les a détruits et pourquoi? Pour tracer une monotonie et insipide régularité; elle a voulu faire des chapelles en l'honneur des artistes; distinguer, séparer les siècles, marquer les progrès de la sculpture, elle a renversé le temple de la méditation et de la pensée... la froide simetrie a chassée ce désordre sublime : on n'est plus ému, étonné, il n'y a plus de surprise... les artistes n'ont pas senti ce qu'ils avaient sous les yeux, leur mains temerares viennent aligner les tombeaux, de rafraichir les épitaphes, de dorer les inscriptions, de ranger parallèlement les mausolées et les colonnes, de placer enfin toutes ces statues suivant l'ordre chronologique. Hélas! C'est aujourd'hui le cabinet d'un curieux, ce n'est plus l'univers d'un penseur!²⁶

In the concluding parts of this thesis I would like to propose that, actually, Lenoir's aim for the Museum never diverged much from what appealed most to Mercier. The partial investment on "scientific" classification was not intended against the appeal to the imagination and the invocation of the sublime, but rather as an additional tool, a legitimising means through which to carry that aim further. It should not be forgotten, after

²⁶ B.N., Cabinet des Estampes, Collection Deloynes, LVII.

all, that the seeming lack of order, which Mercier so praised in the earlier phase of the Museum, was a studied effect by Lenoir, in order to achieve maximum aesthetic contrast.

The most eloquent reports about the Museum's appeal would have to be those actually written after its closure, by important figures of the arts and letters reminiscing about their experiences. I would agree with Poulot who speaks of the great "posthumous" success of the Petits-Augustins in the 1830s and 1840s, citing a number of historians, archaeologists and curators who reminisced about Lenoir's Museum with great fondness and, most importantly, acknowledged their debt to it.²⁷ Particularly significant was the great historian Jules Michelet, who stated that it was his childhood visits to the Museum of Monuments that gave him his first sense of history, and wrote repeatedly describing his emotive experiences there. The fusion of all the elements which gave the Museum of Monuments its unique character was masterfully expressed in Michelet's lines, which are worth quoting in some length:

Que d'âmes ont pris dans ce musée l'étincelle historique, l'intérêt des grands souvenirs, le vague désir de remonter les âges! Je me rappelle encore l'émotion, toujours la même et toujours vive, qui me faisait battre le cœur quand, tout petit, j'entrais sous ces voûtes sombres et contemplais ces visages pâles, quand j'allais et cherchais, ardent, curieux, craintif, de salle en salle et d'âge en âge. Je cherchais, quoi? Je ne le sais; la vie d'alors, sans doute, et le génie des temps. Je n'étais pas bien sûr qu'ils ne vécussent point, tous ces dormeurs de marbre étendus sur leurs tombes. Je ne savais trop si je ne verrais point se mettre sur leur séant Chilpéric and Frédégonde. La Diane d'Anet, charmante et nue, semblait égarée par la chasse dans ce logis demoines, se reposant de la chaleur du jour. Surprise, elle n'allait-elle pas se lever? A la puissante voix de la Révolution, tout un monde de morts historiques était venu se rendre dans cette vallée de Josaphat. Pour la première fois, l'ordre régnait parmi eux, le seul vrais, celui des âges. La France se voyait enfin elle-même dans son développement de siècle en siècle et d'hommes en hommes. De tombeau en tombeau elle pouvait faire son examen de conscience"²⁸

And elsewhere:

C'est là, et nulle autre part, que j'ai reçu d'abord la vive impression de l'histoire. Je remplissais ces tombeaux de mon imagination, je sentais ces morts à travers les marbres, et ce n'était pas sans quelque terreur qu j'entrais sous les voûtes basses où dormaient Dagobert, Chilpéric et Frédégonde.²⁹

²⁷ POULOT, D., "Alexandre Lenoir et les Musées des monuments français", in P. Nora (ed.), *Les lieux de mémoire*, II. La Nation, 2 (Paris: Gallimard, 1986), pp. 520-521.

²⁸ MICHELET, J., *Histoire de la Révolution française* (Paris, 1847-1853), book XII, ch. VII.

²⁹ MICHELET, J., "À M. Edgar Quinet", *Le Peuple*, (ed.) P. Viallaneix, (Paris: Flammarion, 1974), pp. 67-68.

The kind of emotional, totalising experience described by Michelet was also captured by a host of artists who continued to be inspired by the Museum of Monuments even after its closure, setting their scenes in more or less accurate reproductions of the spaces in Lenoir's project (figs 17, 21, 36). Also like Michelet, another great nineteenth-century French historian, Augustin Thierry, identified the Museum of Monuments as an influence on the development of his love of history.³⁰ He regretted its closure, as did Prosper de Barante - who, as we saw in Chapter 1, went on to hope that the *Musée de Cluny* would be a worthy replacement. Alexandre du Sommerard, the founder of Cluny, also wrote that the closure of the Museum of Monuments had been most regrettable. He praised Lenoir for arranging "so picturesquely" the collection, but, above all for "drawing attention to effect and importance of these old things". Du Sommerard then went on to praise the efforts of a number of individuals whose successive efforts gave the necessary impetus and guidance for more studies in the field. It is highly ironic that Quatremère de Quincy, instrumental in the closure of the Museum of Monuments, featured first on the list.³¹

The Minister François Guizot, famous for his initiation of the *Inspection générale des monuments historiques* in 1835 - and, thus, the modern French "politique du patrimoine" - named Lenoir as the single most important contributing factor to this development. In his report to the king of 1830, introducing his idea of a systematic recording and conservation policy for the nation's artistic patrimony, he deferred to the project at the Petits-Augustins as a pioneering moment in the formation of a heritage consciousness.³² Still in 1867 Ernest Vinet could not emphasise enough the nation's debt to Lenoir, and, once more, regretted the closure of the Museum:

Lenoir n'a pas seulement créé, au milieu des tempêtes, un musée plein de poésie, refuge du vieil art français; il nous a donné Augustin Thierry: c'est en visitant les salles gothiques de ce musée pittoresque, si digne d'être regretté, qu'il éloquent, que le pénétrant et patient interprète des anciens chroniqueurs conçut l'idée de débrouiller le chaos des origines de notre histoire.³³

³⁰ THIERRY, A., *Récits des temps Mérovingiens précédés de Considérations sur l'Histoire de France* (Brussels, 1840), vol. I, p. 240.

³¹ Cited in HASKELL, op. cit. (note 9), p. 249.

³² See POULOT, D., "The birth of heritage: le moment Guizot", *Oxford Art Journal*, XI, 1989.

³³ *Journal des débats*, 23 April 1867.

In a similar vein, in 1872, the curator of the museum of Pau recollected his own visits at the Museum of Monuments with fondness, at the same time as identifying the significance of the project for the development of the nation's historical consciousness and its host of pioneering historians:

Je n'ai jamais compris l'histoire enseignée d'une manière plus saisissante. Comme (...) s'était une bonne préparation à la lecture des Augustin Thierry, des de Barante et de cette pléiade d'historiens qui peu après devaient apporter la lumière sur les parties restées obscures de notre histoire nationale.³⁴

Opposition

Despite the widespread popularity and considerable praise, a distinct body of scholars and connoisseurs disapproved of the Museum of Monuments. Their opposition was founded primarily on the moral and aesthetic issues involved in the uprooting of monuments from their original contexts. At the same time, such elements as Lenoir's highly interventionist approach to conservation, and his investment in theatricality and atmosphere more than in any rigorous archeological principles also added to their arguments against the project. A number of eponymous men subscribed to this view, from France as well as abroad, who expressed their disagreement in memoirs and other papers. Sir A. Alison and the Reverend T. F. Dibdin, for example, agreed that the Museum of Monuments performed a useful role in so far as it preserved those works, as well as displaying an artful and interesting principle of arrangement, yet they also agreed that the works really needed to be in their original situations of they were to be fully appreciated. Alison went as far as saying that "the deep and peculiar interest which belonged to the monuments of the dead in their original situation" was "wholly lost" in the Museum.³⁵

With very similar arguments, centring on the alienating nature of the Petits-Augustins and the necessity for those monuments to be returned to their places of origin, a scholarly opposition against the Museum formed in Parisian circles during the last seven years or so

³⁴ Cited in POULOT, "Alexandre Lenoir...", op. cit. (note 27), p. 521.

³⁵ ALISON, A., *Travels in France during the years 1814-1815* (Edinburgh, 1816), pp. 106-109; DIBDIN, T. F. *A bibliographical, antiquarian and picturesque tour in France...* (1819) (London, 1821), pp. 105-107.

of its life. The particular emphasis of those arguments was on the religious nature of the monuments, which was seen as temporarily interrupted over the political welter of the last fifteen years, now urgently requiring restitution. We already saw in Chapter 1 that the Minister Champagny, who had supported Lenoir's acquisitions five years earlier, argued in 1811 that those pieces ought to be returned to the "natural harmony" of their religious contexts. The great romantic writer De Chateaubriand closely echoed that view in his *Génie du Christianisme*, where he wrote that the monuments in the Petits-Augustins were deprived of their harmony with Christian worship, being left with nothing more to say to the imagination or the heart.³⁶ But it was the sculptor L.-P. Deseine and Quatremère de Quincy who were the most tenacious critics of the Museum of Monuments, their criticism effectively amounting to a campaign for the closure of the project.

The sculptor Louis-Pierre Deseine had been involved with the Museum of Monuments on two separate, and rather conflicting, occasions since 1797. As the representative of two Parisian churches, he wrote to the *Comité d'instruction publique* requesting and achieving the restitution of certain sculptures³⁷; on the other hand, around the same time, he accepted Lenoir's commission for the busts of Héloïse and Abelard³⁸. In 1802, however, he became employed by the parish of Notre Dame, in order to trace and recover the monuments which had been removed from it during the Revolution, as well as to acquire other pieces, in order to replace the destroyed decoration of the cathedral. Deseine embraced this task with considerable zest, seeing his role extending beyond the specific requirements of the Notre Dame, into a broader attack of Revolutionary institutions.

The *Lettre sur la sculpture destinée à orner les temples consacré au culte catholique, et particulièrement sur les tombeaux* of 1802, as its title suggested, argued for the necessity of the complete restitution of displaced monuments, "and especially tombs", from the point of

³⁶ DE CHATEAUBRIAND, F., *Génie du Christianisme* (Paris: Pléiade, 1978), p. 936.

³⁷ See AN F17 1241 (5 fructidor an V) - As McClellan comments, it seems that the Directoire was not in principle opposed to such restitutions, as long as the church was responsible for all costs incurred in the process. It should be noted, however, that similar moves were actually rare - the majority of pieces which left the Museum in those years were those bound for the Louvre.

³⁸ See GUIFFREY, J., "Busts commandés à Michallon et Deseine", *Nouvelles Archives de l'art français*, 1880-1881.

view of the catholic cult. In 1803, the text was incorporated in a larger work, the *Opinion sur les Musées, où se trouvent retenus tous les objets d'arts, qui sont la propriété des temples consacrés à la religion catholique*; here, as this title also suggested, the emphasis shifted from the arguments for restitution, to those against museums - the general term "museums" barely concealing the specific reference to the Museum of Monuments. The *Opinion* was argued exclusively from the point of view of the "culte catholique", with the largest part of the work referring specifically to the Museum of Monuments - examining it at length and opposing it in every detail.

Deseine started by pointing out the inconsistency of the government's policy in the matter of monuments: on one hand, he cited the demand of the *Conseil général* of the Seine department that all monuments removed from churches and still in depots, as well as in the Museum of Monuments, be returned to their original places; and, on the other hand, Deseine referred to a recent proposal by Lenoir, approved by the Minister of Interior, to sell all those pieces in the Museum which were of no use to it, in order to use the profits for more appropriate purchases. Deseine, obviously, sided with the *Conseil*, and said that by pleading the cause of the catholic church he was also pleading that of the arts, which owed to Christianity their flourishing in France.³⁹ These works, he continued, could only be "useful" as - sacred objects and therefore it was essential to preserve them as such. The suspension of their sacrality, by their hoarding in depots, was a necessary move due to the urgency of the situation. But it could only have been justified as a temporary move. Remaining outside their appropriate religious context, the monuments in the Petits-Augustins were rendered useless (*inutiles*): "C'est sur le lieu même où un monument a été élevé, qu'il est beau, qu'il est utile de venir l'admirer".⁴⁰

Deseine's insistence on "usefulness", which permeated the *Opinion*, and his identification of their sacrality and beauty with it, is highly revealing. The notion of *utilité* was a crucial concept of the Enlightenment, intensified in the Revolutionary rhetoric. In many ways, it

³⁹ *Opinions sur les musées* (Paris, floréal an XI), p. iv.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 8.

was synonymous with the rational, and thus the moral and the good. D'Alembert's suggestion that, in order to have a truly enlightened, philosophical history, it would only be necessary to compose an extract of the "faits historiques réellement utiles" and burn the rest, perfectly exemplified the origins of this passion for utility/usefulness⁴¹. Dominique Poulot suggests that the Revolution's investment in the museum, with the Louvre as the most notable example, was largely a result of the Enlightenment obsession with *utilité*. He writes that the demand for museums was less about the significant gesture of allowing the People to access freely the masterpieces previously reserved for the exclusive use of the prince, but rather, that this exclusive "use" was, in fact, not a use at all, not serving any actual edifying purpose (as it would with the people), and was, thus, properly *inutile*, and an offence to reason.⁴² The relationship between *utilité* and Enlightenment reason was intrinsic, with both taking the role of the promised alternative to the condemned hierarchies, beliefs and practices of the *Ancien Régime*, during the Revolution. Therefore, it seems paradoxical to find the notion equally passionately embraced by Deseine, actually used as a weapon *against* the museum.

There were further contradictory instances in the *Opinion*. Deseine wrote that the monuments ought to be preserved as sacred objects, which, "appartenans tout entiers à l'histoire, à la morale et à la politique des différens âges d'un Empire, devoient être environnés d'un profond respect"⁴³. On one hand, then, these objects were sacred, and therefore could only belong to the continuity of catholic Christian worship, but, on the other, they should be respected as objects reflecting the "history, mores and politics of different ages". Again, later on in the text, Deseine wrote that only in situ,

⁴¹ From the *Réflexions sur l'histoire*, quoted in POULOT, Dominique, "La naissance du Musée", in BORDES & MICHEL (eds.), *Aux armes et aux arts : Les arts de la Révolution* (Paris, 1988), p.425. Poulot discusses this notion, and particularly its relevance to the Revolutionary attitudes to the arts, in a number of other essays, including: *Le public, l'état, et l'artiste : Essai sur la politique du musée en France des Lumières à la Révolution*, EUI Working Paper in History HEC No 92/13 (Florence, 1991); "La droit au musée: un droit du citoyen?", in M. VOVELLE (ed.), *Les droits de l'homme et la conquête des libertés* (Grenoble-Vizille, 1986); and "Le Louvre imaginaire: Essai sur le statut du musée en France, des lumières à la Révolution", *Historical reflections / Réflexions historiques*, 17, 1991.

⁴² In *Le public, l'état, et l'artiste*, as above, p. 20.

⁴³ *Opinion*, op. cit. (note 39), p. v.

l'historien fidèle vient s'entretenir avec lui [the monument], et l'interroger sur les causes qui l'ont produit; c'est là que ce même monument fait connoître à la postérité ce qu'étoient les arts et l'esprit du temps où il a été érigé.⁴⁴

I would like to propose that this was a drastically historicist turn in Deseine's rhetoric, seriously undermining his catholic argument. The sacrality of these objects, by becoming attached to historical movement and relativity, was already "history". The monuments' return to worship was not after all their ultimate goal. It did not suffice to argue for their restitution from the point of view of the fragmented unity of the church, which would thus be made whole again, as the monuments would become sacred again. Rather, this "re-sacralisation" was only a step in the process of re-utilisation of the objects, which involved their role in the communication/interpretation of history. In other words, these pieces needed to be restituted to their churches because any value they had was in their relevance to history, and that could only come across if the pieces were set in context, in the positions of sacred objects. The monuments were not themselves sacred anymore, simply *in the positions of* sacred objects. Historicisation and musealisation had already occurred, even in situ. It was only a logical step away that the same objects could display their historical relevance as well, if not better, in a purpose-built environment for "history" - that is, in a museum.

Deseine was quick to exclude the Louvre from all this. The argument that he had been presenting so far held true for architecture and ornamental sculpture, *not* for painting and statues - that is, not for high art. The Louvre, argued Deseine, was the only museum not resulting from Revolutionary vandalism, being, thus, properly *utile*, as its collections were there to educate young artists through exposure to artistic masterpieces. The autonomous legitimacy of high art was unquestionable. It seemed irrelevant to Deseine's critique that a considerable number of those "masterpieces" in the Louvre were altarpieces. Their aesthetic character and value had already overshadowed their situated character, as objects of worship, even before the Revolution - so they were free from the constraints ruling the aesthetically inadequate works at the Petits-Augustins.

⁴⁴ Ibid., p. 8.

The rest of the *Opinion*, dedicated to a detailed critique of the Museum of Monuments, revealed even further the conflict in Deseine's position. The critique was meant to prove that there was no excuse whatsoever for maintaining the collection, because the argument of its alleged usefulness in artistic education (through the display of the progress and decline of the arts) did not hold true. In the process, Deseine analysed each hall in detail, including the Élysée and Lenoir's catalogue, all to support his one main thesis: that the display in the Museum of Monuments was badly and haphazardly assembled, lacking the necessary system that would render it useful. There was a long list of specific observations supporting this, such as: the bad light of the room containing the tomb of François I (the Chapelle des Louanges); the co-existence of insignificant monuments and those of illustrious personages, in the Introductory hall; the incongruous presence of sculptures representing animals and mythological deities, amidst a majority of Christian funerary monuments, in the Élysée, etc. On a more general level, Deseine condemned what he described as the arbitrariness and sheer ugliness of Lenoir's extensive restorations, the lack of space for the proper observation of the monuments, and the overall incompleteness of the collection, making the whole experience unrepresentative and, once more, arbitrary.

On this latter point, he took particular issue with the Seventeenth-century hall, exclaiming that a tiny room as this, with eight monuments and a few more statues and reliefs could not possibly suffice "pour donner à la postérité une juste idée des merveilles du XVII^e siècle".⁴⁵ Furthermore, he resented the absence of the publicised yet never executed Eighteenth-century hall. He also implied that the chronological sequence was insufficiently implemented, because, as he wrote, if a history of the progress of modern art were to be properly presented,

il falloit classer les différentes productions dans un ordre chronologique, de manière que l'homme éclairé pût promptement a percevoir les artistes qui ont commencé, et ceux qui ont perfectionné; ainsi, en remontant à la source première, on se plairoit à suivre la marche de l'art et de ses développemens.⁴⁶

⁴⁵ Ibid., p. 30.

⁴⁶ Ibid., p. 28-9.

This entire level of the critique seems almost unconnected to the earlier part of the text, where Deseine was arguing about the essential sacredness of the monuments, and their incapacity to be "useful" in any other context. The project's historical relevance and legitimacy was here fully accepted, and, in fact, criticised for not being articulated rigorously enough. At this point, the central position against the Museum of Monuments was no longer one which denied it its very right of existence, but had become one of particular criticism against a number of its attributes. It was not an essential opposition to the concept of *a* museum of French monuments, but rather a particular disagreement with Lenoir's project.

The attack on Lenoir personally was intensified towards the end of the paper. More than anything about the Museum itself, what offended Deseine was the interpretation of the "progress and decline" of French art, which Lenoir offered in the catalogue. Lenoir's position that the rule of Louis XIV was a period of decadence and decline, was dismissed as idiotic and stuck in the time when "il suffisoit de vomir des injures contre les rois pour obtenir le titre de patriote par excellence".⁴⁷ Furthermore, revealing the perpetual grudge of the artistic establishment against Lenoir, Deseine wrote that it wasn't for a man who was neither an artist nor an architect to suggest that someone like Lebrun wasted his talent by his servitude to the monarch, anymore than to judge the likes of Perrault, Mansard and Blondel as bad architects. Deseine concluded on Lenoir by calling him no less than sick in the head, for his outrageous claims: "Ne seroit-on pas fondé à croire qu'un pareil jugement est l'ouvrage d'un cerveau malade, qui a juré d'outrager la mémoire de Louis XIV et celle de tous les habiles artistes de son siècle?"⁴⁸

It is not hard to justify Deseine's frustration with Lenoir's unscholarly choices throughout the Museum, be they in the catalogue, the restorations, or the staging of the exhibition. Whether the Museum as a whole experience, and what Lenoir was trying to convey through it, were really as negatively affected as someone like Desein would have it, is a

⁴⁷ Ibid., p. 59.

⁴⁸ Ibid., p. 65.

different issue, which will be discussed separately. However, the important point as far Deseine's criticism is concerned, remains that a very large part of the discussion was conducted on the level of art-history, not religion. It is true that, towards the end of the detailed critique of the Museum of Monuments, and before the final attack on Lenoir's historiography (both of which were entirely art-historical) Deseine did return one last time to religion. He wrote that the continued existence of the "depot" of the Petits-Augustins would be a public sanctioning of vandalism, in the face of all established ideas and respect for religion. He called for the restitution of all those monuments "qui servent à tracer l'histoire de la religion catholique et sa morale".⁴⁹ And then he identified the country's great churches as "Musées sacrés", wherein the public had the double advantage of "admirer le véritable génie des arts et d'apprendre l'histoire de sa religion".⁵⁰ In other words, in this brief return of the critique to religion, there was hardly a word about sacrality - instead, the goal was once more identified as the communication of the *history* of religion, and the genius of the arts.

The question that might arise about Deseine's vacillating critique is whether the investment on historical/art-historical arguments might not have been a calculated choice, one not particularly important to Deseine, but aimed at convincing as wide an audience as possible about the necessity of restitution. There is no reason for denying Deseine the possibility of a genuinely religious motivation. However, it is abundantly clear that there was also a very serious critique conducted from the point of view (and with the language) of art-connoisseurship and history. Whether this whole level was simulated by Deseine in order to align his critique with the religious front, or whether he actually believed in the consistency of an art-historical-religious argument combined, is, ultimately, irrelevant. The point remains that it was possible, and in fact *necessary*, for this level of the critique to be articulated, in order for the case against the Museum to be complete. But the very necessity to address those works as historically relevant, and, furthermore, the necessity for their historical relevance to exist over and above their role in religion, was itself a confirmation

⁴⁹ Ibid., p. 44.

⁵⁰ Ibid., p. 47.

of the fundamental shift which Deseine - and Quatremère, as we shall see - were still nominally fighting, although essentially endorsing.

I would suggest that, although Deseine seemingly argued for a return to an older order, with religion reinstated in its dominant role over the arts, he himself had already accepted in all but name the secularisation and historicisation of art. What allowed for the survival of the nostalgic appeal to a Christian unifying order were the disturbing implications of this historicisation. Although Quatremère was much more eloquent about the problematic character of this shift - particularly as manifested in the institution of the museum - there is no reason to deny Deseine a similar perceptiveness. Nevertheless, the essence remains that his cry against the musealisation of culture was largely a *post-factum*. The very way that both scholars conducted their criticism indicated that the shift had already happened, irreversibly so, and, therefore, a completely different kind of discourse would now be necessary to address the problematic core of the museum.

This third chapter concludes the presentation of the Museum of Monuments. We shall return to discuss it further after the presentation and discussion of the Museum's most prominent adversary, Quatremère de Quincy, and specifically his ideas on the museum - which follows.

Chapter 4

Quatremère de Quincy on the museum

Antoine Chrysostôme Quatremère de Quincy represented the most eloquent and intellectually substantial opposition to the Museum of Monuments, and he was personally instrumental in its closure (*fig. 3*). By the time of his involvement with Lenoir's project he was already a highly respected scholar of art and architecture. His first contribution to the academic world had already been made in 1785, with the winning essay for the Prix Caylus, on Egypt and the origins of civilisation.¹ He subsequently went on to compose the highly influential dictionary of architecture for Panckoucke's *Encyclopédie méthodique* (from 1788 onwards), the *Considérations sur les arts du dessin en France* with its two *Suites*, in 1791, as well as a number of shorter texts in the form of reports and "discourses" on a variety of cultural matters for the Revolutionary authorities before 1793. Quatremère supported the movement for a Constitution, so for the first three years he was fully engaged with the Revolution as a member of various committees. It was during that time, in 1791, that he embarked on his only architectural commission, the transformation of Souflot's Sainte-Geneviève into the Pantheon.²

This latter project was never completed, as Quatremère's career was abruptly interrupted with the Revolution's change of direction in 1793. His views now deemed counterrevolutionary, and after a spell in prison in 1794, he was forced into hiding until 1797 when he finally left the country seeking refuge in Germany. Despite the extreme tenacity of his position, in 1796 he published the seminal *Lettres sur le préjudice qu'occasionneraient aux arts et à la science, le déplacement des monuments de l'art de*

¹ See LAVIN, S., *Quatremère de Quincy and the invention of a modern language of architecture* (MIT Press, 1992).

² On the Quatremère and the Pantheon see OZOUF, M., "Le Panthéon: L'École normale des morts", in P. Nora (ed.), *Les lieux de mémoire, I. La République* (Paris: Gallimard, 1984); and LAVIN, as above, pp. 166-174.

l'Italie, subsequently known as *Lettres à Miranda*, signing them "A. Q."³ He was recalled from exile with the 18 Brumaire amnesty (November 1799), and within a few months he begun his campaign against the Museum of Monuments. As Lavin puts it, until his death in 1849, the number and prestige of Quatremère's official positions and honours bestowed on him were equal only to those of his publication on the arts.⁴

Quatremère's appointment as perpetual secretary of the Academy in 1816, and his immediate recommendation for the closure of the Petits-Augustins, was the culmination of a six-year campaign against the project, which officially commenced in 1800 with his first report to the *Conseil général* on the matter. Quatremère shared with other critics the most salient points against the Museum of Monuments, but, most importantly, he placed the specific critique of this museum in the context of a much broader discourse on art. Those of his writings referring to Lenoir's project directly, or even implicitly, are only a small part of a larger opus which addressed the fundamental problem of the work of art and its relation to place.

Although Quatremère argued strongly against the Museum of Monuments, I would like to propose that both the ideas which he used to substantiate this, and the ideas emerging from the rest of his writings touching on the institution in general, undermined his opposition. Furthermore, I would propose that the Museum of Monuments was in many ways an attempt to respond to the very same concerns which occupied Quatremère and which, through his own interpretation, led him to actually condemn Lenoir's project. In order to outline Quatremère's critique of the museum, and to point out the ambiguities which, ultimately, reveal his deeper affinities with Lenoir and his project, I will be discussing four texts, written between 1796 and 1818: the Letters to the general Miranda, on the displacement of works of art from Italy, of 1796, a report to the *Conseil général*, dealing explicitly with the Museum of Monuments, of year VIII (1800), the *Considérations*

³ See POMMIER, E., "La Révolution et le destin des œuvres d'art", introductory essay to his edition of the *Lettres à Miranda* (Paris: Macula, 1989).

⁴ LAVIN, op. cit. (note 1), p. 3.

morales sur la destination des ouvrages de l'art (1815) and the Letters to the sculptor Canova, on the Parthenon marbles in the British Museum (1818).

Rapport (1800)

In August 1800 Quatremère de Quincy submitted a report to the *Conseil Général* of the Seine, of which he was already a member, where he was explicitly attacking the Museum of Monuments for being nothing but a relic of the Revolution, and demanding its immediate closure.⁵ As the title suggested, the aim of the report was to challenge certain of aspects of cultural policy and education left over by the Revolutionary regime, including schools and funds for education, public burials and cemeteries, and the body of monuments and other objects removed from their churches to be placed in depots. Although in this last part of the report Quatremère often talked about "establishments" in the plural, it was quite obvious that what he had in mind was the Museum of Monuments itself. It is indicative of his tone that, even when explicitly referring to it, he did not call it a museum, but merely a depot:

Je veux parler de ce séquestre universel dont se sont trouvés frappés tous ces pieux objets de la vénération publique qui décoraient les temples, et de cet emmagasinement dispendieusement inutile, où ce trouvent encombrés tant d'ouvrages d'art qui formaient, dans leur ancienne destination, une des richesses de cette ville. Je veux parler de ce prétendu conservatoire, où s'entassent journellement tous les débris des temples, de ce dépôt de la rue des Petits-Augustins, véritable cimetière des arts, où une foule d'objets, qui ne sauraient être d'aucune valeur pour l'étude, et qui n'en avaient que par le local et leurs accessoires, désormais sans rapport avec les idées qui leur donnaient la vie, formeraient le plus burlesque, s'il n'était le plus indécent de tous les récueils.⁶

The most striking, and best-known phrase from this text is, of course, the characterisation of the Museum as "proper cemetery of the arts". Knowing Quatremère's position on the museum institution in general, this becomes inevitably the Quatremèrian anathema *par excellence*. However, for now, it makes more sense to limit its applicability to the Museum of Monuments, and the specific arguments he articulated against it.

⁵ *Rapport fait au Conseil Général (Département de la Seine), le 15 thermidor an 8, sur l'instruction publique; le rétablissement des Bourses; le scandale des inhumations actuelles; l'érection de cimitières; la restitution des tombeaux, mausoloées, etc.* (Paris, 1800)

⁶ *Ibid.*, p.33

This was not, after all, a "museum" for Quatremère, but a mere "heap of objects", "daily amassed"; that is, an arbitrary body of works, lacking any sense of structure and, therefore, of purpose. Furthermore, the works themselves were "of no use to study" - by which Quatremère meant the education of artists through exposure to the masterpieces of the past. And this because these works did not fit in the accepted category of "work of art", in the sense of the autonomously-meaningful and valuable piece, which could convey its significance (an *aesthetic* significance, in the broadest sense of the term) through direct and individual contemplation, regardless of context. The pieces amassed in the Petits-Augustins had "no value except that conferred upon them by their original placements". Detached from their context and "the ideas which gave them life", they could only form what would be "the most ludicrous, if it wasn't already the most indecent, of all collections". In other words, the removal of funerary sculptures and other religious ornaments from their churches, was doubly offensive for Quatremère. It was detrimental to the objects themselves, which were rendered useless as there was no significance or value to be found in them once they had lost their original placement (physical and spiritual); and it was detrimental to the church, similarly robbed, both physically and spiritually.

The identification of the enterprise as "sacrilegious" (Quatremère did use the actual word earlier in the report) introduced the ethical level of the critique against the Museum. The second level of the critique (by no means a totally separate one) concerned the objects themselves, and their ambiguous status as autonomised fragments of symbolic representation - yet not quite "works of art".

On the first level, from the point of view of ethics, the stripping of religious establishments during the worst years of the Revolution was recognised as a necessary operation of salvaging and preservation; but, by the same token, as soon as the danger was over, the works were expected to have left the depots and been restituted in the temples, their traditional role in culture fully restored.

As interesting as the obvious content of the argument here, and still on the first level of the critique, is the way in which it was structured. Further on in the report, Quatremère asked, rhetorically, whether this unnecessary prolonging of the separation of the monuments from their churches wasn't, finally "attaquer la liberté religieuse et celle des cultes, qui admettent, dans leur intérieur, la vénération des signes et des images?"⁷ Suddenly, the issue was no longer substantiated merely from within the traditional Christian worldview and the idea of "sacrilege" as such, but rather from a civic point of view, whereby the freedom of worship of *any* cult was a right of the individual, and any hindrance of this worship (such as the removal of essential "signs and images") was an attack on the citizen's liberty.

In addition to the religious and the civic lines of what I have called the "ethical" aspect of the critique, there was also a third one, in a largely Voltairian vein. Quatremère seemed to resent the general absence of certain ideals from post-Revolutionary society, which allowed for measures and institutions to exist that denied the individual life (and death) a fundamental level of decency and civility. This resentment became most evident in the sections of the report concerning state burials and cemeteries, which were described as "indecent" , "abandoned to the elements and to chance"; the state should construct "honest and decent" grounds, where each person could be buried "honourably and according to their cult". The restitution of private funerary monuments to their families (discussed in a different section from the church monuments themselves) was also largely argued from this point of view: the "recognition of private [individual] virtue" - which is what these commemorative sculptures were seen as - could provide a lesson for the future only if they were appreciated within the dignified context of the family - or where the family would choose to place them. Even the Museum of Monuments, which bore the brunt of the severest accusations for "sacrilege", on one hand, and of being a "cemetery of the arts", on the other, was additionally criticised from this viewpoint, as a place of the "greatest indecency", where "stricken" objects were denied their particular character, be being "hoarded" and "impounded".

⁷ *Rapport*, op. cit. (note 5), p. 34.

This last point brings us to the second level of Quatremère's critique, concerning the detrimental effects of the Museum on the objects themselves, as ambiguous-works-of-art, and, by implication, on the category of art in general.

Quatremère had already sketched a critique of the art museum in the *Lettres à Miranda* of 1796; and he was to develop the full intellectual scope of this critique in the *Consideration morales sur la destination des ouvrages de l'art*, published in 1815. Still, the report of 1800 has a special significance for our discussion, as the first and most direct attack on Lenoir's project.⁸

Quatremère begun the critique of the artistic side of the problem by referring to the government's (the newly-instituted Consulat) desire to promote the arts, so that the French Republic would surpass all its rivals in magnificence. And, he continued :

Il [the gouvernement] veut que le génie prenne enfin dans tous les genres cet essor auquel la liberté l'a appelé. Mais le génie, et surtout le génie des arts, ne s'alimente que de toutes ces moralités. Ce n'est pas l'homme physique, c'est l'homme moral qui est leur modèle.⁹

"Morality", therefore, was established straight away as the basis of the genius of the arts, that which gave even the most ancient of works "cet éclat dont ils brillent encore". What Quatremère implied here was that the very paradigm of artistic perfection - the works of classical antiquity - were what they were essentially due to their ethical core; and he identified this core as deriving from "les rites du culte, les opinions religieuses, les moralités qui en dépendent, et même les préjugés qui les altèrent." He continued by asking the crucial question: "Quelle serait donc l'étrange contradiction qui appellerait d'un côté les mêmes effets et de l'autre en repousserait les causes!"¹⁰ It was the Revolution that had "the privilege of this contradiction", according to Quatremère, with its projects of so-called conservation, which, in reality, were more disastrous for the arts than vandalism itself. Those "depots of ignorance and barbarism" robbed the works of all their value and glory, finally rendering them "comme matériaux désormais inutiles, comme signes d'une écriture

⁸ In the following year (1801), Quatremère submitted a second report of the same character to the *Conseil Général*, his first one not having had the effect he had hoped for.

⁹ *Rapport*, op. cit. (note 5), p. 29.

¹⁰ [What would be, then, this strange contradiction which, on one hand, would aim for the same effects [*the perfection of the arts*] while, on the other, rejecting its causes!]; *ibid.*, p.30

perdue". Because what were these monuments if not "the characters of a symbolic language"?¹¹

We shall return to this parallel between language and monuments later, as it played a significant role in the Museum of Monuments as well as in Quatremère's larger opus.¹²

What should be pointed out here, however, is the decisiveness with which this phrase identified those works as *inherently* part of a greater order as was the alphabet to language.

There was no doubt that outside the continuum of that order its components were essentially meaningless. Quatremère duly identified this order as the "culte catholique", seemingly returning the argument to its initial religious basis. Reading on, however, it becomes increasingly difficult, again, to sustain the purity of the religious cause. It is worth quoting at some length:

Quelle triste destinée attend donc les arts, si leur produits ne se lient plus à aucun des besoins de la société; si des systèmes, soi-disant philosophiques, leur ferment toutes les carrières de l'imagination, les privent de tous ces emplois que leur préparaient les croyances religieuses, les douces affections de l'âme, et les consolans prestiges de la vanité humaine (...) Oui, vous y avez transporté la matière; mais avez-vous pu transporter, avec eux, ce cortège de sensations tendres, profondes, mélancoliques, sublimes ou touchantes, qui les environnaient? Avez-vous pu transporter cet intérêt qu'ils tiraient du local, de l'atmosphère religieuse qui les enveloppait, de cet espèce d'auréole sacré qui en faisait la parure? Avez-vous pu transférer, dans vos magasins, cet ensemble d'idées et de rapports, qui répandait sur les œuvres du ciseau ou du pinceau, le charme de l'illusion qui corrigeait leur défauts, voilait leur faiblesse, et embelissait leur beauté?¹³

This description of the monuments and the way they were meant to be perceived, supposedly argued for their intrinsically religious character and, thus, the inappropriateness of the museum setting, for them. However, I would like to propose that what Quatremère was actually presenting here was not a partaking of religion, in any traditional sense, but rather an emotional experience. There was nothing here to suggest the church as the human community in communion with the divine, and the works as necessary mediators between the former and the latter; rather, the emphasis was wholly on the emotional response of the individual, and the works as triggers of these emotions seemingly for their own sake. The religious, or greater ethical cause, was hinted at in the most abstract and distanced way, more as a token, than in any way an immediately relevant issue (which is what the

¹¹ Ibid., p.35

¹² The latter is very well explored in LAVIN, op. cit. (note 1).

¹³ *Rapport*, op. cit (note x), pp. 37-38.

traditional implications of Christian piety, or its absence, would be). This was an abstraction on spirituality, rather than a specific involvement with the "culte catholique", where all situatedness dissolved in favour of the feelings themselves. The loss of that moral/religious character which Quatremère lamented in the musealised monuments finally translated as the loss of the "cortège of tender, profound, melancholy, sublime or touching sensations" invoked by the pieces; the "interest" created by the "religious atmosphere" and "sacred aura" of the ensemble; and the "group of ideas and associations" which helped maintain that "charm of illusion, which corrected their faults, concealed their weaknesses and embellished their beauty".

What Quatremère described here was less about ethics and more about aesthetics. The ideal relationship between audience and monuments which he presented in the *Rapport* was actually an *aesthetic* experience, investing in the sublimity of art and its powers of transcendence, through the appeal to imagination and sentiment. Earlier in the text he asked: since religion was still alive, how could it possibly be justified to treat its signs as those of a dead and forgotten language? Yet it is quite apparent that for him, too, religion was dead - certainly the religion which would require the situated and participatory relationship with its symbols-as-mediators of the divine. Despite his identification of this as "culte catholique", what he was describing was much closer to the Romantic religion of art of a Goethe, and to the notion of a "higher" education through the arts of a Schiller. At the point where a church was described as the appropriate place for the display of religious monuments because only there was an overall "charm of illusion" successfully maintained, so that the artistic shortcomings of the individual works could be overlooked, one does wonder if perhaps Quatremère was not, after all, referring to the Museum of Monuments without quite being aware of it... What Lenoir was trying to do in his Museum - with the employment of theatricality and atmosphere, and the heavy involvement of sentiment and imagination - was no less an investment in the charm and unifying powers of illusion, than what Quatremère described in his report.

Considérations morales(1815)

The *Considérations morales sur la destination des ouvrages de l'art* emerged from a dissertation written in 1806, but only published in 1815. It was the most complete articulation of Quatremère's thought on the role of the arts in society, and on its incompatibility with the institution of the museum. It is important to note at the outset a basic difference between this dissertation and the previous. The report to the *Conseil général* concerned specifically those "modern" monuments (i.e. not classical) of ambiguous religious/historical /artistic character which formed Lenoir's collection. That text was explicitly dealing with problems arising out of the Revolution, and the displacement and destruction of *Ancien Régime* structures and practices resulting from it. There was little attempt to conceal the extent to which Quatremère was, ultimately, offering the Revolution as sole cause of all the disagreeable turns culture and society were taking at the dawn of the nineteenth century. The *Considérations*, on the other hand, was a work of less immediate political relevance and much greater intellectual import. It did not really distinguish between "kinds" of works of art, using examples from across the spectrum of artistic production, in an attempt to offer a complete thesis on the issue. In many ways it articulates, for the first time, a complete theoretical background for the collective opposition to the Museum of Monuments, even though its scope was much broader, only referring to "ces dépôts appelés *Conservatoires*" in a couple of instances. Actually, this part of the text was a direct transcript from the *Rapport* of year VIII¹⁴.

Quatremère clearly stated the aim of the dissertation in the preface :

Mon but est de montrer que l'utilité morale des ouvrages d'Art, ou leur application à un emploi noble et déterminé, est la plus importante des conditions nécessaires à l'artiste et à l'amateur pour produire et pour juger; au public, pour sentir et goûter les beautés de l'imitation.¹⁵

¹⁴ QUATREMÈRE DE QUINCY, A. C. de, *Considérations morales sur la destination des ouvrages de l'art* - edition including the *Lettres sur l'enlèvement des ouvrages de l'art antique à Athènes et à Rome* - (Paris: Fayard, 1989), pp. 47-48 - a considerable part of the text from the report is quoted here, just above (see note 5).

¹⁵ Ibid., p. 13.

This single phrase illuminates Quatremère's position on the subject most eloquently. The moral utility of the work of Art, one was told, was the most important of all necessary conditions for the work's success, both in terms of its production and its consumption. If the beauties of imitation were to be successfully captured by the artist, it was essential that the work he was creating be destined for a specific and noble employment. Furthermore, this employment was equally essential for the work to be appreciable by the amateur and enjoyable to the public. In other words, the work of art could not fulfil its purpose in the greater context of culture if it was at any point detached from the specificity of a *situation* - in the deepest sense. This essential condition of "belonging" which the work had to fulfil, was identified by Quatremère as the fundamental morality of art.

Quatremère meant the *Considérations morales* to be a normative work, a sort of critical guide which would help to "multiplier autant que possible les rapport nécessaires des ouvrages de l'Art avec les besoins, les goût, ou les jouissances morales de la société".¹⁶ However, in the end, the dissertation read more like a critique and condemnation of current practices, than a creative proposal. This in itself is a substantial indication of the difficulty of Quatremère's position - caught between overwhelming changes in attitude and traditionally situated (even nostalgic) sensitivities. From such a position it was possible to analyse the problem quite astutely - as he did - but it was impossible to overcome it. In any case, the *Considérations morales* was a very ambitious work, and to do it justice one would have to dedicate more space than would be fitting to do here. What I would like to do, instead, is identify the arguments against the museum, as they arise from this work, and then discuss them in connection to the Museum of Monuments.

The main premise of the *Considérations morales* concerning the museum - that it was basically incompatible with the morality of art - was developed in relation to four primary ideas: Nature as the source and measure of the moral; sentiment and the soul as the means for apprehending the moral; the continuity of history as the only meaningful "location" for the work of art; and the transcendence of the human condition as the fundamental purpose

¹⁶ Ibid., p. 15.

of art. It is evident even in this outline that there should be considerable overlap between these four "categories", which certainly do not feature in any clear-cut way in Quatremère's discussion. Nevertheless, it is helpful to identify them, even if rather loosely, in order to structure the argument against the museum more clearly.

Quatremère begun the discussion of the first idea, by stating that the paradigm of artistic perfection, that of the ancient Greeks, was no less than a necessity.¹⁷ Natural law (*la règle naturelle*) dictated, in fact *obliged* it to happen. Under such a law, only works which were necessary and therefore useful (*utiles*) were permitted to be created. Every single work of art and monument had its destination and moral utility established in the unity of the paradigm. Although it was impossible to re-create the circumstances which contributed to the emergence of this perfection, one could certainly learn from it. The primary lesson which Quatremère would derive was that natural law governs cultural development, tying the progress and decline of the arts to their moral utility, which, as the classical model showed, was the fundamental condition for perfection. He used the example of indigenous plants - only capable to grow and thrive in their natural environment - in order to describe the nature of the relationship between the arts and their "use".¹⁸ As he presented the various attitudes to art which conflicted with moral utility, the immediate implication was, always, that these were somehow "unnatural", against the essential character of art as the imitation of Nature. The commercialisation of art, for example, conflicted with the nature of the work as masterpiece of genius. Equating the commercial value of a work (which was entirely man-made and arbitrary) with artistic value (which belonged to a higher order of things, over which man had no influence), implied a dangerous misinterpretation of genius. Similar was the case of the "frivolity of luxury", and the reduction of art to the level of curiosity. This "vulgar instinct" reduced the "arts of genius and of the imitation of nature" to mere "caprices of taste", by denying them their fundamental moral utility.¹⁹

¹⁷ Ibid., p. 9.

¹⁸ Ibid.

¹⁹ Ibid., p. 16-17.

For Quatremère, the museum was at the root of one of the most destructive and unnatural attitudes towards art, which was that of self-reference. He referred to the amassing of works of art in all sorts of cabinets and museums as "l'étrange système qui a prévalu depuis quelque temps en Europe", and characterised it as "la manie des collections" and "l'abus des ouvrages", because this practice was encouraging the production and reproduction of works with no other purpose but to furnish these collections - this being totally against the essence of artistic creation, which "doit être l'effet naturel". Works made exclusively for collections had no political, religious or moral significance whatsoever, and could, thus, only be addressed superficially :

On ne s'occupe plus qu'à comparer dessin avec dessin, couleur contre couleur. On calcule les beautés et les défauts, on fait une balance pittoresque, et on place tout dans cette balance, excepté les raisons et les causes qui ont influé sur les qualités qu'on prétend soumettre au calcul.²⁰

Not only the works specifically made for collections, but all works of art were soon subordinated to this self-referential principle, and thus the moral utility of art, the very essence of its meaning and value, was ignored and lost even where it originally existed. A spirit of pedantic connoisseurship took over, "l'esprit de critique, esprit stérile et froid", which went against the nature of the arts, and thus, ultimately, distorted their proper appreciation and experience.

Quatremère warning against the aestheticisation of art and the validation of form over content, might seem impressively insightful. However, in keeping with the basic ambiguity underlying his discourse, this point was soon contradicted. Although, in many ways, the "aesthetic form vs. moral content" opposition was implied throughout the *Considérations morales*, what constituted the aesthetic was far from clear. Soon after the condemnation of formalist concerns, quoted above, Quatremère went on to say that such an attitude allowed only for what was "perfect" to be displayed, dismissing the rest of artistic production as simply flawed; this, however, was detrimental to the arts "celui qui ne verra qu'une élite de chefs-d'œuvre, perdra bientôt le sentiment de leur valeur", because "la

²⁰ Ibid., p. 38-9.

nature a voulu que le médiocre et le pire eussent leur utilité, dans l'échelle des points de comparaison qui servent à apprécier le bon."²¹ But on which grounds were the "perfect", the "mediocre" and the "worse" identified, and which "value" was Quatremère referring to, if not that of aesthetic judgement? The discussion here was not exclusively about the moral significance of art. It appears that, beyond the "use" of art for the good of society as such, there was clearly a level on which the work of art was legitimately operative as aesthetic object. And although one could argue for the difference between a purely formalist attitude to art (which Quatremère was condemning) and a broader aesthetic one (which could include subject-matter, emotional impact on the spectator, etc.) still what the author was engaging with here had to do more with aesthetics than ethics. Either way, it was made clear that the "esprit de critique" of pedantic connoisseurship was one of the foremost unnatural and destructive attitudes to art, and the museum was the primary vehicle for this attitude: "L'abus des Musées, et l'abus de la critique naissent donc ensemble, et procèdent également d'un principe d'impuissance"²².

At this point, the second central idea of the *Considérations morales* had already manifested itself in the argument, and it involved the concept of the sentiment and emotional experience as the necessary and natural means for engaging with art: "Il y a une loi générale de la nature, qui, liant le plaisir au besoin, veut que tous ce qui plaît soit utile, et tout ce qui est utile agréable."²³ This natural, and therefore necessary, linking of the useful with the pleasant and agreeable discredited the cold functioning of thought and reason in the experience of art. The technical, or "scientific" aspect of the work was the requirement of a certain competence, both in its production and appreciation, which, in itself, did not amount to much. It was through sentiment that the link with morality was effected - in the workings of the artist's genius and in the experience of the spectator. "Les effets de la science s'adressent à l'esprit", wrote Quatremère, "et ce du sentiment s'adressent au cœur"; and, immediately after, "la faculté qui sent est en nous plus active que la faculté qui raisonne", so "la science doit exister dans les productions de l'Art, mais sans chercher y

²¹ Ibid., p. 39.

²² Ibid., p. 42.

²³ Ibid., p. 45.

paraître".²⁴ The spirit of criticism and the museum were impotent ("impuissants") when addressing the arts, because they relied on reason in order to engage with something which appealed predominantly to the soul. It is very interesting to note that, in order to support this argument, Quatremère recruited the traditional concept of the "je ne sais quoi":

C'est qui, dans l'ordre moral, rend la même chose admirable, indifférente ou méprisable, tient souvent à si peu, que ceux qui éprouvent quelle est la grandeur de la différence dans l'effet, ne savent quelquefois comment exprimer la petitesse de la cause. C'est le *je ne sais quoi*; et ce *je ne sais quoi*, qui souvent est tout pour le sentiment, n'est jamais rien pour le raisonnement.²⁵

It was profound sentiment which produced "les beaux ouvrages de l'Art", and thus it was those works which lost the most if they were condemned to the "rôle inactif" which awaited them in the cabinets. Those works which appealed most to sentiment and imagination, were those which became the most mute when they were displaced, because outside their proper locations they could no longer engage the soul. Leaving aside the problem of Quatremère's definition of the "beaux ouvrages" - once again, already relying on an aesthetic principle in order to argue for the moral - one was here led to understand the importance of context for art. Only within the continuity of a unified experience, through a wealth relationships and correspondences, could the work of art reveal its significance to the spectator. This unity was both spatial and temporal, assisting the works of art to achieve their goal, which was the ultimate transcendence of their specificity and materiality, and their transformation into sentiment. In the museum, however, where this unity was disrupted,

ce n'est que par hypothèse, ou par fiction, ou par le moyen d'une froide reminiscence, qu'il est possible d'éprouver (...) l'effet moral de ces impressions heureuses qui, s'identifiant avec celles de la nature, font disparaître la main de l'Art sous le charme d'une illusion sentimentale. Tout ici, au contraire, vous parle de l'Art et de ses ressorts, des secrets de la science, des moyens de l'étude; tout ici vous tient en garde contre la séduction. La curiosité et la critique sont là pour empêcher les émotions d'arriver jusqu'à l'âme ou d'y pénétrer.²⁶

In order to stress the ideological damage inflicted on the works by the segregation of the museum/conservatory, Quatremère resorted to a clever reversal of the "indigenous plants"

²⁴ Ibid., p. 33.

²⁵ Ibid., p. 44.

²⁶ Ibid., p. 45.

argument. He wrote that the works of art were not exotic plants which one kept under special conditions, protected from natural weather conditions. Quite on the contrary, works of art ought to "enrich our prairies, ornate our gardens, and embellish our countryside" - that is, be allowed to grow naturally, where they could be effortlessly enjoyed and appreciated by the public. Because, "ce n'est à aucune méthode de culture artificielle qu'on en est redevable. On les doit à la liberté de toutes les causes naturelles et nécessaires."²⁷ As well as arguing for the necessity of location for the meaning of art, Quatremère was here also presenting the museum as somehow restricting the capacity of the public to access it freely. After the Revolution and the opening of the collections to the people, it would seem unlikely that anyone would take issue with the public accessibility of art. However, I would suggest that what Quatremère was questioning here was whether the museum was a properly "public" institution, or, for that matter an "institution" at all, in the sense of an establishment for the benefit of the people. His critique denied the museum - at least the collections he was taking issue with - any educational or other social value, more or less equating its operation with the frivolity of luxury, idle curiosity and pedantry, all in fundamental conflict with the true purpose of art. In that sense, although the museum might have allowed physical access to the individual works, because of the destructive conditions which it imposed on them, it restricted access to the unity of their purpose and meaning. Thus, ultimately, the public was denied a proper relationship with art, which relied on the situation of the works in their original location, and amounted to a unified experience addressed primarily to the soul.

The temporal dimension of this necessary unity, in practice indistinguishable from the spatial, was the third structuring idea in Quatremère's critique. He wrote :

Aux yeux du vrai philosophe, les Arts sont les historiens populaires d'un grand nombre de faits, d'opinions, de traditions, qui composent l'existence moral des nations. L'influence des monuments sur l'esprit, sur la mémoire, sur l'entendement, procède souvent moins de leur perfection même, que de leur ancienneté, que de l'authenticité de leur emploi, que de leur publicité. Ces livres originaux, toujours ouverts à la curiosité publique, portent leur instruction au-dehors, et la communiquent sans réserve au sentiment qui les consulte sans effort. ²⁸

²⁷ Ibid., p. 46.

²⁸ Ibid., p.47.

The introduction of the historical dimension, and its direct association with the highest purpose of art, is greatly significant. Moral utility was here expanded to include the communication of national character itself, which was made available to the public through the authenticity of the works themselves, as well as the authenticity of their manner of display and use. Quatremère's recruitment of the concept of the authentic was not really a full espousal of the scientific-archeological quest for objectivity of fact, rapidly taking over the study of the past in the nineteenth-century. Although he condemned the fabricated aspect of the "dépôts appelés *Conservatoires*", and their "ruines factices" - as he had, more extensively, done in the earlier *Rapport* - the real issue of authenticity had to do less with archeological accuracy than with purpose and significance. The "originality" of the works which Quatremère cherished here, was likened to that of books, that is, to text and narrative - ultimately, to meaning, and the "emotionally instructive" effect of art on the reader/spectator. This effect was directly influenced by the antiquity of the pieces, because "l'idée de l'ancienneté imprime aux monumens, comme aux hommes, un caractère de respect et de vénération".²⁹ Quatremère went on to articulate the idea that the veneer of time on objects was no less than the manifestation of the continuity of history, establishing a kind of community between us and the great personalities of the past, rendering them, for a moment, contemporaries and compatriots. For this, the attempt to efface the imprint of time from monuments by restoring them to a state of fake integrity, erased the best part of their beauty and value, and, crucially, "cette espèce d'inviolabilité qui les défendait des attaques de l'esprit de critique".³⁰ Ultimately, the antiquity of the works was "une sorte de droit de nature", which demanded to be respected.

In the same way that authenticity was not really about archeology, history was not about chronological accuracy - as factual narrative - but, instead, a "philosophical" history, where the moral message was all. This message, however, unlike the philosophical history of the Enlighteners, was one addressed primarily to the soul, apprehended through sentiment and imagination, rather than reason and intellect. Thus, although Quatremère had argued for

²⁹ Ibid., p.66.

³⁰ Ibid., p.67.

the necessity of the continuity of purpose and significance for the work of art in order for it to maintain its historical character intact, at the same time, he did not hesitate to condemn the museum for killing art to make "history" - because it only thus achieved a semblance of history, a mere epitaph. In a characteristic turn of phrase, he accused "those depots" absurdly named "conservatories" (a thin disguise for the Petits-Augustins), for using the excuse of history in order to dispatch the monuments to oblivion.³¹

The fourth structuring idea of Quatremère's discourse, to which the previous three were leading, was the identification of the moral element of art as a means of transcendence of the human condition and access to a higher order of reality.

The work of art, through its unique way of engaging and communicating with the spectator, had the capacity "de faire naître telle ou telle passion, d'éveiller telle ou telle espèce d'affection, d'exciter telle ou telle sensation, de correspondre à telle ou telle disposition de notre âme, de diriger notre esprit vers telle ou telle pensée". Since art was capable, by its nature, to communicate with our soul, its highest goal could not have been but to stir us towards the moral and ultimately the divine. And it was the degree to which it achieved this goal which gave art its measure of success. In order to emphasise this, Quatremère embarked on a description of his experience at the shrine of St. Rosalia of Palermo - the young princess who renounced the world and devoted herself to God in a mountain hermitage. The actual bronze and alabaster statue of Rosalia, wrote Quatremère, was rather mediocre and forgettable ("partout ailleurs il arrêterait faiblement les yeux d'un connoisseur", but the impressions it produced were remarkable and enduring. This was exclusively due to the placement of the piece in the original grotto-hermitage of the princess, surrounded by such appropriate paraphernalia as the saint's bed - the whole setting making for such an evocative experience, that visitors can barely hold back their tears as they kneel by the effigy to pray.³²

³¹ Ibid., p.48.

³² Ibid., pp. 60-61.

Quatremère recognised that this example directly involved the religious dimension at its most emotive, and, thus, it might have seemed misleading to advocate the emotiveness of art through it. Nevertheless, religion had traditionally been the central motive for art, and although one might have argued that it had become less explicitly so, art would always maintain a religion-like "higher" aspiration, if it was to be art at all. Whether the Christian piety of Saint Rosalia or the "religion toute sensuelle" of Greek art, what had given life to works of art had always been the need to lift humanity to a grander destination and "a beauty more than human":

La croyance religieuse, le besoin d'élever l'homme à un beauté plus qu'humaine, la grandeur de la destination, cette importante obligation de se mettre au niveau de l'imagination de plus en plus exaltée d'un peuple passionné : voilà quel fut le foyer qui donna la chaleur et la vie aux ouvrages de l'Art.³³

It is fascinating to observe Quatremère making his way through Christianity, ancient Greece and unspecified spirituality, as he unfolded his argument. What one was presented with here was not an "evolutionary" account, where Christian worship appeared as the culmination of a long quest for religious truth. In a manner reminiscent of the liberal tone of the *Rapport* of year VIII, what Quatremère was trying to convey was that art was destined to serve a higher purpose, across cultures and centuries - that is, above specificity. In that sense, what was established was the universality of art at its most essential, as a means of transcendence of the limitations of human condition - in itself a universal. Although Quatremère had positioned himself within the Christian catholic framework, the validity of his argument was not actually dependent upon that point of view. I would propose that his interpretation of art was not even tied to the concept of religion as such (in any organised or situated manner), but rather to a more abstract and universal concept of a higher order, which humanity had a natural urge to commune with. Although, in Quatremère's discourse, religion initially appeared as the "reason" for art, ultimately both religion and art were treated as mediums through which the primordial urge for transcendence manifested itself. Through such statements as "l'homme n'est pas aussi capable qu'on semble aujourd'hui le croire, de s'élever tout seul"³⁴, Quatremère's

³³ Ibid., p. 63.

³⁴ Ibid., p. 28.

positions demands to be compared to the movement of *Bildung* of his German contemporaries. One crucial point, however, where Quatremère seemed to differ, was on the role of the museum, at least as it was discussed here. In this section of the *Considérations morales*, the cultivation and self-improvement through the arts, and the consequent uplifting onto a higher level of human existence, appeared incompatible with the musealisation of art. The appeal to our emotions was muted by the work's displacement,

lorsque tous les moyens accessoires qui concouraient à lui faire produire ces effets lui sont ravies, lorsque lui-même il a perdu dans l'opinion, la puissance morale attachée à sa destination originale. § Et c'est là, précisément, ce qui est arrivé à ces statues *dédéifiées* de l'antiquité; c'est ce qui arrive à toute composition enlevée à sa fonction première, déplacée du lieu qui l'avait fait naître, et rendue étrangère aux circonstances qui lui donnaient de l'intérêt.³⁵

The "dedeification" suffered by the displaced works was a sweeping, destructive transformation, which did not only affect the explicitly religious pieces, but all art. Quatremère used this highly significant expression to denote the loss of meaning in general - where sarcophagi lay devoid of affection for the dead, coats of armour devoid of honour, signs devoid of significance. Like gods without an altar, he said - or, rather, like altars without a god - the displaced works became objects of a sterile admiration, and lost the power to move us. Having discussed, so far, this "faculté d'émouvoir" as a capacity of the work itself (in the appropriate circumstances), it is interesting to read, at the very end of the dissertation, that this capacity of art to produce impressions in us, was thought of as reciprocal to our capacity to receive them:

Trop souvent on se trompe sur la source des impressions que nous font éprouver les ouvrages de l'Art, en la plaçant exclusivement dans ces ouvrages. Outre la réciprocité qui existe quelquefois, comme je l'ai fait voir, entre la capacité de produire et la capacité de recevoir les impressions (...)³⁶

By identifying what he called "reciprocity" between the work and the soul, Quatremère intended to emphasise even further the role of context in the experience of art. What he meant, as he went on to explain, was that the soul could not receive the appropriate impressions from the work unprepared; and this preparation came, primarily, from the

³⁵ Ibid., p. 54-55.

³⁶ Ibid., p. 78.

"multitude de rapprochemens qui échappent à l'analyse", which were conveyed through context and "l'accord morale" established through it. One would assume, therefore, that precisely because this web of relationships eluded analysis and representation, it could not be substituted: one had to experience the works first hand, *in situ*, otherwise one remained closed off to the proper moral experience of art. There was, however, an exception: that of the true savants, who, presumably, were so deeply versed in and engaged with art, that they could immediately connect with the work regardless of context - the latter being readily supplied by their highly informed imagination. This exception, I would suggest, is a significant compromise of the seemingly *sine qua non* importance of context in Quatremère's thought: It could be argued that, if the proper experience of art could actually be recreated independently of context, within an imagination primed by a considerable body of knowledge (such as the savant's), then it is conceivable that this specialist knowledge could be used in order to create an altogether new context that would, through a variety of means, highlight this crucial web of relationships in order to appropriately prepare the imagination of the non-specialist for the experience of art. If the knowledge of the savant sufficed to provide the essential context of that experience for the savant himself, it would follow that a similar provision could be made for the wider public through the use of that knowledge - for example, in the intelligently constructed setting of a museum, which would appeal to the imagination of the spectator in such ways that would, potentially, allow for his full engagement.

Before closing the dissertation with the much-quoted story of Le Sueur's Magdalene painting³⁷, Quatremère recapitulated in characteristically impassioned prose:

Qui pourrait donc nous persuader que les œuvres de l'imitation auraient sur celles de la nature l'avantage d'un effet absolu, permanent, sans rapport avec les affections de notre âme, et avec toutes les causes morales dont on a parlé? Je le dirai: c'est ce froid et orgueilleux esprit de calcul et d'analyse qui (...) détruisant tout principe moral dans l'homme et dans ses œuvres, réduit tout à un mécanisme organisé dont il croit trouver les secrets; matérialise la pensée pour la définir, paralyse les affections qu'il ne peut analyser, frappe d'inertie toutes les facultés imaginatives, et de stérilité les dons du génie; répand le froid de la mort sur la nature, et, après avoir élevé à la maison un trône de glace sur les débris de nos affections, laisserait l'univers

³⁷ A work which, in a manner similar to St. Rosalia's statue in her grotto, was the case of Le Sueur's painting of the Magdalene: wonderfully inspiring in the convent of the Chartreux, where it originated, but a mere shadow of its former self ("une pâle copie d'elle même") once transported in the former palace and current museum of the Versailles ("le seul lieu du monde qui ne devait jamais le recevoir") - *ibid.*, pp. 83-85.

sans Dieu, l'homme sans âme, la société sans morale, les jouissance da la vie sans perspective, nos désirs sans illusion, les Arts sans passion, leurs ouvrages sans effet.³⁸

Here it is, in one paragraph, the best part of Quatremère's critique against the new attitude to art, which he referred to as the spirit of criticism, or of calculation and analysis, which actually included the entire modern, aestheticised and reified understanding of symbolic representation. It is fascinating to find, in the same sentence, the highly sophisticated accusation of this spirit as "reifying thought in order to define it, and paralysing the affections which it cannot analyse", and the deeply emotional cry about humanity being left without a God as well as without a soul.

Having started from Nature, and the natural laws governing art and its purpose, Quatremère completed his interpretation by identifying a universal sense of order with which humanity aspired to commune through art. Whether this order was also Nature, at its most broad as *cosmos*, or whether Nature itself was understood as derivative from this order - in this case understood as the divine - is a matter of considerable ambiguity in Quatremère's discourse. In any case, the important point for our discussion remains that Quatremère identified the essence of art as being intrinsically linked with a greater unity, which determined its origins and destination alike. As it was already mentioned, although the *Considérations morales* begun with aspirations to become a normative work, it ended up more of a critique of the changing attitudes towards art at the beginning of the nineteenth century. As such, the aspects of culture which it took issue with were all contributing to one central problem: that of the loss, or breakdown, of the moral purpose and unity of art. The museum was a prominent manifestation of - and contribution to - this breakdown, through a rationalisation and reification of the work of art stemming from the loss of context and the severance of the essential relationship of the work with its "world", thus resulting in a severe impoverishment of the experience for the observer, no longer engaging the soul, no longer elevating.

³⁸ Ibid., pp. 80-81.

For all its apparent rigour and conviction, the intellectual front which was composed against the so-called "Collections, Cabinets, Muséum" in the *Considérations morales* was, upon closer inspection, rather tenuous. In addition to the more implicit weaknesses of this front, there is a distinctive complimentary reference to collections of art, which, against Quatremère's intentions, actually contributed to the tenuousness of the critique. Towards the middle of the *Considérations*, having already outlined most of his condemnation of the museum, and just before he was about to re-launch the attack on "ces dépôts" (verbatim from the report of year VIII), Quatremère pronounced a surprising disclaimer:

Ce n'est pas que j'entende contester aux collections classiques des ouvrages de l'Art toute espèce d'utilité (...) ce que je combats, c'est l'abus moral de ces collections, c'est leur excès, c'est le principe mal entendu de l'usage qu'on en fait. Qu'on ouvre des galeries à ceux des ouvrages que réclame l'enseignement, et dans lesquels le public, comme l'étudiant, trouveront à former leur goût et leur talent. Qu'on destine enfin des cabinets aux ouvrages classiques de l'Art; mais qu'on ne destine pas tous les ouvrages de l'Art à n'être que des objets de cabinet.³⁹

It is surprising to read this, because it obviously conflicted with his own acerbic critique of the "spirit of connoisseurship", and his idea that the education of the artist ought to involve the soul in order to produce works that will appeal to the soul, in order to fulfil their moral purpose. In that argument, it was made clear that such engagement could happen in the "collection, cabinets, museum", yet here it was stated that the collections of classical works of art played a central role in the artist's education. We shall leave this ambiguity standing, for now, and return to it later.

Lettres à Miranda(1796)

Unlike the *Considérations morales*, where all types of artworks were mentioned in the attempt to produce a unified discourse on art centring on its fundamental moral utility, the Letters to Miranda dealt specifically with classical Roman art. Quatremère's motivation for these seven short essays was the spoliation of Rome's artistic treasures by the victorious French army, under the guidance of Napoleon. On his way to arguing against their displacement, Quatremère sketched a broader discourse on the meaning of art in society and

³⁹ Ibid., p. 46.

its relation to context, which in many ways was a preamble to the *Considérations morales*, a decade later. There were, however, considerable intellectual differences between the two texts, which contributed to the significant ambiguity and irresolution of Quatremère's thesis concerning the museum.

In very broad terms, the main idea supporting the Letters to Miranda was the vital relationship between art and its original setting, which did not allow for works to be moved without a loss of coherence and significance. As in the *Considérations morales*, Nature was, here also, repeatedly called upon as the great legitimising order governing the realm of art - in this case, having designated Rome as the cradle of artistic perfection after the Greeks. As such, the stripping of Rome from its riches would result in "la mort de toutes les connoissances dont son unité est le principe".⁴⁰ The theme of unity was as central to these Letters as it was to the *Considérations morales*, being the necessary condition for art to be meaningful and in any way "useful". There was one significant, if fleeting, identification of this unity as a "harmonie métaphysique" bonding works of art with their original situation. However, in the Letters to Miranda it is questionable whether it was the problem of removal from context as such, or the resulting dispersal of the works, which Quatremère took issue with.

There is textual evidence for both potential identifications of the problem behind the displacement of monuments from Italy. On one hand, there is support for the idea of actual site-specificity, a Winckelmann-influenced geographical determinism, where the climate and countryside of Rome were presented next to its architectural character and historical associations, as elements of the same unity, essential for the "life" of its works of art⁴¹. On the other hand, however, there was extensive discussion of the issue of dispersal as the most destructive aspect of the displacement of works, directly implying that if the works of

⁴⁰ *Lettres au général Miranda, sur le préjudice qu'occasionnent aux arts et à la science le déplacement des monumens de l'art de l'Italie* (1796) - from their 1835 edition (together with the Letters to Canova of 1818, under the title *Lettres sur l'enlèvement des ouvrages de l'art antique à Athènes et à Rome*), published in a compilation volume with the *Considérations morales*, in 1989 (see note 11), p. 205 (Third Letter).

⁴¹ For example, Quatremère writes that the "hyperborean" metropolises are distinctly incapable of providing the antiquities of Rome with "un hospice digne à eux", because it is not in the fog and fumes of London, nor in the rains of Paris, where this profound sensibility for the beautiful can be developed - *ibid.*, pp. 221.

a certain "unit" (a school of painting, for example), were to be removed and transported elsewhere as a whole, there would not necessarily be a problem.

This latter premise was repeatedly supported throughout this text. In the Fourth Letter, for example, Quatremère addressed the possibility of the transportation of antiquities from Rome with great horror, because he realised they would inevitably be distributed among different places, while it was precisely their unity ("ensemble") "qui peut donner la valeur nécessaire à ces fragmens", this value being "ce complément précieux de leçons et de parallèles, qui produit la théorie pratique du beau".⁴² Another even more illuminating example was Quatremère's discussion of the situation in England, in the Fifth Letter. He wrote that, although the country had the second largest concentration of antiquities outside Rome (as a result of the many excavations conducted by the English in Italy), it was dispersed among numerous private collections, so not only was it very difficult to gain access to them, but, most importantly, it was impossible to appreciate them as anything other than individual fragments. He then went on to illustrate the detrimental effects of such a dispersion, by speculating on the possible distribution of Raphael's entire known *œuvre* - roughly twenty paintings in total - only two of which were known to be actually in Rome: "Si dix-neuf villes de l'Europe possèdent chacune un tableau à l'huile de Raphael, chaque élève qu'envoie chacune de ces ville à Rome, qui n'en possède qu'un, ne peut jamais parvenir à étudier que deux tableaux de Raphael"⁴³ (presumably, because it would be unthinkable to travel to another city, for the sole purpose of viewing a masterpiece, even by Raphael).

The issue of comparison appeared to be crucial for the proper appreciation of, and instruction from, the works of art in question. There were many instances in the Letters where ability to make comparisons and draw parallels between works was emphasised as a necessity in its own right. It had already been mentioned that a "théorie pratique du beau" could be produced without a comparative scope of study.⁴⁴ As a result, the host of

⁴² Ibid., p. 218.

⁴³ Ibid., pp. 228-229.

⁴⁴ Ibid., pp. 218.

mediocre works which accompanied masterpieces was deemed necessary for the highlighting of precisely that which gave the latter their unique position: "Il y a de même dans les ouvrages inférieurs de l'antique, placés à côté des excellens, une propriété demonstrative, une vertu instructive, que les chefs-d'œuvre isolés ne sauroient nous procurer."⁴⁵

A crucial element in the identification of dispersal as the root of the danger faced by displaced monuments, was the fact that the concept of the museum was taken for granted. To begin with, the unity of Rome's antique riches was consistently referred to as the "muséum de Rome". This was, of course, a manner of speech, not unusual at the time - yet a highly significant one in this context, for it freed the term "museum" from any a priori negative connotations, which was definitely not the case with the *Considérations*. If the naturally situated, harmoniously united antiquities in Rome were a "museum", then it should not be impossible to conceive of another museum, where works of art could exist equally harmoniously. In fact, this possibility was already established in the title, where one was immediately led to understand that the actual museums of Rome were appropriate locations for antiquities, which had to be respected: "Lettres (...) sur le préjudice qu'occasionnens aux arts et à la science (...) et la spoliation de ses collections, galeries, musées [my emphasis]". And as Quatremère concluded his introductory observations, he exclaimed that before even thinking about the antiquities of Rome, France should make the most of its own, by organising digs and putting the worthy pieces on display in existing museums, or even in purposely erected ones:

Pourquoi ne pas restaurer ce bel amphithéâtre de Nîmes, pour en faire le dépôt de toutes les richesses antiques de cette colonie Romaine? Pourquoi ne pas y établir un muséum d'antiquités correspondant avec ceux de l'Italie? Voilà bien, ce qui me semble, ce qu'il conviendrait de faire, avant de mettre en question si l'on peut démembrer et spolier les galeries de Rome et de l'Italie.⁴⁶

⁴⁵ Ibid., pp. 217 (Fourth Letter) . The same point is made again in the Sixth Letter, where Quatremère writes that the "extracts" of different schools of painting which have found their way into various collections around Europe, are insufficient examples of their kind, as a result of their isolation (p. 234).

⁴⁶ ibid., p. 203 (Second Letter).

Lettres à Canova (1818)

Despite initial appearances, therefore, Quatremère was clearly not against the museum as such. To complicate matters further, let us now look at another set of letters, written to his friend Canova in June 1818, during Quatremère's visit to London, which were nothing less than an elaborate praise to the museum institution. The subject of the Letters to Canova, as stated by Quatremère himself, was the Parthenon marbles at the British Museum, examined primarily in order to establish whether they might have been direct products of the legendary Phidias' chisel or merely of his workshop⁴⁷. This being the case, it is not entirely surprising that the discourse which followed was conducted almost exclusively on a level of connoisseurship. What makes this text interesting for our discussion, however, is that all the questions concerning the removal of artworks for the museum, which Quatremère had previously raised in his writings, were also pertinent here, despite his refusal to acknowledge them - or, rather, his negation of them.

In order to answer Canova's question, Quatremère embarked on a discussion of the possibility of evaluating consistently the monuments of antiquity as works of art, in the great scale of the "beaux ouvrages". Issues of taste, style, beauty and artistic creativity led the entire discourse, leaving all other issues aside.⁴⁸

He identified the Parthenon fragments as *sculptures du bâtiment*, which he defined as "tout ouvrage sculpté, soit adhérent à la masse d'un édifice, soit faisant partie nécessaire de son architecture, et ordinairement d'un mérite secondaire"⁴⁹. In other words, the *sculpture de bâtiment* was by definition inferior to antique statuary, which, he continued, we know was created for a different and more noble purpose. This meant that the more autonomous the works of art the more acceptable they were in the scale of artistic perfection. Quatremère

⁴⁷ "Quelle part Phidias peut-il être présumé avoir eue individuellement à ces travaux?" - QUATREMÈRE DE QUINCY, A.C., *Lettres écrites de Londres à Rome et adressées à M. Canova, sur les marbres d'Elgin*, from their 1835 edition (together with the Letters to Miranda of 1796, under the title *Lettes sur l'enlèvement des ouvrages de l'art antique à Athènes et à Rome*), published in a compilation volume with the *Considérations morales*, in 1989 (see note 11), p. 122 (Third Letter)

⁴⁸ Eventually, Quatremère concludes that there are no "measures or tarifs" which would allow for a definitive classification. Instead, the key to an intelligent evaluation of such works lies in the notion of the ideal - *ibid.*, pp.174-181 (Fifth Letter).

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 100 (First Letter).

struggled with the problem of autonomous and relative beauty - artistic "perfection" - and how they could be measured, in order to form the unified comparative scale of the entire artistic production of antiquity:

Je vois bien que, pour les admettre dans la balance d'un comparaison équitable, avec celles des sculptures antique, qu'on sait avoir été faites pour un autre but et pour de plus nobles emplois, il falloit tenir compte de toutes sortes de différences dans le genre, dans la destination, dans l'exécution.⁵⁰

What is significant here is not so much that Quatremère acknowledged the difference in situation and significance of architectural fragments viz. autonomous statues, but rather that he felt the necessity to "translate" the value of the former in a form compatible with the latter, so that the fragments could be compared with the statues in one consistent scale. In other words, Quatremère's attempted a transformation of the architectural fragments into autonomous works of art which could stand on their own, so to speak, in order to be appreciated on the same grounds as the acknowledged aesthetic masterpieces of classical statuary.

The autonomy of the fragment in the museum, detached from the distractions of context and thus revealed in its proper dimensions of grandeur, was praised further:

Dans un édifice terminé, chaque objet de sculpture, vu sa place, perd sa grandeur; considéré en compagnie avec tout ce qui accompagne, il ne se laisse examiner que d'un côté, que sous un rapport : plus l'ensemble a d'accord et de proportions, plus l'œil et l'esprit sont portés à généraliser, et à voir chaque partie dans le tout. Alors disparaissent, et l'idées des détails, et le sentiment des longueurs, ainsi que des difficultés du travail. § Ici, au contraire, vous avez la main sur les objets, ils vous apparoissent dans leur dimension réelle, vous tournez autour de chacun, vous dénombrez les morceaux, vous en combinez les rapports et les mesures (...).⁵¹

As the culmination of a consistently pro-museal stance, Quatremère concluded his final letter to Canova by paying the British Museum the highest compliment, writing that its splendid collection of original sculptures from the "plus beaux temps de la Grèce", placed it "en tête de tous les recueils", where "la science et l'histoire de l'art iront chercher des modèles classiques, et les plus authentiques matériaux de la saine critique du goût."⁵²

⁵⁰ Ibid.

⁵¹ Ibid., p. 122 (Third Letter).

⁵² Ibid., p. 185 (Seventh Letter).

Even though Quatremère offered such a sweeping disclaimer about his discussion of the Parthenon pieces exclusively on the level of connoisseurship, he could not altogether avoid the key question concerning their initial removal, and his support for their musealisation. In fact, the publication of the Letters to Canova in the same volume with the Letters to Miranda rendered it absolutely necessary for him to justify his defence of the spoliation of Athens, when he so strongly opposed the one of Rome. It is important to stress that the idea of pairing these two works for publication was Quatremère's own, and that he wrote a preface as an explanatory note of the significance of publishing them together. The reason for this pairing, he wrote, was one of contrast rather than comparison, for beyond the obvious similarity of the events discussed (the removal of indigenous works of art from their respective countries - Greece and Italy - and their transfer to foreign museums - Louvre and British Museum), there were no further similarities between the two cases.

Quatremère proceeded to list the four major points of difference, on the grounds of "morality", "politics", "science and taste" and "conservation". As far as the first was concerned, it is fascinating to read that Quatremère deemed the issue of morality simply non-applicable to the Athenian case, because the government of the country had given permission for the removal:

Quand aux point de vue de moralité, on les a déjà mis hors de cause, par l'autorisation que le gouvernement du pays donna, en reconnaissance des secours de l'Angleterre, au ministre de cette nation.⁵³

The issue of "politics" related to the fact that, because of their respective governments, scholars and amateurs were encouraged and assisted in their visits to Rome - which was not the case with Athens, still occupied by the Ottoman Empire at the time. The point of "conservation" was based on the same grounds, emphasising the actual danger of destruction and even disappearance of the Parthenon marbles, should they have remained in their place, as opposed to the properly conserved ones of Rome. The point of "science and taste" is worth quoting in full:

⁵³ Ibid., p. 91 (Avant-Propos, *Lettres sur l'enlèvement des ouvrages de l'art antique à Athènes et à Rome*).

On doit reconnoître, que les sculptures enlevées des ruines du Parthénon, se trouvoient situées trop loin de la vue, et trop désavantageusement, même à la place qu'elles occupoient, non-seulement pour servir d'objet d'étude, mais encore pour être appréciées par les voyageurs, à leur juste valeur.⁵⁴

It appears, therefore, that, as far as the Parthenon marbles were concerned, the whole issue of context/unity and its implications on art, discussed repeatedly and on varying levels in the Letters to Miranda and the *Considérations morales*, was simply ignored. The main contrast was, obviously, with the highly connoisseurial point of "science and taste", at odds with the contextual approach to art, and in direct conflict with the anti-formalist/anti-connoisseurship position of the *Considérations morales*, not simply accepting but applauding the removal of the pieces from their "disadvantageous" original placements, for the sake of better visibility. Furthermore, "morality" was used in reference to political negotiations, ignoring the notion of a moral purpose of art which resisted displacement and dispersal. The issue of "conservation" of the Athenian pieces could, conceivably, be the one truly convincing argument for their removal, in contrast to the case of Rome.

Nevertheless, Quatremère's position on context ought to still hold true in principle for the Parthenon, even if a *force majeure* made it necessary for the pieces to be removed in reality, as the least harmful of two evils.⁵⁵ But there was little in Quatremère's discussion to suggest that he felt the pieces were genuinely compromised by their removal from context - in a way that would have been consistent with the dominant principles of his earlier works.

Quatremère did acknowledge that there were other important angles from which the Parthenon pieces ought to be examined, but which went beyond the scope of this work⁵⁶, the latter remaining mostly a connoisseur's analysis of antique sculpture. He consciously side-stepped the principles of the *Considérations morales*, in favour of a more traditional discourse on art. The problem with this, however, is that the interpretation of art and its significance laid out in the *Considérations morales* - with its direct, damning implications for the aesthetic attitude and for the institution of the museum - by no means allowed for

⁵⁴ Ibid.

⁵⁵ The removal of works of art from context sanctioned as a necessary measure for their survival immediately brings to mind the case of French monuments removed to depots for safekeeping under the Revolution.

⁵⁶ Letters to Canova, op. cit. (note 47), p. 105 (First Letter).

such selectivity. After all - and almost unbelievably - in the Fourth Letter to Miranda, in order to emphasise his point about the fragmentation of Roman monuments, he had written: "Ne vous semble-t-il pas voir Morosini, dépouiller le fronton du Parthénon d'Athènes, pour en transporter deux figures à Venise? Je vous le demande, qu'eussent signifié ces fragmens détachés de leur masse et de leur ensemble?"⁵⁷ The grounds on which the removal of the Elgin marbles from the Parthenon was approved, and the entire collection of classical sculpture in the British Museum applauded, were in seeming opposition to the previous condemnation of the "esprit de critique" and the fragmentation of art.

We are once more confronted with what I proposed as the deep conflict in Quatremère's position on the role of art in society, in general and the museum in particular. If the main principles of the *Considérations morales*, and the extent to which they overlapped with the Letters to Miranda, were to be taken for face value, then the Letters to Canova should not have been written - or, if they did, they should have presented a very different position. The concluding praise of the British Museum as treasure-trove of antiquity and beacon of knowledge and "la saine critique du goût", was only the most explicit instant of what was actually a consistent support for the musealisation of all art - including the difficult cases of "dependent" art, such as the *sculpture de bâtiment*.

As an important concluding remark to the examination of these four texts of Quatremère relating to the museum, a mention should be made to a fifth and earlier one. The *Considérations sur les arts du dessin en France suivie d'un plan d'académie, ou école publique, et d'un système d'encouragemens*, were published in 1791, followed by two *Suites* in the same year. These were laid out as a response to the question: to what extent should France encourage the arts of design, and what would be the means of encouragement the most favourable for them.⁵⁸ This work belonged to the early

⁵⁷ Letters to Miranda, op. cit. (note 40), p. 218.

⁵⁸ For a detailed discussion of the *Considérations sur les arts...* in the context of the contemporary Revolutionary debate on the arts, see POMMIER, E., *L'art de la liberté: Doctrines et débats de la Révolution française* (Paris: Gallimard, 1991), pp. 63-91.

Revolutionary debate on the arts and the anticipation of a new artistic renaissance for the regenerated France. One of the key moments in the three instalments composing the *Considérations sur les arts*, was the proposal for an institute, or academy, along the lines of the antique archetype of Alexandria, where the sciences, letters and arts would be brought together and studied in unison. In the first instalment, a more modest proposal was initially put forth, for an academy where the study of all the arts would be unified under one roof. A key feature of this school would be a museum, comprising, firstly, of a gallery of original antique statues "parce qu'il y a dans ces monuments originaux je ne sais quel caractère de beauté, je ne sais quel préjugé du respect, je ne sais quelle authenticité et quelle vivacité de leçon que jamais l'empreinte en plâtre de ces statues ne communique". But there would also be a gallery of casts and moulds of classical statuary, as well as a "collection d'ornements antiques, des plus beaux rinceaux, des chapiteaux, d'enroulements, de frises d'architecture, de vases, de candélabres et autres objets principalement relatifs aux décorateurs et à ceux qui étudient l'ornement".⁵⁹ By the third instalment, however, Quatremère had expanded his vision to a "lycée universel" and "institut national". This would be the answer to the need for "la liaison des science, des lettres et des arts, la nécessité d'un chef-lieu commun, d'un point central d'instruction pour toute la France, au milieu duquel s'élèverait cet arbre méthodique de la science qui jusqu'à présent n'a existé que dans les livres"⁶⁰. It would be housed in the Louvre itself, this being the most magnificent of all the buildings in France. I would suggest that the idea of such an institution remained with Quatremère throughout his life, and that behind the varied projects which he embarked on lay implicit the same totalising ideal which it represented.

At this point, before moving on to a more systematic interpretation of the above material and its implications, I would like to offer some explanation on my use of the term "work of art" in reference to Quatremère's writings.

⁵⁹ QUATREMÈRE DE QUINCY, *Considérations sur les arts du dessin* (Paris, 1791), p.128-130.

⁶⁰ *Seconde suite aux Considérations sur les arts...* (Paris, 1791), p.47.

Referring to Quatremère's various subjects, across several of his writings, as "works of art", without further specification, might seem like a dangerous generalisation. On one hand, the *Rapports* of 1801 and 1803 were written about French monuments - religious and funerary pieces whose "function" had only recently been interrupted by the Revolution, coinciding with their unprecedented removal to the depots (and the Museum of Monuments). On the other hand, the Letters to Miranda referred to classic Italian art, including antique marbles and old master paintings - in other words, to recognised masterpieces, already the legitimate object of museum collecting. Also, the Parthenon marbles, in the Letters to Canova, may have been architectural fragments but, as Quatremère himself confirmed, because of their combined artistic excellence and authenticity (products of the archetypal age of artistic perfection itself), they were also understood as "works of art" in the conventional sense. There was, therefore, an undeniable difference between the objects in question, between the classical/aesthetic masterpiece and the Christian/historicist monument.

The key for a common interpretation, however, was implicitly given by Quatremère himself in the *Considérations morales*. This work covered the broadest spectrum of artistic production, as it alluded to a unifying theory of art, on the basis of social relevance and morality. Quatremère used examples of master painting, classical sculpture and French monuments alike, to weave his arguments on moral utility. This is not to say that he did not distinguish between them in respect to their different uses and characters. But his aim was, finally, to unite all these works under certain pervasive principles and concepts, which structure their ultimate goal in the social context. As such, Quatremère was already accepting that there was a substantial common denominator, or mutual backbone, to all these works, which united them in respect to their highest responsibility to culture. Even the most ambiguous pieces, the French monuments, which, Quatremère argued, ought to be returned immediately to their churches, were being already transformed into "works of art", addressed in respect to their artistic qualities and their relevance to the history of art. In his texts, although these works were referred to in their religious capacity, as "objets pieux", or simply as "objets" and "monumens", they were also frequently mentioned as

"produits des arts", "œuvres du ciseau et du pinceau", and in general, directly referred to in their capacity as works of art. In that sense, and as far as this investigation on the museum is concerned, I believe there is substantial evidence to legitimise the use of the term "work of art" for all the pieces Quatremère wrote about.

Overview

It has become apparent that Quatremère's position on the museum was much more complex than the straightforward condemnation which his attitude towards Lenoir's project had implied, and which has survived widely associated with Quatremère's name.⁶¹ Clearly, Quatremère was troubled by changing attitudes in culture, where the idea of the museum in all its manifestations was becoming increasingly viable and important, at the expense of a more traditional understanding of art and architecture. The main theme of his discourse, implicitly when not explicitly, was that of morality/moral utility - a concept directed against the superficialisation of the work of art. Whether its commodification by idle curiosity and the desire for luxury, or its misguided rationalisation by the spirit of criticism, Quatremère deplored the fragmentation of the work from a fundamental unity on which rested its proper significance and value. I would like to propose that this underlying notion of unity, in its various manifestations throughout the texts, was the basis of his entire critique of the museum. But was this notion truly contradictory to the museum, as Quatremère would have us believe? Or was the ambiguity, which his pronouncements on the institution suffered from, actually due to the affinity of the principles which he interpreted as essentially conflicting?

In the reports to the *Conseil général*, where the works in question were religious and funerary monuments, the initial identification of the "culte catholique" as the unifying reference which was shattered by the museum, quickly transformed into a much broader and stranger concept. Ultimately, Quatremère appeared to be concerned with something

⁶¹ See, for example, SHERMAN, D., "Quatremère/Marx/Benjamin", in Sherman & Rogoff (eds.), *Museum Culture Histories, Discourses, Spectacles* (London: Routledge, 1994), and the influential SCHNEIDER, R., *Quatremère de Quincy et son intervention dans les arts 1778-1830* (Paris: Hachette, 1910).

more like an abstract sense of spirituality through an aesthetic/emotive experience, rather than with religion proper. The *Considérations morales* confirmed that reading, alluding to a universal concept of higher order with which humanity would commune through art - an idea strongly echoing the contemporary culture of *Bildung* across the border. Between this text and the earlier Letters to Miranda the argument linking the true significance and morality of art with the condition of

"belonging" was elaborated enough to appear as seeming fundamental. Both in terms of location (what I have been calling site-specificity) and in terms of history (the evocation of), it would appear that the work of art absolutely required this link to its original situation in order to be meaningful and purposeful. However, upon closer inspection, and through a number of contradictory statements, it emerged that the truly crucial precondition for the experience of art was not "belonging" as such, but rather the implied sense of unity - this latter being that which ultimately would captivate the soul of the observer and thus would allow for the true purpose of art to be fulfilled.

Quatremère's concern with location and the related capacity of the works to be "true historians" of their own past, was a concern directly relating to the capacity of art to perform its specific role and to affect the observer in the appropriate way. He was concerned with history because the implication of time and the invocation of continuity with the past was essential for the experience of the spectator, effecting the immediate involvement of sentiment - which, as we saw, was the gateway to the higher/moral significance of art and the ultimate fulfilment of its purpose. An exemplary moment of this in Quatremère's texts is in the *Considérations morales* where he argued for the historical authenticity of art in terms of the "veneer of time" which rendered to the works a character which would command "respect and veneration" when contemplated. Speaking against the reconstruction of ancient monuments, he wrote:

Voilà pourquoi il est si précieux aux yeux de l'amateur, ce vernis du temps, que l'on cherche si souvent à contrefaire. Redonner à ces restes mutilés une menteuse intégrité, effacer et faire disparaître des ouvrages antiques l'empreinte de l'antiquité, et leur redonner un faux air de jeunesse, c'est leur enlever en partie leur valeur et leur beauté, et cette espèce d'inviolabilité qui les défendait des attaques de l'esprit de critique.⁶²

⁶² QUATREMÈRE DE QUINCY, *Considérations morales...*, op. cit. (note 14), p. 67.

But the investment in history - which Quatremère so radically distinguished from rationalisation and the "esprit de critique" - nevertheless placed the understanding of art on a different level from the holistic/traditional, which he was nostalgic about and which he hoped to recapture through precisely this history. The kind of experience which Quatremère associated with art - whether Roman antiquities, old master paintings or French monuments - already presupposed that the works were the object of historiography and art-history, already participating in the socio-cultural continuum in different ways to those which Quatremère was rallying to preserve.

Furthermore, elaborating on Adorno's point mentioned earlier, I would say that Quatremère's major argument on the disruption of situation and historical "belonging" of the musealised work of art simply failed to acknowledge the fact that those works were already "history" in their original settings. With the Grand Tour having consolidated the ideal of classical Rome into a unified picturesque image of antiquities, palaces, rolling hills and colourful locals, Quatremère's pronouncement that "the country itself is the museum" rung supremely ironic despite its sincerity. What he intended to communicate was the inextricability of the artworks' significance and beauty from their setting, but what inevitably came through was the alarming fact that the whole country itself had become a museum; not, as it is were in the sense of the "muséum de Rome", by which he understood the unity of cultural creation, but rather in the sense of "Collections, Cabinets, Muséum", the institution of disruption and alienation which he was battling against. The fact that the word "museum" was used throughout the texts - but most poignantly in the Letters to Miranda - in two opposite senses, was a crucial detail which revealed the magnitude of the conflict Quatremère was confronted with in this issue. Being an astute observer of the changing culture and, more specifically, the shifting role of art in society throughout the past century, he must have been aware of the inevitability of museum-like phenomena, even as he was condemning the museum. The result was a discourse woven with disclaimers, exceptions and outright contradictions, through which the notion of the museum emerges, or rather is *concealed*, in ambiguity. This is why, for example, he did

not hesitate to include the Uffizi and other museums and galleries of Rome in the catalogue of "original settings" threatened by spoliation by the French.

In the end, it is a question of definition: there is a "good" and a "bad" manifestation of the museum, or, to follow Maurice Blanchot's reading of language in *L'entretien infini*, there is a "white" and a "black" image of the museum, both of which share the same characteristics in a positive-negative relationship.⁶³ For Quatremère this dual manifestation seemed to resolve the difficulties of the issue - allowing for disparate units such as the whole of Rome, the "collection classiques", Michaelangelo's house, and, ultimately, the British Museum itself, to be considered good and necessary museums, while the Louvre of the Roman spoliation, the *Musée des monuments*, and all the anonymous "Cabinets, Collections, Muséum" to be condemned as cemeteries of art. The inevitable arbitrariness of such a division, returned to undermine Quatremère's critique of the museum, and, more specifically, his outright condemnation of the Museum of Monuments. The question begs to be asked: if he approved of the museum-monument (such as the casa Buonarroti and the Pantheon, which he had been in charge of redecorating during the Revolution), as well as of the study-museum (the "collections classiques" of the *Considérations morales*, and the "musée didactique" which he proposed in the *Considérations sur les art du dessin* of 1791), and of the historical/archaeological museum (several of which he proposed across France, in the Letters to Miranda), and, finally, of the British Museum itself, then how could the critique against the museum institution in general and the Museum of Monuments in particular have been sustained?

My proposal is that in Quatremère's view the qualifying difference rested in the extent to which the higher sense of unity of the art on display was somehow preserved and communicated or lost in the service of other agendas (such as the "esprit de critique" or the mislead and destructive sense of history which he attributed to Lenoir and his project). It would follow that the kind of experience which the museum afforded to its visitors would

⁶³ See BLANCHOT, M., *L'entretien infini* (Paris, 1969); and J.-L. DÉOTTE, "Rome, the archetypal museum, and the Louvre, the negation of division", in *Art in Museums. New Research in Museum Studies*, S.Pearce (ed.), no. 5, 1995, p. 222.

be of paramount importance, immediately connected as it was to the capacity of the art to communicate its ultimate significance. This experience was the crucial moment towards which all other concerns - about context, history, authenticity, etc. - were contributing. This conclusion was implicit throughout the *Considérations morales*, but it was also emphatically manifested in the Letters to Miranda and to Canova, where the object in question - the "museum" of Rome and the Parthenon marbles - were analysed and praised predominantly in terms of the kind of experience they offered to the contemporary spectator. The remarkable conclusion being that both groupings were seen as operating satisfactorily in terms of their sense of unity and the kind of experience they were effecting, despite the fact that one was the actual site of the works' creation whereas the other was a fully-fledged museum institution.

Quatremère saw no conflict in, on one hand, praising the museums which he thought had the right attitude towards art - maintaining the totality and allusion to a greater unifying order, which was the fundamental precondition for a meaningful art - while, on the other hand, he condemned museums that were not essentially different from the ones he praised, because he focused exclusively on the particular situation of specific works of art therein, which he did not find satisfactory. Had Quatremère seen a coherent selection of Roman marbles from, say, Hadrian's villa, nicely set-up in a room of their own in the British Museum, would he have written the Letters to Miranda quite the way that he did? The question is, admittedly, rather facetious... As it has been pointed out before, the Letters to Miranda were a critique of a whole political attitude rather than a mere discussion of antiquities - they were as much about classical Rome as they were about contemporary France. Nevertheless, the point remains that the notion of the museum and its essential character was greatly incomplete in Quatremère's discourse.

However, what is really important for our discussion is that Quatremère, did make a number of highly significant observations which betrayed an implicit concern with matters for which the museum was absolutely crucial (or the other way round). In other words, although he never pursued the implications of these tangents himself, he *was* concerned

with alienation and fragmentation and modernity and that great unknown realm of history. I would go even further by saying that because he was, on a first level, focused on the pursuit of the increasingly dated idea of a largely linguistic model for the arts, he overlooked the really important issues. Nevertheless, he did allude to them, and often quite astutely - and it is on the basis of these collected allusions, observations and implications that I have based my proposal that, had he paused to give it some thought, he ought to have approved of the Museum of Monuments.

At this point, I would like to look briefly at three relatively recent interpretations of Quatremère, in order to further explore the idea of a higher sense of unity/order as the main theme behind Quatremère's discourse on the museum.

Jean-Louis Déotte⁶⁴ writes that Quatremère's discourse on the museum was one of the negation of historical time and of the suspension of destination. The Revolutionary museums were participating, according to Déotte, in a broader politico-metaphysical discourse, which Quatremère saw as detrimental to art. The agendas behind the Louvre and the Museum of Monuments implied a heavy politicising or "re-destination" of the works of art, which Quatremère understood as obscuring their true destination and significance. On the other hand, the British Museum represented for him the kind of apolitical/ ahistorical collection which allowed the pieces to appear in their original form, as works-of-art. This position, continues Déotte, was the result of Quatremère's aesthetic attitude to art, for which the museum actually was the pre-condition. Quatremère attacked the idea of the modern/Kantian aesthetic judgement of the "aura" of the individual work as the result of a process of dissociation and discontinuity - an idea which he directly associated with the museum and the "esprit de critique"/cult of the masterpiece. Nevertheless, what Quatremère was then concerned with was still aesthetic judgement, as it addressed art from the point of view of a distinctly aesthetic discourse. Despite his repeated reference to notions of situation and morality, Quatremère's critique did not

⁶⁴ DÉOTTE, J.-L., "Rome, the archetypal museum, and the Louvre, the negation of division", in S. Pearce (ed.), *Art in Museums. New Research in Museum Studies*, no.5, 1995.

actually raise the fundamental question of the ethical and ontological destination of art. Ultimately, concludes Déotte, Quatremère could not ignore the necessity of the institution - hence its "white" incarnation which he gladly supported - because he was an art-historian and a connoisseur, concerned with the production and judgement of art as art - i. e. as unsituated, ahistorical manifestations of a specifically artistic ideal. The invocation of the social and historical relevance of the work was merely a tool in the quest for "better" art, not the other way around.

Although largely in agreement with this reading, I would oppose the conclusion which leaves Quatremère in the position of the mere connoisseur. The aesthetic attitude to art, which he could not escape, did not define the limit of his concerns, but merely the limit of his interpretative tools. Quatremère's discourse on art and architecture - incorporating the critique of the museum - was, indeed, largely a quest for the golden principles on which artistic perfection could be achieved again (or at least approximated) in that newly-shaped future which since the Enlightenment was being systematically promised. But this was not all; or, rather, in the process of achieving this goal, Quatremère found himself tackling issues which exceeded by a long way his aesthetic preoccupations. His critique of the museum was such a "by-product" which, in itself, betrayed concerns and raised issues that, strictly speaking, would have been irrelevant to a connoisseur. Déotte himself offers a lead which rescues Quatremère from the confines of connoisseurship - although he (Déotte) does not identify it as such. He suggests that Quatremère, whether through his proposal of the Alexandria-like Institut or the language/origin theory of world architecture - was ultimately aiming at a totalising synthesis of culture and history. The principles of comprehensiveness and coherence implicitly informed Quatremère's entire work, to an extent that warrants comparison with Leibniz's *Monadologia*.⁶⁵ Such an analogy demands the implication of metaphysics, which does greater justice to Quatremère's aspirations than pure connoisseurship.

⁶⁵ In this light, Rome was the great monad, representing the ultimate manifestation of unity between art and society - see DÉOTTE, *ibid.*, p 221.

With Sylvia Lavin, I would say that the importance of Quatremère's theoretical contribution lay beyond the articulation of a model for artistic and architectural judgement, in so far as that model also implied a new way of conceptualising history and identity and, thus, of addressing culture as a whole.⁶⁶ Lavin is predominantly concerned with architecture, but certain key aspects of her interpretation hold true for Quatremère's entire discourse. It follows from her proposals that one of Quatremère's most enduring aims was to identify a universal, metaphysical sense of order governing human endeavour - one which would be, simultaneously, transcendental (in its universality) and secular (in its independence from nature and specificity to mankind). His structuring principle throughout this quest was the idea of language - a language-like system governing artistic and architectural creation across history and geography. His engagement with history and the quest for origins were essential for the construction and legitimisation of his system of art.

The issue of the origins of civilisation was one of the most important intellectual debates of the time, as it was thought to define the moment of primordial unity and transparency between truth and representation. Quatremère contributed to the debate throughout his life - most famously with his dissertation on Egyptian architecture which won the Prix Caylus in 1785, entitled: *De l'architecture égyptienne considérée dans son origine, ses principes et son goût, et comparée sous les mêmes rapports à l'architecture greque* (published in 1803). His most important innovation in this essay was not the identification of Egypt with origins as such - already a largely accepted premise - but rather the idea that the origins of architecture were directly related to those of language. By merging the two debates, on origins and on the linguistic structure of architecture, Quatremère was suggesting that the causal and universal relationship between primitive forms and more advanced cultural expressions was legible in the patterns and structures of the monuments of different periods and civilisations. In other words, he was proposing that not only the common origins of all civilisation were detectable in the artistic heritage of the world, but also that the historical development of civilisation, and its relationship to society, were legible therein.

Ultimately, Quatremère fused art, language and society into one theory, whereby the

⁶⁶ Op. cit (note 1).

invention of the first two were not only part of the invention of the latter, but also shared elemental structural similarities. As such, the nature of societies was written in their art and architecture - and it was a simple step further to suggest that the national identity of a society, such an urgent issue at the beginning of the nineteenth century, could be read in its monuments.

Despite the variation of my conclusions from those of Édouard Pommier's on Quatremère and the museum, I would avail myself of certain observations he makes in the *L'art de la liberté*.⁶⁷ Pommier, in reference to, and quoting from, the Letters to Miranda, writes :

Les monuments de l'Antiquité offrent beaucoup plus qu'un répertoire de modèles à copier: ils sont la matière première d'une science indispensable au progrès de notre civilisation, "cette science qui doit rattacher nos connaissances à celles du passé, qui doit faire revivre une foule de notions perdues, qui doit porter à la philosophie et aux arts des lumières toujours nouvelles". Quatremère de Quincy développe l'idée de la solidarité de toutes les connaissances avec les beaux-arts et semble vouloir ainsi illustrer cette intuition de l'Institut national, qu'il avait esquissée en 1791: "La philosophie, l'histoire, la science des langues, l'intelligence des poètes, la chronologie du monde, l'astronomie scientifique, la critique, sont autant de parties séparées de ce qu'on appelle la république des arts, et intéressées à son intégralité."⁶⁸

For the first time, suggests Pommier, the emphasis of the concern with antiquity was shifted from the arts to the whole of culture. Talking about the indissoluble unity of Rome, Quatremère passed from the reference to monuments as signs and the book metaphor to the metaphor of the "natural" museum;⁶⁹ and, thus, continues Pommier, Quatremère offered the latter as the ultimate totalising unit and the opposite to the fragmentation of the other, "artificial" museums coveting the fragments of Rome (such as the Louvre). The manifestation of the museum in its natural form - the "white" image of Blanchot - was the only one which makes sense, being the one which is whole. Such a total museum (as exemplified by Rome) would be a place where the harmonious interrelation of all elements would occur, and thus the whole would be intrinsically unified and meaningful. Pommier

⁶⁷ Op. cit. (note 58).

⁶⁸ Ibid., pp. 421-422.

⁶⁹ These are the two instances from the Thirs Letter to Miranda which Pommier cites in *ibid.*, pp. 422-423: "Tous ces monuments ne sont pour la philosophie que des signes, dont l'intelligence une fois acquise et complète doit être d'un grand secours à la recherche de la vérité"; and "Qu'est-ce que l'antique à Rome, sinon un grand livre dont le temps a détruit et dispersé les pages, et dont les recherches modernes remplissent chaque jour les vides et réparent les lacunes?"

then suggests that the integrity of the total/"natural" museum was of quintessential importance for Quatremère's thought, as well as a conceptual innovation in its own right, since it was on this precondition that the possibility of a proper "science" or history of art (as we know it today) could occur elsewhere; in other words, that the possibility of a proper understanding of art could rely on the maintenance of - and thus availability to study and research - the original sources.⁷⁰ As a result of this shift of emphasis towards the totality of context, according to Pommier, Quatremère contributed to the theoretical foundations of art history: a history which could only be written through the relativisation of the notion of the masterpiece and the glorification of the comparative.⁷¹ In that sense, Pommier's identification of the importance of this idea of unity/integrity/totality for Quatremère - significantly manifested through the almost-interchangeable use of the concepts of book, language and total-museum to describe Rome - is, ultimately, an identification of the deeply historicist root of Quatremère's discourse. Referring to Quatremère's pronouncement that the sense of the beautiful was an informed and comparative judgement, Pommier writes:

*La notion de jugement fondé sur des relations et des comparaisons avec "les points intermédiaires" implique, au moins implicitement, celle d'histoire: l'histoire de l'œuvre d'art, de sa création à son lieu de découverte et à son lieu de présentation; et l'histoire de l'art, envisagée comme l'étude de la série et des circonstances dans lesquelles l'œuvre vient s'inscrire.*⁷²

It transpires, therefore, that this idea of integrity and totality was actually realised historically. In other words, the metaphysical level of the inquiry, the quest for a universal order, occurs in the realm of history.

Ultimately, despite his interpretative tools, Quatremère was interested in the essential and universal nature of things. Déotte is right in identifying his opposition to the "politico-metaphysic" agenda of the French Revolutionary and Napoleonic museums, but he is wrong in leaving it at that. Quatremère's idea that art and architecture, across the globe and the centuries, had a coherent system based on its essential and universal nature, was the

⁷⁰ Ibid., p. 426.

⁷¹ Ibid., p. 430.

⁷² Ibid., p. 428.

basis of what he called a "metaphysique". This mode of conceptualising artistic production offered the possibility of identifying continuity and change in culture and society as a whole through a rational mechanism, while, at the same time, testifying to the presence of a greater order unifying and legitimising human artifice on a metaphysical level. My proposal is that this metaphysics was also what Lenoir was aiming at with the Museum of Monuments, although his framework was much more implicit and metaphorical, instead of normative/theoretical like Quatremère's.

I will now return to the Museum of Monuments for the following two chapters, in order to offer the interpretation which will allow, in the final chapter, for its rapprochement with Quatremère's thought on the museum, as we have seen it here.

Chapter 5

The *Musée des Monuments français*: analysis

As an introduction to this chapter, I would like to discuss the idea of national patrimony and its relevance to the Museum of Monuments. An essential aspect of the great inventive project of history, to which the Museum of Monuments belonged, involved the problem of collective identity - that is, the element of stability amidst the change of historical movement. The idea of the nation was the fundamental complement to this quest for history, and the definition of national identity one of its main directives. In the context of the Revolution and its inheritance, the concept of national patrimony and the extensive debates around it, provided the specific framework for the development of the museum in general. The concept of patrimony was the crucial mediator between the past and the future, having substituted the role of tradition in the establishment of continuity. It was under the concept of national patrimony that the scattered, ambiguous materials of the past were united, in order to form the building blocks for the future.

From the later eighteenth century onwards, the development of modern political ideology substituted tradition as the vehicle of collective identity and memory, alongside the transformation of history from implicit ground to explicit, positive science.¹ The notion of the state as the secular source of all authority was accompanied by an understanding of the past as a concrete, objective source of legitimacy and credibility. One of the most useful tools in the construction of this history was found in the domain of the arts and architecture - a domain where innovation had always fused with continuity and the re-enactment of tradition. The understanding of art as "historical monument" and its key role in the

¹ Dominique Poulot's work of the last fifteen years has explored the notion of patrimony and its implications for culture, specifically in France, in considerable depth, incorporating and responding to the ideas of his predecessors. See particularly his "Naissance du monument historique", *Revue d'histoire moderne et contemporaine*, vol. XXXII, July-Sept. 1985; "De l'héritage monumental à l'entreprise du patrimoine. Pour un histoire de la transmission culturelle en France XVIIIe-XXe", *EUI Working Papers*, ECS No. 91/3; and *Musée, Nation, Patrimoine 1789-1815* (Paris: Gallimard, 1997).

foundation of national identity concretised in the notion of patrimony. The Revolution provided the radically-altered cultural context where such a notion was suddenly and urgently relevant. Triggered by the phenomenon of vandalism, the understanding of and attitudes towards culture and its products became an explicit issue which impinged on the very essence not only of the Revolution but of the (modern) nation itself - hence the continuing topicality of the notion of patrimony/heritage throughout the next couple of centuries.

The museum, as it emerged from the Revolutionary debates, was the locus par excellence for the institutionalisation of national patrimony.² It was within the museums, rationally-arranged and publicly-accessible, that the role of patrimony as historical legitimacy and proof was made concrete, so that it could safely extend as an abstraction, to include the totality of the nation's cultural output across its reaches. Through the idea of patrimony and its exemplary manifestation in the museum, history was fixed as the similarly rationally- arranged and publicly-accessible ground whereupon the nation and its state stood.

The Museum of Monuments represented a particularly significant case of the "urge for patrimony". In many ways, Lenoir's project was its earliest and purest manifestation, exemplifying the shift of the traditional, situated attitude to culture into the modern category of patrimony at its most acute. Quite literally overnight, the objects which found their way into the Petits-Augustins were transformed from living participants in the continuity of tradition and its rituals, into building blocks for the construction of the new history and identity of the nation. It is significant that the vast majority of artefacts which remained in the Museum of Monuments had no claim to absolute artistic value - as did the unambiguous masterpieces in the Louvre. Works referred to as "masterpieces" in the Petits-Augustins, with little exception, were thought so *comparatively* - that is, measuring their artistic

² On the Revolutionary debates on art, vandalism and the museum see POMMIER, E., *L'art de la liberté: Doctrines et débats de la Révolution française* (Paris: Gallimard, 1991), and POULOT, D., *"Surveiller et s'instruire": la Révolution française et l'intelligence de l'héritage historique*, Studies on Voltaire and the Eighteenth Century, Voltaire Foundation (Oxford: Alden Press, 1996).

achievement in relation to the accomplishment of their era. In other words, these works did not already belong to the emancipated aesthetic category of "high art" - it was precisely this deficit which kept them from being claimed by the Louvre. As high art, the Louvre pieces were already once removed from the fabric of the social continuum, their participation in that rarefied category preceding and modifying all other meaning.³ Whereas the pieces in the Museum of Monuments were only perceived as meaningful as parts of a greater whole - the physical whole of the church/palace/urban structure to which they belonged and, most importantly, the symbolic whole of the traditional paradigm in which they actively participated.

In that sense, the transformation of Lenoir's monuments to patrimony was a more radical operation than the equivalent transformation of the artistic riches of the Louvre.

Furthermore, I would suggest, it was more useful and enduring - ultimately, more modern. The works in the Louvre constituted national patrimony to the extent that the newly-defined nation adhered to the Enlightenment criterion of recognising and celebrating the sublimated category of art as a necessary aspect of the nation's makeup. When the victorious republican army under Napoleon gathered the artistic riches of Europe and brought them to the Louvre, in 1798, the idea was that these examples of the highest artistic achievement really belonged to France as the only truly enlightened nation. Liberated from the shackles of despotism and on the path of regeneration, France was the only place fulfilling the potential of these works which, as products of exceptional genius transcended their necessarily constricted context and anticipated the *lumières*.⁴ The relevance of these

³ A good example of this is the famous case of the Rubens' Medici cycle, painted to celebrate the reign of Henry IV and his wife, Marie de Medici. The references of this series of canvases were quite blatant, and as such they would have been prime candidates for destruction under the Revolutionary regime. At the same time, however, those works had long been considered by artists and connoisseurs as prime examples of artistic accomplishment. A solution to the dilemma was found by displaying two of the most allegorical paintings from the series (*The Treaty of Angoulême* and *The Conclusion of the Peace*), because, as McClellan writes: "Removed from their narrative sequence, the dense allegory of the scenes rendered them illegible except as figurative paintings and examples of Rubens's brush; the nude foreground figures became all the more prominent as signifiers of the Ideal." All the same, as an added precaution all 'feudal signs' in the paintings were painted over. See MCCLELLAN, A., *Inventing the Louvre: Art, politics, and the origins of the modern museum in eighteenth-century France* (Cambridge University Press, 1994), pp. 110-111.

⁴ There are extensive discussions of the issue in existence - see, for example, POULOT, D., "Le Louvre imaginaire: Essai sur le statut du musée en France des lumières à la République", *Historical Reflections*, vol. 17, no. 2, spring 1991, and his *Musée, Nation...* (op. cit. note 1); MCCLELLAN, A., op. cit. (note 3),

masterpieces to national patrimony was established via the Enlightenment ideal: France as the enlightened state laid claim to those works as manifestations of the endurance of human genius across history. The identification did not occur on the level of the actual history of the nation, but on the history of an ideal - and as such the actual "nationality" of the works was irrelevant. In short, the fundamental universality of the Enlightenment ideal rendered the role of high art in the constitution of patrimony less acute.

The Museum of French Monuments, on the other hand, participated in the invention of national patrimony rather differently. The notion of progress towards the *lumières* and the nation's imminent fulfilment of this ideal was clearly present in the structuring of the chronology and in Lenoir's whole rhetoric on the brilliant future facing the nations' artists - as we saw in Chapter 1. But this aspect of the Museum was tangential to the invention of patrimony rather than essential. The evidence of *lumières* in the monuments was negligible compared to that in the masterpieces of the Louvre - in fact the reason the monuments were there was that deficit. What mattered in this Museum vis. à vis patrimony was the very existence of these monuments. By being unambiguously French and stylistically distinct, they directly alluded to the historical extension of the nation, tracing its development as a meaningful narrative. By being very recent fragments from a greater artistic and symbolic whole - the church, the city square, the royal dwelling - they reinforced the continuity and coherence of the nation as one living culture, developing and changing, yet always maintaining its essential identity.

What I have called the specific modernity of this understanding of patrimony and its participation in the formation of national identity evidently rests in the relationship to history. And it is here that this thesis departs from the discussion of the transformation of art and architecture into heritage, and engages with the problem of the representation and interpretation of history in the museum. In that sense, what is of particular interest for this discussion is how the Museum of Monuments operated on the level of the

POMMIER, E., "La Révolution et le destin des œuvres d'art", introductory essay to his edition of QUATREMÈRE DE QUINCY, *Lettres à Miranda* (Paris: Macula, 1989).

metaphysicisation of history as a response to specific needs and lacunae left by the shift of culture. The notion of patrimony was, of course, itself part of that shift, but there is a danger in concluding the discussion of phenomena such as the Museum of Monuments at that point: the notion of patrimony favours, inevitably, the nationalist colouring of the whole discussion, looking at the significance of said phenomena *to the extent* that they were relevant to the specific national-invention operation. The actual principle of a such an operation - the reasons why it was necessary in the first place - tend to be taken for granted. In that sense, the greater project of the invention of history as an independent notion and the shift towards the historical paradigm is overshadowed by its consequences - such as the idea of the nation and the necessity of "evidence" in the form of national patrimony, or heritage. I would propose that some of the most significant characteristics of the Museum of Monuments become manifest when the project is interpreted beyond the specificities of that particular framework, in the wider context of the philosophy of history. It seems to me that, after a certain point, hugely important as the discussion of heritage might be, there is no way of understanding the greater implications of complex and ambiguous projects such as this Museum unless the scope of the interpretation is significantly widened. Focusing on the history of the concept of heritage, or the development of art history for that matter, the differences between the Petits-Augustins and, say, the Museum of Cluny, dwindle to technicalities and to obvious issues of precedent - Cluny being one of the most obvious offshoots of the Museum of Monuments⁵. I would propose, however, that this is not the case, and that the earlier project allowed for an engagement with the greater questions of history and identity in far more complex and interesting ways than this, or any, of its antecedents did.

⁵ Stephen Bann has offered an interesting alternative to this in *The clothing of Clio: A study in the representation of history in nineteenth-century Britain and France* (Cambridge University Press, 1984). He contrasts the two collections on grounds of their semiotic differences, reading one as a metonymy (Lenoir's) and the other as a synecdoche (Cluny). Depending on how one reads this, it could be hinting at a genuine distinction, but Bann certainly doesn't pursue the matter beyond that initial hint.

History

The Museum of Monuments was clearly about history. As we already saw, in Lenoir's own words, its aim was to demonstrate the link between the progress of the arts to the passage of time. But it was about a much greater sense of "history" than that, which encompassed and united all the seemingly non-historical aspects of the Museum - such as the Élysée, the insistence on atmosphere over archeological rigour, and the investment on sentiment.

The unprecedented dissolution of established categories which followed the 1798 Revolution forced the entire realm of symbolic representation into uncertainty and radical reconsideration. To begin with, this entire realm was obviously problematic because of its re-presenting of that which the Revolution was attempting to annihilate. Upon closer inspection, certain areas were excluded, as their associations somehow transcended the specificity of what was defined as the *Ancien Régime*, making it easy for the Revolution to re-interpret and re-appropriate them. The area covered by artistic connoisseurship - that is, the hierarchy founded on the concept of the masterpiece - was affected to the extent that tastes changed and values shifted, but the category itself remained intact and in full operation, as did, in fact, a large core of the old hierarchy itself; beyond the obvious case of classical art we have only to remember the incident with Rubens' Medici cycle at the Louvre, where the unchallenged status of the paintings as masterpieces kept them in display despite their obvious royalist significance. But the body of works of symbolic representation largely outside the scope of mainstream connoisseurship and the classical ideal, a body not even considered as a single coherent group until then, was suddenly thrown to light defined as a significant "other" - that is, those pieces which were, like all symbolic representation, inherited from the *Ancien Régime*, but which did not possess unambiguous artistic merit to help them transcend their *Ancien Régime* specificity. These were the works which found their way into the depots but, unlike "art", did not subsequently find their way out again and into the Louvre.

It is clear, therefore, that the pieces in the depots left unclaimed by the committees of the Louvre - which was largely what Lenoir initiated the Museum with - were not an arbitrary mass. The fact that they had been brought over to the depots in the first place while, at the same time, were not deemed appropriate for the new Republic's showroom of artistic excellence, indicated the novel significance of those pieces, albeit one without precise articulation as yet.

So, what was the reason which brought those works in the Petits-Augustins in the first place? By being exclusively sculpted pieces outside the classical paradigm, what made them valuable and, thus, worthy of transportation to a depot for their safekeeping, was not artistic merit as such - although they were understood as works of artistic endeavour. It was in the name of "history" and "instruction" that they were preserved, as laid out in the decrees for the conservation of ecclesiastical property - and, later for all confiscated nationalised property - drawn between 1790 and 1794 by specially appointed committees.⁶ The Third *Instruction* of 1790 stated clearly in two of its nine clauses that "all monuments older than the year 1300 shall be conserved because of the representation of the costumes", as well as "monuments which are not the above, but are instructive for history or on the epochs of art".⁷ Even the hardline government of year II (1794) produced a major *Instruction* on conservation, composed by Vicq d'Azur, under the title "Instruction sur la manière d'inventorier et de conserver, dans toute l'étendue de la République, tous les objets qui peuvent servir aux arts, aux sciences et à l'enseignement [my italics]". And then, the first report of Grégoire on vandalism (year II/1794, immediately after the fall of Robespierre), famously suggested that, although "à Franciade [St. Denis] la massue nationale a justement frappé les tyrans jusque dans leurs tombeaux", actually conserving the tomb of someone like Richelieu (which Lenoir had) would "renforcer la haine des tyrans, en les condamnant, par cette conservation même, à une espèce de pilori perpétuel"⁸.

⁶ For an account of these *Instructions*, see BOYLAN, P. J., "Revolutionary France and the Foundation of Modern Museum Management and Curatorial Practice", Part 1: From Revolution to the First Republic, 1798-1792, in *Museum Management and Curatorship*, vol. 11, no. 2, June 1992, and Part 2: David and Vicq d'Azur, 1792-1794, in *ibid.*, vol. 15, no. 2, June 1996.

⁷ *ibid.* (Part 1), p. 149.

⁸ GRÉGOIRE, *Rapport sur les destructions opérées par le vandalisme et sur les moyens de la réprimer* (Paris, 14 fructidor an II/31 Aug. 1794).

The Revolutionary debate on artistic heritage is an expansive issue which, as I have already suggested, remains outside the scope of this thesis. Nevertheless, the conclusion which I would retain here is that a new dimension to the relevance of art was emerging through the widespread change, rapidly becoming a key feature of the great project of the (re)invention of cultural and national identity. This was the historical, or rather *historicist* dimension, which removed the work of art from both its culturally situated (as symbolic representation) and its connoisseurial significance, linking it to a realm of universal relevance and objectivity. The recognition of the value of those monuments which were not "useful to the arts" as models of excellence, but which were nevertheless "instructive for history and the epochs of art" was not a mere continuation of the tradition of Caylus and Montfaucon. In the context of the Revolution, the idea of History had suddenly acquired a tremendous and urgent new significance as the realm of all rational order, the only realm where the Revolution could stake its legitimacy. The fragments of the discredited old order became the ideal building blocks for the construction of this realm. Their transportation in the depots was an act of fundamental transformation, and, although the depots were "provisoires" (as Lenoir himself stated in the title of his first catalogue), that transformation was, in essence, permanent. With this in mind, the creation and development of the Museum of Monuments emerged as no less than the logical conclusion of the idea behind the depots - that is, of the project of constructing history.⁹

As Reinhart Koselleck reminds us, traditionally there was the writing of a continuous "current history" (*Zeitgeschichte*) which accounted for something more akin to "former present" than "past".¹⁰ Whereas the legitimacy of the *Ancien Régime* was drawn from the continuity of this "present", the Revolutionary legitimacy became "a coefficient of movement, mobilising history in terms of the prevailing prospect of the future". In that

⁹ The shift away from the traditional paradigm into the modern/historicist one was the core of the Revolution which transcended Revolutionary specificity. One could argue that the Revolution was merely a vehicle for this deeper shift, accelerating and, perhaps, intensifying it, but far from inventing it. It would be interesting to attempt the identification of certain key manifestations of this modern shift - such as the emergence of the museum institution - in countries other than France, where the transition occurred more subtly, without the assistance of a revolution.

¹⁰ KOSELLECK, R., *Futures Past: On the Semantics of Historical Time*, trans. Keith Tribe (MIT Press, 1985), p. 142.

sense, the Revolution provided "a lasting title of legitimacy in the form of a metahistorical constant". Koselleck recognises a new paradigm at work, one which required the transcendence of history as *Geschichte* - that is, the traditional understanding of history as recurrent temporality and lived experience - in favour of *Historie*, which is history as the object of "scientific" historiography.¹¹

[History] is no longer a given temporal order - for instance, a God-given order - of all of history that arranges the material of history, but instead the history of the future and the history of the past are determined by desires and plans, as well as the questions which arise in the present. The experiential space of contemporaries is the epistemological kernel of all histories.¹²

The historian had unprecedented freedom in the writing of this new history, being in a position to construct hypothetical histories which drew more attention to the prerequisites of all histories than to these histories themselves. This was, of course, the philosophical history of the Enlightenment, more interesting in its abstraction than its specificity, in its ordering rather than its content. Although, as I will be showing, the "constructive" project of the Museum of Monuments was not a philosophical history, nevertheless the quest for a unifying order persisted and prevailed throughout, rendering Fénelon's statement of nearly a century earlier strangely apposite: "the true completeness of history rests in its ordering".¹³ The predominance of principle - or "prerequisite" - in this new sense of history has another crucial implication, which Leo Strauss identifies as the conviction of the present that it understands the past better than it understood itself.¹⁴ Gadamer elaborates on this by saying that such a conviction "excludes from the outset the possibility that the thoughts which are handed down to us simply could be true". He calls this "the obstinate positivity of a naive historicism", which operates by applying the (falsely) superior perspective of the present to the whole of the past.¹⁵ Despite its theoretical authority, the present is actually absent from this understanding of history, where the operation of understanding the past is geared to and substantiated by an eagerly anticipated yet elusive

¹¹ Ibid., pp. 52-53.

¹² Ibid., p. 137. I would actually substitute the word "experiential" with "intellectual" or "theoretical" in this quotation, as I believe it is precisely the discrediting of the *experience* of history (*Geschichte*) by the *theorising about* history (*Historie*) which constitutes the fundamental shift discussed here.

¹³ Cited in *ibid.*, p. 139.

¹⁴ STRAUSS, L., *What is Political Philosophy?* (Glencoe, 1959), p. 68.

¹⁵ GADAMER, H.-G., *Truth and Method*, trans. Weinsheimer & Marshall (London: Sheed & Ward, 1989), p. 534.

future. The primary role of posterity in Enlightenment philosophy¹⁶ and the construction of the new sense of history was a fundamental concept to the museum and the role of the museum in the project of historical invention. In this paradigm, since the only way the past could exist was through its recognition by posterity, an element of preservation became necessary to the project of invention. This is what the Revolution was soon confronted with and, despite its initial cries for a return to a total *tabularasa*, embraced the museum as one of its most significant vehicles.

On a first - and the most explicit - level of operation, the Museum of Monuments was clearly on a par with this dominant agenda of historical invention. The pieces were presented by Lenoir as examples of the development of artistic style through the centuries, and thus as examples of history. The depot-as-Museum was consolidating and making explicit the ideological transformation of the pieces: ignoring their situated references, the display proposed a different kind of order according to which they should be interpreted; an order no longer relating to any practical, current state of affairs, but rather an abstract, theoretical one, about the movement of history and ways of accounting for it.

Even after the passing of the Revolution, when the pieces in the Petits-Augustins could, theoretically, be safely returned to their places of origin - as, in fact, a large body of critics was demanding - Lenoir argued convincingly for the Museum: this was a project which employed rational principles as well as imagination and sentiment, in order to present the monuments at their best advantage, emphasising their style within the carefully staged setting of each era, thus enhancing their significance by indicating their relevance in the study of history.¹⁷ The Museum allowed the monuments to be experienced as a meaningful collection in ways which would have been impossible outside its walls. The implication here was that the historicist construct to which the monuments contributed had a

¹⁶ Of the long list of works on this subject, I would cite two of the classics: BECKER, C., *The heavenly city of eighteenth-century philosophers* (New haven & London: Yale University Press, 1952), and VOEGELIN, E., *From Enlightenment to Revolution* (Duke University Press, 1975).

¹⁷ See, among the many examples, *Description* an VI, pp. 4-5 and *Musée*, an VI, p. 52, where he repeated his well-known premise that his meticulous reconstruction of the chronology of the arts - a principle of arrangement ordered by nature itself - would please and instruct artists and public alike not only in the progress of the arts themselves but also in the broader history of the nation.

much greater significance than the socio-political and even metaphysical implications of their original situation. In their newly discovered capacity to testify on history, the monuments were laying claim to an objective, rational and permanent order, which transcended what was seen as the arbitrariness and transience of their *Ancien Régime* references. Lenoir described already in the second edition of his catalogue how the "objets d'une culte fanatique" became in the Museum "les matériaux de l'Histoire".¹⁸ In other words, the chronological display of the monuments in Petits-Augustins was that which would assist them to reveal their true significance, beyond the veils of irrelevant, prejudiced meaning imposed on them by their fanatical contexts. By leaving their origins and entering the Museum, the monuments underwent a sort of semantic purification: they shed the irrelevancies imposed on them by the *Ancien Régime*, in order to finally reveal their true significance, as participants in the enlightened order of history. In the end, and in line with the future-oriented character of the new sense of history, the historicist transformation of the monuments in the Museum was less an accusation of the *Ancien Régime* in its socio-political actuality, than a confirmation of the newly envisaged paradigm as a whole worldview. Although the origins of the Museum of Monuments were firmly rooted in the context of vandalism, the relevance of the project exceeded the demonisation of the *Ancien Régime*, and it is for this reason that it operated equally successfully under the variety of different regimes that came and went during its life.¹⁹

To briefly recapitulate: The monuments Lenoir was left to work with were not an arbitrary mass to begin with. They were pieces which carried a key significance - albeit not yet fully articulated - for the project of historical invention which the Revolution initiated. What the Museum of Monuments contributed to the historicist potential of the pieces - and to the development of the modern museum institution - was precisely the articulation which was lacking, by explicitly and for the first time structuring them into a coherent, emancipated body, which could be read as a narrative.

¹⁸ *Notice historique*, an IV, p. vi.

¹⁹ Actually, as Poulot has shown across his work, the issue of vandalism and its demonisation was itself a constructive device, a vehicle for the necessary transformation of the *Ancien Régime*'s identity and role in the new state of things - see, for example, POULOT, D., "Revolutionary 'vandalism' and the birth of the museum: the effects of the representation of modern cultural terror", in S. Pearce (ed.), *Art in Museums*, New Research in Museum Studies, no. 5 (London, 1995).

Although the chronological arrangement of an art-collection was still far from established practice by Lenoir's beginnings, there had already been precedent.²⁰ However, I would argue that the stronger precedent for Lenoir's arrangement was less from the world of art collections than from the broader intellectual realm of Enlightenment thought. This was not a classic art collection, but a new hybrid of urgent socio-political relevance and its structuring on a strictly rationalist principle directly affected its role in that context. Enlightenment rationality as the great unifying order was, here, at its most constructive: it was no longer a case of the confirmation of an existing paradigm (such as the Vienna Belvedere), but the construction of an altogether different one. In the Museum of Monuments the chronological sequence was not really a demonstrative device, a *re-*presentation, but rather an inventive one, a presentation. Chronology was rapidly becoming a principle of near-autonomous significance. Aiming to confer the objectivity of scientific principle upon the realm of art, Lenoir had proposed that both the "chefs-d'œuvre" of the Louvre and the "monumens historiques" of the Petits-Augustins ought to be chronologically arranged (the former in his *Essai sur le Muséum* of 1794, which was never realised). He justified this proposal in a number of ways - he wrote, for example, that chronology was "la ligne de démarcation que la nature a tracée elle-même", and that through it the museum would become a "livre ouvert à l'instruction"²¹.

But the most telling pronouncement pertaining to chronology, I would suggest, identified the latter as the necessary structure through which the history of the arts could be linked with that of time - "lier l'histoire de l'art à celle des temps".²² In other words, the medium of chronology would re-integrate the realm of art with the rest of the culture, with its "periods" and their rhyme and reason, so that a unified and objective order would emerge -

²⁰ Most famous being the re-arrangement of the imperial gallery of Vienna at the Belvedere palace in 1781 by Christian von Mechel, who aimed to present a "visual history of art". It is important to note, however, that this project, although still innovative, did adhere to the classical model of art connoisseurship - see MEIJERS, D. J., "La classification comme principe: la transformation de la Galerie impériale de Vienne en 'histoire visible de l'art'", in E. Pommier (ed.), *Les Musées en Europe à la veille de l'ouverture du Louvre* (Paris: Klincksieck, 1995). Furthermore, even earlier in the eighteenth-century there are some examples of the nascent historicisation of collections - see HASKELL, F., *History and its Images: Art and the interpretation of the past* (New Haven & London: Yale University Press 1993), Chapter 6.

²¹ *Musée*, an VI, p. 52.

²² *Essai sur le Muséum*, 1794, p. 12.

that of "history". We have already seen that the idea of a dominant chronology for the display was not exclusively Lenoir's - the minister Bénézech explicitly demanded such an arrangement as he was officially recognising the institution in 1795, following suit from a dominant pro-chronology tendency which had been manifesting itself in the proposals for museums of all kinds since the Revolution.²³ The chronological sequence, the "forme raisonnée" of the collection at Petits-Augustins, was the most prominent feature of the Museum of Monuments, advertised by Lenoir in the catalogues, but also approved by the authorities and praised by the visitors. Ultimately, it could be said that this idea was suggested by the circumstances themselves. The objectivity and radicality of this device was a fundamental necessity, a precondition for the emerging paradigm which made the Museum of Monuments possible in the first place. In other words, there was a kind of inevitability that those pieces would be semantically reinvented as links in the chronological chain - chronology being the purest rationalist/positivist backbone of the great invention of history.

Origins

Although the chronological circuit of the Museum formally commenced with the Middle Ages in the Thirteenth-century hall, Lenoir's idea of French history extended all the way to antiquity and to the mythical origins of human civilisation. We already saw how he continued to list in the catalogue, in great detail, the twenty-odd classical sculptures which he called "archétypes", and which had been taken to the Louvre, in the name of completeness and continuity. What he called the "monuments celtiques", a handful of statues and carvings of pre- and early Christianity, were important because they established the extension of the history of "French" art into the primitive stirrings of northern European civilisation (identified with the term "celtic", at the time), while the classical antiquities did even more than that: as an embodiment of the classical ideal, the essential model of all western art, they represented an instance of the explosion of history into the realm of myth and the mythical origins of civilisation.

²³ See POMMIER, op. cit. (note 2).

It is significant that the section of the "Archétypes Antiques" were the twenty-odd pieces were listed extended over twenty-two pages in the catalogue. In addition to the exhaustive descriptions, Lenoir analysed the uses these artefacts had in the cult, their relations with other monuments, the meaning of their inscriptions and their symbolic representations, etc. At no. III, for example, there was a fragment from a "pierre sépulcrale", with names of the dead carved on it, which gave Lenoir the opportunity for a comparative etymological analysis, explaining what the names meant in Greek and what their contemporary French equivalents were.²⁴ At nos. XII and XXII, representing Bacchus in a marble statue and a festival in his honour in relief respectively, Lenoir discussed the Bacchic myth at length and some of its versions across the world and history, including Christianity where Bacchus/Dionysus survived as St. Denis.²⁵ At no. XIII, the marble statue of Meleagros was identified, over three pages of analysis, as embodying the "caractère du beau idéal" which could also been seen in the Apollo Belvedere and the Antinoos - among the most celebrated classical marbles of the Louvre.²⁶ Similarly with the "Monumens Celtiques", where more discussions of comparative mythology took place, with great emphasis on the direct transition of figures from antiquity to Christianity. In the process, Lenoir referred to a host of ancient historians and brought in ancient and modern discussions on theology, genealogy and etymology in his attempt to convey the sense of continuity he was after. At no. 2, for example, the fragment of an altar gives rise to an examination of Esus, god of the Gauls, as the Greek Àres, the Roman Mars and the Germanic Erich;²⁷ at no. 423 (later additions in the collection did not have continuous numbering), a statue of Nehalennia, Celtic goddess from Germany, prompts Lenoir to avail himself of yet another historians such as Pausanias, Theocritus, and Keysler in order to draw analogies between her and Diana, Isis, Ceres, Minerva and the Virgin Mary, via the symbolism of the new moon and the idea of a great goddess of Nature, with links to Hercules and Neptune.²⁸

²⁴ *Description*, an X, pp. 43-44.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 50-51 and 60.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 53-57.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, pp. 81-82.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 87-90.

With the profound intellectual changes which signalled the demise of the divine paradigm and the consequent need for the articulation of a secular history, the origins of human civilisation acquired a new significance. The search for primary causes was intensified by the Enlightenment, whose intellectual framework rested on the full accountability of the world in rational terms. This was manifested throughout the culture, in the realms of art and architecture, language and religion. Architecture played a particularly important role, as the most obvious and most imposing remnants of the distant past were buildings.²⁹ In France, the architectural theory of the eighteenth century was dominated by the question of origins, and figures like Laugier, Caylus and Blondel were instrumental in the dissemination of this influence.³⁰ Egypt, with its unique and fascinating monuments recorded even in the oldest surviving texts of antiquity, held a place of unparalleled significance in the project to establish the historical origins of mankind.³¹ The belief that its ancient civilisation held a mystical key to the origins of human endeavour was already popular in the later-sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, where hieroglyphs, as well as the monuments themselves, were studied on varying levels between the occult and the rationalist. By the end of the eighteenth century, and especially with Napoleon's campaign, the interest in Egypt reached its peak as the subject of countless studies spanning the whole range from mysticism to the nascent science of archeology.

Lenoir was profoundly influenced by these themes, which found their way in the Museum of Monuments as well in a number of texts which he published throughout his life. Both his "mentors", Montfaucon and Winckelmann, had dealt with Egypt as the origins of civilisation in their work, the former according it its accepted significance, while the latter, famously, challenging it.³² Lenoir, not being himself a scholar, did not write

²⁹ For a good summary of the quest of Origins in the realm of architecture in eighteenth-century France, see LAVIN, S., *Quatremère de Quincy and the invention of a modern language of architecture* (MIT Press, 1992), Chapter I.

³⁰ LAUGIER, A., *Essai sur l'architecture* (Paris, 1755), which almost single-handedly established the notion of the "primitive hut"; BLONDEL, J.-F., *Cours d'architecture...* 6 vols (Paris, 1771-1777) based on his lectures of the 1750s and after.

³¹ A famous early work was abbé Terasson's, *Sethos, vie tirée des monuments de l'ancienne Égypte* (1731). In 1749 the comte de Caylus presented the hugely influential "De l'architecture ancienne" at the *Académie*, which was not published until 1756 (much revised); see also his *Receueil d'antiquités égyptiennes, étrusques, grecques et romaines* (Paris, 1752-167).

³² See MONTFAUCON, B. DE, *Antiquité expliquée et représentée ...* (Paris, 1721-2), and WINCKELMANN, J.-J., *Histoire de l'art chez les anciens* (first French translation - Paris, 1766).

systematically about anything, albeit he did so enthusiastically. This being so, it is not clear to what extent he espoused, or even considered, the German's view about the autonomy of the origins of Greek perfection, rather than its partially derivative nature from the Egyptian precedent. What is clear, nevertheless, is that Lenoir did see ancient Egypt as a crucial moment in the development of human civilisation. From the end of the Revolution until his death he published at least eight different texts, on such subjects as the explanation of hieroglyphs, the obelisk of Luxor and the zodiac table of Denderah, and he delivered several lectures at the various societies he had become a member.³³

Lenoir's concern with origins also manifested itself in forays into comparative studies. His presentations to the society meetings aside, he published two separate dissertations comparing, firstly, ancient Egyptian monuments and symbols with those of Greece and "des autres peuples" (1822), and secondly between ancient Egyptian, Mexican, and Indian monuments and those "du reste de l'ancien monde" (1834). An offshoot of the cult of origins, comparative analyses flourished in the eighteenth century. As Sylvia Lavin writes, this culling of data from the ancient world was part of the attempt to reconstruct the beginning of man. They were less intended to shed light on the past than on the contemporary world, as the notion of origins was becoming more of an intellectual category than a chronological datum. She also points out that, "as primitive peoples came to mean those who lived in a state of nature rather than those who were temporally remote, the grip of chronology on the conception on history was loosened"³⁴. As the aim was to decipher the essential truths behind the multifarious manifestations of civilisation, all efforts were bent on uncovering underlying consistencies and, ultimately, unity in as wide a terrain of human endeavour as possible.

This quest for hidden essential truths was never far from mysticism and the occult in varying degrees - a trend which had accompanied the scientification of the world and which was at the time beginning to enjoy the renewed popularity that Romanticism would soon

³³ A detailed list of Lenoir's publications is given in the Bibliography.

³⁴ LAVIN, *op. cit* (note 29), p. 76.

consolidate.³⁵ However, what is most significant about the kind of "occult" which Lenoir related to, was its actual absence of occultism. In the manner definitively exemplified by the Revolution, a whole set of issues from what was traditionally the realm of the transcendental and the spiritual were appropriated by enlightenment rationality, and were recast in its terms as the "true" issues. The cult of Reason is the obvious example, but even more interesting is the manifestation of this tendency beyond the extremities of the Revolutionary era itself. The quest for Origins, in all its manifestations, was heavily based on such an appropriation. Alongside the increasing importance of scientific method and positivist rigour in all fields of study, there was an accelerating fascination with and return to the ritualistic, the mystical and the cryptic, as territories where truths lay concealed under layers of misguided belief, awaiting revelation under the lens of Reason.

Two of the most influential studies of the later eighteenth century exemplifying this tendency were the *Monde primitif analysé et comparé avec le monde moderne, considéré dans son génie allégorique et dans les allégories auxquelles conduisit ce génie* (1773-1782) by Court de Gébelin, and *L'Origine de tous les cultes ou religion universelle* (1795) by Charles Dupuis. Both were key texts for Lenoir, who was deeply interested in these questions.³⁶ Court de Gébelin was a freemason, co-founder of the lodge of the Neuf Sœurs, and his *Monde primitif* contributed considerably to the prominence of the quest for myth and origins.³⁷ He presented his book as a study "qui restaure aux yeux de l'univers la sagesse et l'intelligence des Peuples primitifs, qui développe leur origine commune, lève le voile qui masquait leurs connaissances, ramène toutes les Nations à la plus grande unité". It is, thus, only by comprehending and deciphering the allegorical spirit of the Ancients, he wrote, that one could discover in their narratives "un sens raisonnable, honnête, utile"; for if they were taken straightforwardly, as "historical", they would be

³⁵ See on this subject VIATTE, A., *Les Sources occultes du romantisme, 1770-1820*, 2 vols (Paris: Champion, 1922), and JUDEN, B., *Traditions orphiques et tendances mystiques dans le romantisme français, 1800-1855* (Paris: Klincksieck, 1971).

³⁶ Poulot also offers some evidence suggesting that Dupuis wrote his seminal work in collaboration with the abbé Leblond, one of the protectors of young Lenoir - POULOT, D., *Musée, Nation, Patrimoine 1789-1815* (Paris: Gallimard, 1997), p. 325, note 3.

³⁷ For a commentary on this work, see BALDENSBERGER, F., "Court de Gébelin et l'importance de son *Monde primitif*", *Mélanges E. Huguet* (Paris, 1940).

nothing but "un amas d'indécences et d'atrocités".³⁸ The *Monde primitif* clearly subscribed to Enlightenment ideals, but it was a work where the lure of the mystical and the transcendental was very pronounced. The *Origine des cultes*, on the other hand, significantly dedicated to the National Assembly itself, was exemplary of an explicitly atheist philosophy with strong political undertones.³⁹ Here it was made clear that Christianity was the same as all the other cults of the world where a figure representing, essentially, the sun was worshipped as the unifying centre of the universe: "Le mot Dieu paraît destiné à exprimer l'idée de (...) la force vive que renferme en lui l'univers".⁴⁰ Across the seas and the centuries, the cults of all peoples reveal a common significance. Having thus demystified and overcome the naiveté of all those attempts to make sense of the world transcendently, Dupuis implied that it was now the role of the political ideal to provide the necessary unifying framework of society. Although the *Origine des cultes* seemed to break with the fascination of the cryptic, nevertheless it still treaded the same path as the *Monde primitif*, in so far as both works not only detected in the past but also subscribed for the future to the idea of a greater unifying order of society, recasting in the language of Reason the meanings of the past.

Lenoir's entire work was deeply characterised by this dual task. In the spirit of Dupuis, the chronological sequence of the Museum of Monuments and the analytic aspect of his written work was the rationalising moment which dispersed the misleading veils from the faces of the monuments, presenting them for what they really were: a lesson in the development of civilisation - the French, as well as human civilisation in general - and, thus, a guide in the construction of the future. In the spirit of Court de Gébelin, however, Lenoir sought the essence of this lesson deeper. He was himself a freemason, member of the significantly named lodge of Saint-Jean d'Écosse du Contrat Social.⁴¹ He published a dissertation on the movement in 1814, entitled *La Franche-Maçonnerie rendue à sa véritable origine, ou*

³⁸ COURT DE GÉBELIN, *Monde primitif...* (Paris, 1773-1785), vol. I/ii, pp. 72f.

³⁹ For a commentary on this work, see PLONGERON, B., *Théologie et politique au siècle des Lumières 1770-1820* (Paris & Geneva, 1973).

⁴⁰ DUPUIS, CH., *L'origine de tous les cultes...* (Paris, anIV/1795), vol. I, p. 1.

⁴¹ See BIHAN, A. LE, *Francs-maçons parisiens du Grand Orient de la France* (Paris, 1966), and LEULLIOT, P., "La franc-maçonnerie, fait social", *Annales. Économies-Sociétés-Civilisations*, April-June 1953.

l'Antiquité de la Franche-Maçonnerie prouvé par l'explication des mystères anciens et modernes, based on a series of lectures he had given at the *Académie celtique* on the relationship between the ancient mysteries of Egypt and Greece with those of Freemasonry. Faithfully on the path of his two predecessors, Lenoir intended to reveal "le véritable sens des allégories sacrées, présentées aux profanes comme des histoires, ou comme des faits héroïque", using the symbols of Freemasonry as a sort of deciphering code; for the latter is "un tableau parfait des causes agissantes dans l'Univers et un livre dans lequel on aurait inscrit la moral de tous les peuples".⁴² More specifically:

Les institutions mystérieuses et secrètes, renouvelées sous une autre forme dans les temps modernes, en rapprochant les hommes et en les unissant par des formules et même par des lois qui leur appartenoient exclusivement, servirent d'abord d'obstacle au fanatisme religieux; elle furent aussi un asile contre le despotisme de quelque souverains, c'est du moins l'opinion le plus universellement adoptée sur l'origin des assemblées mystérieuses et philanthropiques auxquelles on a donné le nom de *Franche-Maçonnerie*.⁴³

It would appear, therefore, that the origins of Freemasonry were more ancient than commonly thought, and that they lay in the Orient. As such, continued Lenoir, he saw in it nothing other than an imitation of the cult of Nature and the mysteries of Isis, Ceres, Bacchus and Atys.⁴⁴ Ultimately, Freemasonry operated as a medium which

rapproche les hommes, les lie entre eux par tous les nœuds qui constituent véritablement le contrat social; c'est-à-dire des principes d'union et de force, par des actes de bienfaisance, et enfin par tout ce qui persuade.⁴⁵

It is highly significant that Lenoir proposed Freemasonry as an obstacle to religious fanaticism and despotism which united the people in a social contract of "bienfaisance" - a description could easily have fitted the idealised project of the *lumières*. The difference being the historical rooting and the mythical legitimation, which attested to the continuity with Origins and Nature in a way in which the Enlightenment project didn't quite succeed to, and which was becoming increasingly necessary. In this light, rather than Lenoir's dissertation as a specific propaganda for Freemasonry, it would be more accurate to see it

⁴² LENOIR, A., *La Franche-Maçonnerie rendu à sa véritable origine* (Paris, 1814), p. ii.

⁴³ Ibid., p. 4.

⁴⁴ Ibid., p. 6.

⁴⁵ Ibid., p. 5.

as a vehicle of rapprochement and unity in terms of a universal social contract, rooted in - and legitimised by - a greater natural order.

This was one of the most prominent themes in all of Lenoir's writings. In the revealingly entitled *Parallèle des anciens monuments mexicains avec ceux de l'Égypte, d'Indostan et du reste de l'ancien monde*, for example, he wrote that from Egypt to Japan and Mexico, a diversity of cults and symbols all concealed the same primitive truths and followed the same logic. The particular importance of Egypt in this context resided in the combination of its antiquity and the consequent purity with which the monuments represented the cult of Nature.⁴⁶ At the same time, and most importantly, this *rapprochement* was evident across the ages, providing continuity between the contemporary world and its origins through the medium of history. One of Lenoir's most consistent efforts was to find evidence of the latter throughout French art and architecture. He identified the emblems of the goddess Isis and other Egyptian deities in a variety of French gothic ornaments, as well as a host of other forms and architectural principles. "On ne doit point s'étonner de voir nos temples décorés des emblèmes qui se trouvent en Égypte", he wrote, nor "voir des signes du zodiaque, et tous les emblèmes qui sont relatifs à ce culte primitif, orner nos temples arabes ou sarrasins, comme le prouvent encore le portail de Notre-Dame de Paris, celui de Strasbourg, et l'église de l'abbaye de Saint-Denis".⁴⁷ The artistic and architectural styles were, of course, indicative of a deeper affinity due to the common roots of the beliefs of all people, which Lenoir explained at length. Ancient Greece found its way in the great operation of unification where, for example, Osiris, Bacchus/Dionysus and Saint-Denis were directly analogous in their relevant contexts of worship, accompanied by a host of identical ornaments and details such as the vine motif and even the ogive.⁴⁸ Elsewhere, he wrote that Perseus, St. Michael and St. George were the same person under a different

⁴⁶ "Parallèle des anciens monuments mexicaines", in Dupaix, G., (ed.) *Antiquités mexicaines* (Paris, 1834) vol. I, part I.

⁴⁷ *La Franch-Maçonnerie*, op. cit. (note 42), pp. 230-231.

⁴⁸ *ibid.* - also LENOIR, *Musée des monuments*, (Paris, 1810), p. 115. See also POULOT, *Musée*, op. cit. (note 1), pp. 328-331.

name, this figure being, quite simply and if divested of the layers of allegory, "la Vertu qui triomphe du Vice"⁴⁹.

An eloquent example of Lenoir's reliance on these theses for the creation of the Museum could be found in the monument to Philippe de Comines, at no. 93, celebrated as one of the most important historians of the sixteenth century.⁵⁰ The monument was one of Lenoir's many creative restorations, where further decorative features were added to the central fragment to render it more characterful. In this case, Lenoir placed at the foot of Philippe's statue a relief depicting the mounted St. George slaying a winged dragon, which he had copied from an altogether different monument. The *Journal des Débats* criticised this addition negatively, questioning the relevance of the image to the particular historical figure. Lenoir's response to this critique was a long and elaborate justification whereby a whole host of ancient Christian and Muslim fables were brought to bare on the subject, ultimately revealing the story of St. George and the dragon as yet another manifestation of the universal combat between light and shadows. As such, he concluded, the allegory of light emerging triumphant from the shadows was perfect for the commemoration of a celebrated historian of the Renaissance, who embodied the emerging spirit of the *lumières*.⁵¹ Lenoir was particularly fond of this allegory, and he envisaged placing a larger version of the relief in the second court of the Museum, where the façades from the château de Gaillon were also placed.

Another such example was the fragment of an eleventh-century mosaic pavement from St. Denis, which was placed in the Thirteenth-century hall. It depicted the twelve signs of the zodiac and, in its description and analysis in the catalogue, at no. 429, Lenoir related it to a similar piece in Notre Dame, which, he wrote, Dupuis had "savantly" described in his *Origin*. Lenoir expressed his wish to take a moulding from this and other similar fragments in order to display them all at the Museum, facilitating comparative study and, thus, paying

⁴⁹ "Mythologie celtique du dragon de Metz...", read in the meeting of the *Académie celtique* on 29 November 1807 and published in the academies' *Mémoires*, vol. II, pp. 1-19.

⁵⁰ *Description* an VIII, p. 195.

⁵¹ See account in LENOIR, *Compte rendu de l'état actuel du Musée des Monuments français*, n. d. (an X), pp. 4-5.

the homage due to Dupuis, who had first pointed out that such pieces "prouvent évidemment que le christianisme n'est qu'une suite des anciens cultes, dont on a défigurée les principaux personnages".⁵² Prompted by the decorative scheme of the mosaic, Lenoir then went on to draw parallels between the Virgin Mary and Isis, and Horus and Christ as the god of light dying and rising again. This latter idea of Christ as one of the metamorphoses of the universal god of light was also presented at the analysis of François I's tomb, the iconography of which included a relief of Christ as conqueror of shadows.⁵³

Ultimately,

la plupart des fables mythologiques des Anciens ont été intercalées dans les religions modernes; et il est certain que les cérémonies populaires (...) dont nous ne voyons plus le côté ridicules ne sont autre chose que les emblèmes astronomiques, que les légendaires modernes ont tout bonnement copiés du culte des Anciens.⁵⁴

What is noteworthy here is how the main thesis about continuity and unity was distilled down to its barest essentials, with the whole of the ancient world represented as a single cult - the "cult des Anciens". A move, I would suggest, not of hasty simplification but indicative of the profound belief that an essence had indeed travelled unchanged throughout the best part of human history, only to be intercepted by the "modernes" and changed forever. Lenoir was not in any way breaking from the established norm - since the previous century and the famous *Querelle* - by reflecting this understanding of the contemporary as different.⁵⁵ But what is fascinating about the implicit acknowledgement of this rupture is its occurrence while attempting to establish the essential continuity between the two. Lenoir is of course not aware of this paradox - by thus concretising the "now" and the "then" he is merely reiterating a certainty of his time. Through his rather mocking language, however, he does not simply bring this confrontation of the "legendary moderns" with the "cult of the Ancients" into sharp focus, but also allows for the possibility of subversion. This was not followed up here, nor in any other text, but rather

⁵² *Description an X*, p. 142.

⁵³ *Ibid.*, no. 99.

⁵⁴ "Mythologie...", *op. cit.* (note 49).

⁵⁵ For an introduction on the Dispute of the Ancients and Moderns see GILLOT, H., *La Querelle des Anciens et Modernes* (Paris, 1936).

in his museum, where through the multiple fragmentation ultimately surfaced the possibility of amendment.

With human civilisation becoming richer in meaning as it extended back towards its origins, on one hand, and, on the other, the contemporary age's unique privilege of perfect reasoning, the increasingly uncertain future was sought to be defined through a kind of intellectual archaeology - that is, an attempt to distil significance from the restructuring and reinterpretation of images and concepts from the past. The key feature of this operation was the emphatic focus on the assumed underlying unity of all phenomena, and the attempt to, simultaneously, acknowledge its continuation in the contemporary age, but also fully capture it in analytic form and therefore legitimise it. Ultimately, the quest of origins was the crux of the project of historical invention, which was itself a quest for order - an order manifested through history yet impervious to the vicissitudes of epochs, distinguishing the specificity of the nation and its people while legitimising it through a causal link with the established archetypes, an order, that is, capable of upholding Identity through Difference and sustaining the Particular through the Universal.

Speaking Monuments

The quest for Origins, throughout the eighteenth century, was conducted across disciplines - in language, customs and society at large, as well as the arts and architecture. The latter, however, held a particularly privileged position which rendered the Museum of Monuments exceptionally fertile ground for the manifestation of these ideas. The privileged position of the monument in the quest for order in history arose from two fundamental characteristics: it was seen as the most enduring manifestation of human civilisation as well as one relating uniquely to place and time. In the great inventive project of modernity, the monument was the perfect medium for the recording of history, in a format not only enduring but also potentially fully legible. From Montfaucon's seminal *L'Antiquité expliquée*, the first volume of which appeared in 1719, the idea of monuments as concrete and retrievable records of the past - that is, as "historical" - was rapidly established. Montfaucon used the

expression in the preface of his great work, writing that not only sculpture and architecture but also costume, armour and even the different *genres* of painting could be understood as "monuments historiques". Throughout the century the direct link between monument and historical testimony would be further established.⁵⁶ But it was the Revolution which gave the impetus for the final consolidation of the link between history and monument, manifested nowhere more concretely and purely than in the Petits-Augustins where the pieces on display were, at least initially, nothing *but* "historical monuments". The deputy Kersaint was one of the several Revolutionaries who previewed such a museum even as it was being envisaged by Lenoir, writing already in 1791 that: "Les monuments sont les témoins irréprochables de l'histoire; sans leur ruines augustes tout ce qu'elle nous a transmis des Grecs et des Romains ne nous eût paru qu'un fable."⁵⁷

Lenoir himself wrote:

La religion, les mœurs, les usages sont, chez tous les peuples, la cause première des monuments et leurs formes diverses (...). De là vient qu'en étudiant les ruines laissées par un peuple qui n'est plus, l'homme éclairé peut, jusqu'à un certain point, reconnaître ou deviner le culte et les mœurs de ceux dont les ossements sont aujourd'hui (...) confondus avec la pierre ou la brique des édifices...⁵⁸

The aspect of the relationship between the monument and the communication of history which is most intriguing for our discussion pertains to the notion of the "speaking" monument. The identification of a linguistic structure in architecture was concretised by mid-century, seminally represented in Germain Boffrand's *Livre d'architecture* of 1745. In this work, architectural principles were directly drawn from Horace's *Art of Poetry*, thus transposing the link between image and text to buildings.⁵⁹ This expansion of the idea of *ut pictura poesis* into architecture had profound consequences for the development of the discipline itself, but also for its role in the understanding of the past. The idea that the surviving buildings - or fragments thereof - of the past could be "read" like complex, three-dimensional hieroglyphs was the assumption which contributed most to the role of

⁵⁶ On the historical monument see POULOT, op. cit. (note 1).

⁵⁷ KERSAINT, A. G. DE, *Discours sur les monuments publics* (Paris, Dec. 1791) p. vi.

⁵⁸ "Parallèle...", op. cit. (note 46).

⁵⁹ See LAVIN, op. cit. (note 29), chapter III. 2, and PALME, P., "Ut architectura poesis: Idea and Form", *Figura*, 1 (1959).

architecture in the quest for origins. The analyses and comparative studies of ancient monuments - aiming to establish their common underlying themes - rested on the basic principle that these works carried in encoded form (in their proportions, forms and ornaments) condensed information about their society which could be deciphered more or less like a text. A crucial element of this, in contrast to written language, was the richness and breadth of the representation. Rousseau had written in *L'Origine des langues* that the most energetic language was the one where the sign had said it all before one spoke, expressing the widespread idea that visual symbolic language - the language of monuments - was privileged because of its density and comprehensibility. The obvious next step was, of course, that through the symbolic devices of the monument a wealth of secrets could be securely communicated to the selected few who understood the codes - to posterity as well as contemporaneously. As we have already seen earlier in the chapter, this idea held a particular fascination for Lenoir's contemporaries, as it placed them in the role of that privileged "posterity" who could decipher those secrets and establish truths across history. A fascinating implication of this was that all these works of art and architecture which qualified as monuments were thought of as *made* for this purpose - that is, from their origins they were somehow prepared as highly condensed, symbolic records of their times in view of passing on their ideas. Court de Gébelin was one of the many who joined the obsession with origins to the conviction that the symbolism and allegory of monumental language were the keys to historical interpretation. In his aforementioned *Monde primitif* he addressed in one interpretative sweep the history of universal grammar, of the calendar, etymology, heraldry, numismatics, blazonry, games, rites and customs, all united through the medium of allegory.⁶⁰

The crucial aspect of the allegorical language of monuments, and the key to its privileged communicative capacity, was its aesthetic character - that is, the fact that it became effective as aesthetic experience, through the sense and sentiment, and not through the engagement of the spirit, like spoken language. The possibility of such immediate transmission,

⁶⁰ See VIDLER, A., *The Writing of the Walls: Architectural Theory in the Late Enlightenment* (Princeton University Press, 1987), p. 141.

without the mediation of intellect, was becoming increasingly appealing as the stirrings of Romanticism were taking effect. The seminal work here was Le Camus de Mezières' *Génie d'architecture ou l'analogie de cet art avec nos sensations* of 1780, where he first articulated systematically the way in which architectural form could directly evoke sensations. It was maintained that this was a relationship based in Nature and the nature of perception itself, which made it not only possible but also necessary to follow the appropriate principles and render architecture more communicative in that fashion. By appealing directly to our soul, through the aesthetic experience and the ensuing sensations, the physiognomy of the work would "speak" its character to the spectator, more immediately and eloquently than any secondary articulation or explanation could. At the same time, this analogy would secure the legitimacy of the work as truthful to its essence and nature.

The Museum of Monuments as a whole clearly relied on the eloquence of the monument in the communication of meaning, with Lenoir's *fabriques* being the most obvious examples. If the truths of history could be communicated directly to the soul of the spectator through certain symbolic structures, then by the creative manipulation of those structures one could presumably improve and enhance this communication. The notion of "vraisemblance", verisimilitude, captured this perfectly: the ideal monument was "vraisemblable", that is, more true to the character it was meant to represent than the real thing itself. On this level, rather than simple representation the role of the monument was more like an enhanced exemplification. The fabricated monument-as-allegory "spoke" of what it represented even better than an authentic monument. As a construct made for the sole purpose of condensing and *re-presenting* the character of an epoch or person it was privileged in its purity over any original work in that it was *nothing but* such a representation. From the visually simpler monuments/tributes to worthy artists, to the complexity of the cenotaph to Diane de Poitiers or the tomb of Héloïse and Abélard, Lenoir's *fabriques* attempted to capture and convey meaning at a glance. Diane's monument, for example, as we saw in Chapter 2, was given the additional figures of a little dog, an Eros in the process of

writing, four sphinx heads, the enamelled portraits of Henri and François and four caryatids, in order to render the piece more eloquent about this woman's life and character.

Most importantly, I would suggest that the halls and garden themselves should be seen as carefully constructed *fabriques* in their own right. Lenoir wrote that he wanted to give "à chacune des salles le caractère, la physiognomie exacte du siècle qu'elle doit représenter".⁶¹

His extensive attention to detail and decor lavished onto the rooms, and the systematic blurring of the boundaries between monuments and museum - by incorporating actual pieces into the decor -, rendered the whole into a one large "speaking monument".

Lenoir's systematic attempt to convey the "character" of each era as fully as possible led him to bring together forms, ideas and actual fragments from wherever he could, in order to piece together the appropriate aesthetic experience which would do just that. The twilit vaults of the Thirteenth-century hall, or the brightly coloured arabesques of the Fourteenth-century ceiling and the glorious stained-glass windows of the Sixteenth-century, the purpose-built niches covering the Fourteenth-century hall carrying opulently dressed saints and princes, or the sombre neoclassical busts of poets and philosophers aligning the bright "Eighteenth-century" stretch of the cloister, were among the multiple devices which Lenoir used throughout to enhance the eloquence of the Museum's experience.

It would seem that Lenoir was following Ledoux's advice when the latter wrote:

Si les artistes vouloient suivre le système symbolique qui caractérise chaque proportion, ils acquéroient autant de gloire que les poètes; ils élèveroient les idées de ceux qui les consultent et il n'y aurait pas une pierre qui, dans leurs ouvrages, ne parlât aux yeux des passants.⁶²

Lenoir, through his fabrications across the Petits-Augustins, was attempting to erect the speaking monument *par excellence*; in fact, to borrow Poulot's expression, a monument not simply "parlant", but "merveilleusement bavard".⁶³ This highlights the poetic - that is,

⁶¹ *Musée*, 1810, p. 6.

⁶² LEDOUX, C.-N., *Architecture*, vol. I, p. 115.

⁶³ POULOT, "Naissance...", op. cit. (note 1), p. 437.

deeply communicative aspect of the project, beyond the simple level of historical "information" - we shall be returning later in the chapter.

Grands Hommes

It is already becoming clear that the "history" represented in the Museum of Monuments was more than just the *prima vista* chronology of its arrangement. Expanding further the Museum's historical agenda, and departing farther from mere chronology, was the crucial commemorative dimension of the project.

The very idea of the *Grands Hommes*, as was exemplarily employed in the Pantheon, was a relatively novel concept which heralded the emergence of a new understanding of culture and the construction of the nation's collective identity. This was not an invention of the Revolution - the idea had been taking root throughout the century and d'Angivillier's highly significant project for the Louvre, in the 1770s and 1780s which included a series of statues of such men, heralded what was to become a veritable cult.⁶⁴ But it was certainly an idea which bore the seeds of a break with traditional hierarchies, and as such it became ideally appropriated by the Revolution. The concept of the Great Man essentially rejected the system of hereditary hierarchy - that is, the traditional divine-originated paradigm. The king, who traditionally represented the collective identity, was not significant as an individual but an idea, a symbolic structure around which the culture was woven, and in which the person was largely dissolved. By contrast, the Great Man was the exceptional individual who had proved himself precisely through that exceptional individuality and his genius. The emergence of the cult of the *Grands Hommes* was closely associated with the development of the idea of genius, the former encompassing aspects of the latter to a considerable degree. Specifically in the Museum of Monuments, I would suggest that the kind of effect which Lenoir was aiming at through the commemorative/*Grands Hommes*

⁶⁴ See MCCLELLAN, op. cit. (note 3), pp. 82-90; and POULOT, D., "Le public, l'État et l'artiste. Essai sur la politique du musée en France des lumières à la Révolution", EUI Working Paper HEC no. 92/19 (Florence: European University Institute, 1992).

agenda, was one which heavily relied on the idea of genius in its newly-emerging romantic sense.

On one level, the idea of *Grands Hommes* was a totalising and abstracting one. The exemplary Pantheon was a closed, severe and grandiose place, manifesting a similar understanding of the concept. It had been converted from Soufflot's church between 1791 and 1794 - a project in which Quatremère de Quincy had been involved himself, during his brief spell as member of the Legislative Assembly. The Great Men here were mostly significant in the plural, as a collective which defined the spirit of nation at its most ahistorical and essential. As Mona Ozouf points out, death had no place in this representation - the Great Men were immortal.⁶⁵ I would also add that their immortality was granted to them as a group, defined exclusively by those mutually shared, sublimated characteristics which identified them as great. What was celebrated in the Pantheon, really, was not the individual men but the idea which they all represented, an idea eternal and unchanging, despite the fact that the men had been mortal. In that sense, the Pantheon was neither a cemetery, nor a church, museum, garden or archive, it was a shell which contained the collective spirit and genius of the Great Men, understood as a death- and time-defying space complete in and of itself. This notion of *Grands Hommes* was largely complementary to the idea of national patrimony - the Men themselves being part of it, in the attempt to create a substitute tradition, establishing continuity and identity across the fluctuations of history.

On a second level, the idea of the Great Man, in the singular, contained that of genius as individuality. This genius was less a collective or a property which all men could conceivably possess (a principle closer to the ancient understanding of the word), but was instead an extraordinary type of individual. One *was* a genius rather than *possessing* genius. The entire psyche of the genius was of primary interest, his emotional capacities and intuition overshadowing his intellect. K. S. Jaffe pronounces this as the turning point

⁶⁵ OZOUF, M., "Le Panthéon: L'École normale des morts", in P. Nora, (ed.), *Les lieux de mémoire*, i. *La République* (Paris: Gallimard, 1984).

in the idea and the clear prefiguring of the dominant nineteenth-century understanding of the word.⁶⁶ He points out that this genius was captured by his own poetic representations and that the only way of understanding him was by looking *inside* him. Having moved to the opposite end of the ancient poet who could only compose if inspired by a divine spirit, the Romantic genius inspired his own. All external factors having become irrelevant, this extraordinary individual represented the ultimate self-reference. Although these two aspects of the idea were largely complementary, there was a distinctly different emphasis on the role of individuality between them, which is of particular interest to the discussion of the Museum of Monuments.

I would suggest that one of the key aspects of the whole project at the Petits-Augustins was the attempt to show the figures represented in the Museum in a more personal light. It was already mentioned in Chapter 1 that Lenoir went to great lengths in the display as well as in the catalogue to present them as distinct individuals, through details of their lives outside the abstracting realm of historical and national "greatness". Wherever possible, he would attribute to the royals represented in the collection occupations, sensitivities and incidents revealing them as real human beings, beyond their royal status.

Already from the earliest centuries represented in the Museum, the attempt for personalisation was apparent. In the "Monumens du Moyen Age" section of the catalogue, at no. 5, one read the entry for the stylistically unusual sepulchral monument to Dagobert I (+645), which stood in the Élysée. This king, it appeared, had distinguished himself in the wars against the Gascons and Bretons, but he tarnished his victories through "affreuses cruautés" and an altogether licentious lifestyle:

Après avoir répudié la femme qu'il avait d'abord épousée, il en eut jusqu'à trois à la fois, auxquelles il donna le titre de reine, sans compter les concubines avec lesquelles il vivait publiquement.⁶⁷

⁶⁶ JAFFE, K. S., "The concept of genius: its changing role in eighteenth-century French aesthetics", in P. Kivy, (ed.), *Essays on the History of Aesthetics*, Library of the History of Ideas, vol. V (University of Rochester Press, 1992).

⁶⁷ *Description an X*, p. 100.

Dagobert was thirty years old when he founded the abbey of Saint-Denis, in the hope of expiating his crimes through an act of piety.

In the Thirteenth-century hall, at no. 23 in the catalogue, a statue of Louis IX (+1270) was accompanied by a lengthy praise of the man's character. His institution of laws against blasphemy and duels aside, he was truly a virtuous and courageous man, who possessed "tous les principes de la vraie philosophie", but was also "compatissant pour tout le monde, comme s'il n'avait été que malheureux". In this last phrase Lenoir must have been referring to the tragic death of both his sons before him, whose mausolea, built by the king, were also in the same hall of the Museum.⁶⁸

In the Fifteenth-century hall, and at number 78 in the catalogue, the tomb of Valentine de Milan marked another of the numerous emotional instances in the Museum. Her tomb was executed by Paul Ponce, commissioned by Louis XII among the many monuments to his ancestors which he had made during his life. This was a significant piece, indicative of the remarkable progress of the arts at the time - about to become a proper "renaissance" - but it would seem that its historical/anecdotal value nearly overshadowed its stylistic significance. Valentine was the wife of Louis de France, duke of Orleans, who was assassinated on the 23 November 1407, shortly after which "cette femme vertueuse mourut de chagrin". Before expiring, in early 1408, she had chosen her motto to be: "Rien ne m'est plus, plus ne m'est rien".⁶⁹ The tomb of Pierre de Navarre in the same hall, catalogue no. 79, provided Lenoir with an opportunity to reminisce about the prince's father, Charles II, also known as Charles le Mauvais, who did not possess a monument in the Museum, but whom Lenoir clearly wanted to evoke in his great narrative. He wrote:

Je me rappellerai point ici les crimes sans nombre dont Charles le Mauvais se rendait coupable, autant par ambition que par un penchant naturel qui la portait à la cruauté; mais la fin de sa vie m'a parus de nature à fixer l'attention; le voici.⁷⁰

⁶⁸ Ibid., p. 132.

⁶⁹ Ibid., p. 166.

⁷⁰ Ibid., p. 169.

And Lenoir proceeded to recount how the king had requested to be wrapped head to toe in bandages soaked in an alcoholic solution in order to relieve an ailment of his, and how a careless servant holding a candle accidentally set him alight. Still in the same hall, at nos. 80 and 81 respectively, the monuments of Philippe d'Orléans (+1420) and Charles VI (+1422) respectively gave Lenoir the opportunity to recall the former's considerable poetic talents (an entire ballad attributed to the prince was quoted in the catalogue), and the latter's fondness for card-games. It appeared that the unfortunate Charles had suffered a sun-stroke which deprived him of his reason, after having been a particularly wise and competent ruler. Nevertheless, he retained his life-long love for cards, which were invented during his rule. This is why, added Lenoir, when he was restoring the statue of the king, which was missing a right hand, he felt justified to replace it with one holding some playing cards.⁷¹

The bust of Charles VIII (+1498) in the Sixteenth-century hall, no. 444 in the catalogue, was an opportunity for Lenoir to recount the extraordinary story of his first wife, Marguerite of Austria. She was the only daughter of Maximilian I, to whom Charles VIII returned her shortly after the wedding, without having consummated the marriage (Lenoir did not include the reasons in his text). While Charles went on to marry Marie de Bourgogne, Marguerite was requested by Ferdinand and Isabelle of Spain for their son. On the way to Spain, the boat carrying her nearly sank, so the princess, convinced she was going to die, and showing "un fermeté peu commune à son sexe", composed her own epitaph: "Cy git Margot, la gente demoiselle / Qu'eu deux maris et si mourut pucelle".⁷² A similar story of extraordinary courage in the face of death was to be found at no. 449, the monument to François I's constable Anne de Montmorency (+1567), placed in the Introductory hall. Again, this was a sculptural piece of considerable significance by Jean Bullant and Barthelemy Prieur, for the acquisition and restoration of which Lenoir had gone to great lengths (see Chapters 1 & 2). Nevertheless, the curator felt it was necessary to elaborate at some length on the constable's personality, which was, apparently, also

⁷¹ Ibid., pp. 170-171.

⁷² Ibid., pp. 185.

remarkable. He had been proven an intrepid warrior in a number of battles, no less than in his last one, at Saint Denis. Having received eight grave wounds, wrote Lenoir, this man of seventy-four years gathered all his might and killed another an enemy officer. Finally, a Scottish gentleman dealt him the fatal blow, but not before Montmorency had managed to break two of his front teeth.⁷³

One of the key personalities of the sixteenth century in the Museum was undoubtedly Diane de Poitiers (+1566), "femme célèbre par ses amours et par son talent à manier les affaires du gouvernement". In all three pieces directly associated with her in the Museum - her cenotaph (no. 466), the portico of her home at Anet (no. 540) and the fountain representing her as Diana the Huntress (no. 467) - Lenoir took the opportunity to muse on her talents and to recall episodes of her life. Several pages were dedicated to recounting how the nobility and beauty of the young Diane charmed François I when she implored him to spare her captive father's life; how the rumours of the elderly King having demanded her virginity as a price were not true because "un noble chevalier, l'ami des sciences et des arts, n'a point sullié sa vie par ce trait odieux"; and how "le caractère fier de cette femme aimable, la sagacité de son esprit et surtout l'art qu'elle possédait pour manier les grandes affaires" subsequently seduced Henri II, who became her lover and commissioned the magnificent refurbishment of her residence at Anet, calling to the task the greatest talents of the time such as Goujon, Cousin, Bullant, de l'Orme and Pilon.⁷⁴

The most "personal" of all monuments, however was the tomb of Héloïse and Abélard, the most popular personalities in the Museum. Lenoir started the long section devoted to the piece in the catalogue (no. 515) with a disclaimer: by erecting this monument he was not trying to recount the actual story of the tragic lovers, as "déjà Clio a tracer sur le marbre et sur l'airain leur talens et leur malheurs".⁷⁵ Instead, what he wished was for the visitors to read the admirable verses of Pope and Colardeau in order to come and recite them at the feet of this sanctuary. It was made clear from the start, therefore, that this monument was very

⁷³ Ibid., p. 203.

⁷⁴ Ibid., pp. 229-235.

⁷⁵ *Description* 1803, p. 102.

little about history-as-fact and much more about the personal experience of and empathy with the past. Mentioning the inscription he placed on the tomb, "Forever joined", Lenoir continued:

Enfoncé dans la tombe, ils s'aiment toujours, ces époux amans: l'on croit entendre, à travers la pierre qui les couvre, s'échapper des soupirs de tendresse et d'amour; l'air est frappé de leur doux accens, et la plaintive Echo répète de tous côtés: Héloïse, Abélard, Abélard, Héloïse!⁷⁶

Lenoir concluded his discussion of the piece in the catalogue by emphasising the indissoluble link between the lovers which this monument firmly established: "Placer au milieu de cette chapelle sépulcrale, il réunira ce qui nous reste de deux époux indissolublement liés l'un à l'autre."⁷⁷ An obvious question to be asked at this point would be how the two medieval lovers fitted the bill of "worth and greatness" or *Grand Homme* in any conventional sense, in order for them to be included in the commemorative agenda of the Museum. Or, for that matter, how did a number of other figures represented, such as several queens whose only real claim to greatness was that they had been mothers and wives of kings - a few of which were mentioned earlier. One could argue - and to an extent it would be true - that these monuments were there not as part of the commemorative agenda but rather to represent the styles of the various centuries and to "complete" the chronology. Yet this does not explain Lenoir's considerable investment in the presentation of the actual personalities, nor their popularity with the public as such. I would suggest that a considerable part of their role was to contribute to the immediacy of the personal aspect of the representations - that is, to allow for the Great Men to be viewed as sons and husbands as well as the historical important figures they were.

Furthermore, I would suggest, Lenoir wanted to allow for a different kind of "greatness" to emerge in history, one of character and emotions, beyond the established, Pantheon-like definition. Beyond courage, dignity and virtue in battle or in affairs of the state, history was also woven through such qualities in the face of simpler human tragedy, as well as through passion, love, hatred and even cruelty. It was essential, therefore, that not only

⁷⁶ Ibid., p. 103.

⁷⁷ Ibid., p. 104.

the officially "Great" figures were shown to be human, but also that a host of "lesser" characters was celebrated precisely for their humanity. The visitor could thus experience history largely through empathy with them - in the way Anne Plumptre and a host of others had described (see Chapter 3). Ultimately, such was the importance of the emotional participation and empathy of the visitor that Lenoir erected a monument to pure sentiment: the tomb of Héloïse and Abélard.

A significant tangent of the extensive operation of personalisation and bringing-to-life the historical figures manifested itself as an obsession with physiognomic detail. As we already saw earlier, visitors would observe with great interest the facial features of the statues, attempting to relate them to character traits, in tune with the represented figure's life and deeds. Lenoir himself encouraged this in a number of ways. He provided Deseine with the actual skull of Héloïse in order for her likeness to be captured as closely as possible on her effigies, in the absence of an original image of hers. He also referred to the characteristics of various figures in relation to their features on a number of occasions, in the catalogue - relating them also to their effect on the spectator. He wrote, for example, that "les yeux de Charles [IX] sont encore livides et sont front paraît ressuer le sang qu'il a versé". He went on to sympathise with Pilon, the statue's sculptor, for having to endure such a face: "Pilon, ton âme sensible a dû souffrir en modelant cette tête".⁷⁸ The "cortège des assassins" in the Sixteenth-century hall included Birague and Catherine de Médici - the latter disguising her crimes behind her "sourir de la seduction qui colore ses lèvres". But, thankfully, the visitor then encountered Montaigne, whose features "adoucit les souvenirs" from the horrors implied in the previous images. A little further, de l'Hôpital lying in his tomb was the embodiment of the honour and glory of his century, inviting the visitor's reverence, "et chacun porte sur ta bouche le baiser de l'estime".⁷⁹

⁷⁸ *Description* an X, p. 10.

⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 12.

A more extreme manifestation of the cult of personality in the Museum of Monuments, however, was the interest in human remains. The very fact that there were tombs containing actual remains in an institution nominally about "the instruction in the history of France and that of its arts" indicated that this "history" was considerably richer than the rational chronological progression of time and style.

The exhumations at Saint-Denis in 1793, which Lenoir attended meticulously, were a confirmation in a grand scale of the fascination which human remains held for the public. It also provided unprecedented wealth of material for transactions of that kind. People were not just eager to observe the minutest details of the royal corpses' physiognomies, but also fascinated by their materiality, the state of preservation of their skin, nails and teeth, the colour of their hair, etc. Both Lenoir and Dom Poirier - official emissary of the Commission of Monuments - reported in detail on the corpses themselves. Lenoir included a full account of the events in a number of his catalogue editions, entitled "Notes historiques sur les exhumations faites en 1793 dans l'abbaye de Saint-Denis".⁸⁰ One read, for example, how the impressively preserved body of Turenne became an object of continuous fascination, displayed first by the warden of the destroyed abbey - who also sold relics from it to visitors - and then at the Museum of Natural History, before finally being entombed at the Invalides via a brief residence at the Museum of Monuments. Also, that one of France's most popular kings, Henry IV, was equally well preserved and was kept for two days in the abbey before finally being thrown into the communal lime-pit. During that time, the impression of his face was taken on a cloth, but so were bits of his anatomy, like parts of his beard, teeth and toe-nails, by a number of fascinated bystanders. A similar treatment awaited other well-preserved bodies, such as Louis XIV, who, however, being so reviled during that stage of the Revolution, was not such a popular choice with relic mongers, and had only one toe-nail extracted by a man who actually jumped in the pit with him to get it at the last minute.

⁸⁰ For example *Description* an X, pp. 338-356; reproduced in COURAJOD, pp. lxxxvii-xci. On the Saint-Denis exhumations in general see also SAINT-GERMAIN, J., *La Seconde Mort des rois de France* (Paris 1792), and ROBINET, J. F. E., *Le Mouvement religieux à Paris pendant la Révolution*, 2 vols (Paris, 1898).

It was not just the public which was fascinated. The collection of relics enjoyed popularity among the highest classes of society and the educated. There were respectable guides, French but also foreign, which gave details of venues where one might purchase such pieces with a certificate of authenticity to boot.⁸¹ Louis XVIII himself, apparently, was given the toenail of his more famous predecessor, the XIV, as a congratulatory gesture upon his ascension to the throne in 1815. Even more significantly, Vivant-Denon, director of Parisian museums since 1802, was the proud owner of an entire cabinet of relics which included, among other things, a bit of Henry IV moustache, bones of Molière and La Fontaine, a tooth of Voltaire and some of the ashes of Héloïse. It cannot be a coincidence that Lenoir held in his museum the remains of most of these personalities, nor that they were among the most popular of his exhibits. Whether or not directly supplying to Vivant-Denon is irrelevant - it was mostly for similar personalities that Lenoir catered when he began trafficking in human remains via the Museum. The Princess d'Isenburg and a certain official by the name of Lesieur were among those who used Lenoir's services repeatedly for the acquisition of such prizes, as testify their letters of appreciation to him.⁸²

Their commercial exploitation aside, Lenoir invested in the significance of human remains in the composition of the Museum. We already saw that he was not content with the acquisition or fabrication of monuments, but that he went to great lengths to secure the remains of important personalities for his collection, whenever possible. It is not hard to imagine that a tomb actually containing the remains of the personality it commemorated would have elicited a more visceral and immediate response from the visitor than an empty monument. The sudden implication of the physical reality of death in those monuments would have shifted dramatically the character of the visit from the realm of representation ("the arts" and "history") to the realm of the deeply experiential and personal.

⁸¹ For example, *A slight sketch of Paris by a visitor* (London, 1814), p. 27.

⁸² AMMF, vol. III (25 messidor XII/14 July 1804 & 6 Feb. 1810), p. 85 & 131.

The obvious implication of the personalisation of the figures represented in the Museum - or rather the fundamental *assumption* on which such an operation was based - was that "the public", the visitors, were themselves understood as distinct individuals. As Richard Sennett has pointed out, by the end of the eighteenth century the role of the individual in society had taken a new significance and the cult of personality, one of the founding stones of modernity, was already blossoming. "As the gods fled", Sennett writes, the idea of personality as that which was innate and unique in each individual, rapidly became the way to think about the meaning implicit in human life. This gave added weight to the immediacy of sensation and perception, while phenomena came to seem real in and of themselves as immediate experience.⁸³ The Museum of Monuments relied greatly on these assumptions, offering an experience which was as much - if not more - addressed to the soul as it was to the intellect. Beyond - or rather *through* - the positivist principles of chronology and progress, there was a whole world which could only be accessed with imagination and sentiment. The visitor participated in the experience as a distinct individual, through his or her personality and "inner world", where the communication of history occurred on the level of empathy of one personality for another.

To briefly recapitulate: the whole presentation of the Museum, and its essential explication in the catalogues, was geared towards the visualisation and approximation of the figures beyond the grandeur of their deeds and the historical significance of their positions. This was implemented in a variety of ways, through the focus on personal achievement and/or personal weakness, through the inclusion of actual human remains in the Museum, and, above all, through the appeal to sentiment and the imagination on every stage of the display. Finally, the inclusion of minor recent persons, such as the actress Élisabeth Joly, was a further reinforcement of the Museum's investment in the immediate and the personal. Taking in the remote with the proximate, the personally remembered with the quasi-mythical, all in a continuously unfolding aesthetic and emotional experience, would have

⁸³ SENNETT, R., *The Fall of Public Man* (N.Y. & London: Norton & Co., 1992 [orig. 1972]), pp. 150-153. See also ARENDT, H., *The Human Condition* (University of Chicago Press, 1958), Chapter II, and, for a brief summary of the Enlightenment background of the idea, HAMPSON, N., *A cultural history of the Enlightenment* (N.Y.: Random House, 1968), Chapter 6.

encouraged the visitors further to blur the boundaries of both time and identity, to empathise with the figures represented, and to overall feel as participants in the display.

In view of all this, I would suggest that the Museum of Monuments was far from torn between its historicist and its commemorative agendas, despite a seeming conflict. Rather than tension between them, there existed a profound complementarity which allowed the impersonal stylistically-defined chronology to co-exist with the personalisation of the historical figures. One of the keys to this complementarity was the fact that the commemoration which took place in the Museum was not like the Pantheon - the figures were significant individually as much as collectively through a considerable investment in their personalities. At the same time, however, there was a bigger picture looming (quite literally) in the background, which provided the unity and universal legitimacy of the experience. The emotional engagement with, say, the person of a little known medieval king while contemplated through his roughly hewn funerary statue was not something which occurred in a vacuum: there was a meticulously constructed context, literal and metaphorical, visible and imaginary, which granted the figure its momentum and relevance in the greater scheme of things, while simultaneously allowing for the touching minutiae of his life and physiognomy to emerge as equally relevant. It would seem that, at a time of rampant individualisation throughout culture, the investment in personality was the only way back to a sense of coherence and universal principles.

Élysée/Death/Time

It is quite clear that the kind of "history" which the Museum of Monuments was attempting to represent continued beyond the obvious inventive operation which the newly emerging nation required. Rather than stopping at the construction of a narrative where the monuments as examples of national style, on one hand, and the historical figures as the nation's Great, on the other, competed to tell/create the story of the nation's development, Lenoir opened up possibilities for engagement with the project which diverged from this

agenda, introducing ambiguity and confusion. The ambiguity which deeply characterised this project was manifested nowhere more abundantly than in the *Élysée*. Louis Courajod, despite being one of the greatest apologists for the project, which he found immensely influential and called "le plus beau musée de sculpture moderne de l'Europe", dismissed the *Élysée* as a "charlatanerie", Lenoir's moment of weakness.⁸⁴

Perhaps the most obvious precedent of the Museum's garden was the most popular *Élysée* of that time, from Rousseau's novel *La nouvelle Héloïse* of 1761⁸⁵. This idealised place represented the new sensibilities of later-eighteenth-century France as pertaining to the experience of Nature and its relevance in the life of the bourgeois. It concretised the "jardin à l'anglaise", a thoroughly French idea, which was fully embraced by Lenoir.⁸⁶ Its lush "unmanicured" look (in distinct contract to the seventeenth-century French gardens with extremely geometricised and controlled forms) represented Nature as *naturanaturans*, the creative power, the root of humanity as the opposite or, at least, balancing other of civilisation. With his entire opus Rousseau represented the return to Nature as the source of purity and virtue, where the individual found recourse from the excesses and confusion of civilised life, and where one escaped in order to seek oneself.

At the same time, however, the *jardin anglais* was not the wilderness - it was a framed construct with even its "wildest" parts under control. As such, it was not intimidating and terribly, not quite "sublime" in the later Romantic interpretation of the word. It was definitely a *representation* of Nature - that is, an artifice - and as such never quite challenging the anthropocentricity of its agenda. The *jardin anglais* favoured solitary contemplation and reverie. It was as much about communion with Nature as it was a

⁸⁴ COURAJOD, vol. I, p. clxviii.

⁸⁵ There is extensive bibliography on Rousseau's *Élysée* - as an indication I would mention: CUSSET, C., "Cythère et Élysée: jardin et plaisir de Watteau à Rousseau", *Dalhousie French Studies*, vol. 29, winter 1994; MACARTHUR, E., "Textual Gardens: Rousseau's *Élysée* and Girardin's Ermenonville", *Romance Quarterly*, 38, 3, August 1991; MORNET, D., *Le sentiment de la nature en France de J.-J. Rousseau à Bernardin de Saint Pierre* (Paris, 1907). Generally on eighteenth-century Elysia see relevant chapter in ETLIN, R. A., *The Architecture of Death* (MIT Press, 1984).

⁸⁶ The garden was widely theorised in the second-half of the eighteenth century - there were several manuals and commentaries on gardens available, and it is very likely that Lenoir was familiar with most of them, especially the influential WATELET, C.-H., *Essai sur les jardins* (Paris, 1774), and certainly MOREL, J.-M., *Théorie des jardins* (Paris, 1776) - Lenoir collaborated with Morel at the park of Malmaison.

personal experience. The importance of imagination as a primary faculty for the engagement with the world was one of the important aspects of this experience. Both in the ideal, literary gardens (by far the most influential) and in the real ones, a vague sense of unreality and enchantment lingered throughout, allowing for the extensive use of allegory as a means of communicating ideas.

Another important aspect of the literary Elysia which also characterised the one at the Petits-Augustins, was the importance of movement in the form of the promenade. The experience in Rousseau's novel largely unfolded through a long promenade of the conversing characters through the garden. This could occur in pairs or groups, but it also characterised the solitary visit of the *jardin anglais*. In both cases, whether through conversation or internal reflection, there was an emphasis on the fact that this was not just a sensual but a highly theorised garden, which appealed to the senses, but also demanded an engagement of the intellect, to uncover and ponder the ideas behind the forms. This marked temporal extension of the experience also implied a particular relationship with Time and History, which were emphatically important for Lenoir's Élysée. We shall return to this point shortly.

There was, however, another characteristic of the *jardin anglais* featuring prominently in Lenoir's Élysée, but not so in Rousseau's. It was the element of death, as represented by the tomb.⁸⁷ In the Enlightenment shift of attitude toward death, as Robert Favre writes, even the ordinary tomb became monument, in the sense of a "souvenir", an incitement to remember, and a manifestation of duration, to ensure a survival of sorts on this earth. Alongside the remembrance of the specific dead, the tomb operated as *memento mori* and, in the face of one's own mortality, an appeal for the examination of one's consciousness. In the garden, situated within timeless, all-embracing nature, the tomb as mnemonic device assumed its most pure and eternal, propelling memory onto a higher plane and establishing

⁸⁷ MICHÉA, R., "Le plaisir des tombeaux au XVIIIe siècle", *Revue de littérature comparée*, 18 (1938); MC MANNERS, *Death and Enlightenment: Changing attitudes to death in eighteenth-century France* (London: Clarendon Press, 1981); ARIÈS, PH., *Western Attitudes Towards Death: from the Middle-Ages to the present* (Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 1974); FAVRE, R., *La mort au siècle des lumières* (Presses Universitaires de Lyon, 1978), p. 516.

the common ground between the living and the dead. Rousseau's burial place at Ermenonville, created in the late 1770s by the marquis de Girardin, was a prominent such example, where the implications of human virtue and idyllic nature combined to create one of the nation's most celebrated places. The philosopher's neoclassical sepulchre, in the midst of a poplar-lined islet, represented, according to Elisabeth Mac Arthur "the nation's promise to be worthy of his ashes, to become 'humains et libres'. Rousseau's memory, prolonged into the future as a promise, will act as a conscience of the French nation, and the land his tomb is built on represents the land of France more surely than does the Pantheon into which his remains were later transferred."⁸⁸ This is an interesting comment, with which I would largely agree, contrasting what I would read as the impersonality and intellectual abstraction of the Pantheon, with the immediacy and emotional appeal of Ermenonville (no less because of its idyllic natural setting), rendering the latter seemingly more effective in the confirmation of the idea of the nation despite the absence of an explicit such agenda.

The idea of death was key not only to the Lenoir's Élysée, but to the entire Museum of Monuments. We already saw that, for the representation of the historical figures Lenoir expressly sought funerary monuments or fragments thereof, and his own fabrications were exclusively sepulchres of different sorts. The busts which he commissioned were largely incorporated in funerary-stele-like constructions rather than stand on their own. There were some notable exceptions - such as the fountain of Diane de Poitiers as goddess Diana - but they were far too few to challenge the predominance of the funerary theme. It could even be argued that they made it all the more prominent. But it was in the Élysée that the idea of death in all its splendour dominated. In contrast to the tombs in the century-dedicated halls, the ones in the garden were finally liberated from the positivism of chronology, simply united in the embrace of Nature. As appropriate to a *jardin anglais*, the experience here was more overtly sentimental and personal/subjective. The deceased were even less historically abstracted and even more real personalities, whose death could still be

⁸⁸ MAC ARTHUR, E., "The tomb in the garden in late eighteenth-century France", *Dalhousie French Studies*, vol. 29, winter 1994, p. 110.

mourned (let us remember Ann Plumptre's comment). In that sense, the Museum was different from the Pantheon in that it *was* a cemetery. The personalities represented were there precisely because they were mortal, rather than in spite of it.

The worthiness of those commemorated in the Petits-Augustins consisted as much of the sublimated notions of virtue and genius, as it did of the immediate reality of those otherwise extraordinary lives. The fact that they had lived and died, like everyone else, although they were "great" in a number of ways, bound them to the same temporal order as the anonymous visitor of the Museum, establishing the continuity of history on a level of experiential immediacy. Furthermore, by including in the same order the less conventionally "great" who had either, somehow, captured the public sentiment (think Héloïse and Diane) or who were simply there, caught in the webs of history so to speak (the mothers, the wives), the collection reinforced the sense of community and identity beyond - but without discrediting - the distinction of merit and the closed circle of the *Grand Homme*. Situating the open narrative in Nature as the timeless, already-there ground of human existence, was the crowning moment of this unifying, approximating gesture, while reinforcing its legitimacy. Historical distance became simultaneously more real and less remote, as the lives and deaths of the ancestors were encountered in their actual temporality, but, at the same time, they were characterised by the same canons of Nature - both as the soul/"inner man" and as the natural world.

In this light, the significance of the temporal dimension of the Élysée, and the Museum of Monuments as a whole, becomes apparent. The sustained unfolding of the visit itself, through a variety of different spaces, brought the idea of temporal extension to an immediate experiential level. The visitor had to experience the narrative over time, discover rather than instantaneously capture it. The carefully staged perspectival view, the *coups d'œil* - an instantaneous all-encompassing frame - played an important role, but only as a complement to the gradual unfolding of the rest of the experience. It was a momentary and significant explosion of focus, making a specific point - most notably in the Introductory hall, where the entire historical presence of the nation was tantalisingly glimpsed at upon

entry, as a preview and promise of what was to follow, as well as an initial statement about the nation's consistent identity across history - this, as well, to be "proven" further along the Museum. But these important changes of pace were meant to urge one to continue, rather than imply self-containment. The temporal extension of the visit to the Museum of Monuments implied the temporal extension of the greater historical narrative which the project was subscribing to. This was another important difference of the Petits-Augustins and the Pantheon: the latter revealed itself immediately and totally to the visitor, both as a space and as an idea, whereas the former was very much about discovery, variety of pace and, to a considerable extent, personal engagement and subjective interpretation. The Pantheon was invariable and eternal, existing on a sublimated, ahistorical plane. Whereas the Museum of Monuments demanded an engagement with the movement of history and the temporality of mortals, in order to begin revealing its timeless ideals.

I have left for last Lenoir's own comments on the Élysée. The reason is that they seem to put forth a rather different vision to the one actually presented in the Museum's garden. Once again, however, the ambiguity was not really a conflict but rather a complexity and, ultimately, a complementarity in pursuit of the greater themes of the Museum, as I will proceed to show.

Lenoir had a lengthy explication for his garden which he put forward in the "Observations sur l'Élysée", published in full in the fifth volume of the *Musée des monuments français*.⁸⁹ Confirming the key role of Origin theory across the Museum, Lenoir traced the idea of the Elysium back to antiquity. At the time, he wrote, it was linked to that of Tartarus - its essential counterpoint and complement, together constituting the Underworld. The Elysian Fields was the place of Felicity, the equivalent to the Christian heaven, while Tartarus was hell. Similarly confirming the comparative nature of his ideas, Lenoir then embarked on a lengthy consideration of the various manifestations of Elysium/Tartarus across the fables of ancient people through to contemporary art and literature, with the aid of a host of authors

⁸⁹ *Musée*, vol. 5 (1806), pp. 171-204.

and artists such as Homer, Plato, Virgil, Lucian, Fénelon and Poussin.⁹⁰ The latter, suggested Lenoir, was one of the earliest "moderns" to have captured the essence of the Elysium as it would be relevant for the era of the *lumières*.⁹¹ But it was a contemporary of Lenoir who articulated it fully:

Un philosophe dont l'existence a honoré notre siècle; qui a employé toutes ses facultés à écarter des chimères à combattre l'erreur; (...) dans la péroraison d'un ouvrage consacré au bonheur de l'espèce humaine (...) sous le titre modeste d'*Esquisse*, nous y lègue l'image d'un véritable Élysée.⁹²

Lenoir did not name the philosopher, but he was obviously referring to Condorcet and his *Esquisse d'un tableau historique des progrès de l'esprit humain*, written in 1793. Here was an Elysium which was not about vain nor about imaginary pleasures - the case with the previous Elysia. Condorcet's felicitous realm was about the reward of virtue and, as such, both real and ideal, joyful and sober, personal and universal. It is worth transferring here some of Lenoir's lengthy quote from Condorcet's *Esquisse*:

Le tableau de l'espèce humaine affranchie de toutes ses chaînes, soustraite à l'empire du hasard comme à celui de l'ennemi de ses progrès, et marchant d'un pas ferme et sûr dans la route de la vérité, de la vertu et du bonheur présente au philosophe un spectacle qui le console des erreurs, des crimes, des injustices dont la terre est encore souillée, et dont il est souvent la victime. C'est dans contemplation de ce tableau, qu'il reçoit le prix de ses efforts pour ce progrès de la raison, pour la défense de la liberté. Il ose alors les lier à la chaîne éternelle des destinées humaines; c'est là qu'il trouve la vraie récompense de la vertu, le plaisir d'avoir fait un bien durable. (...) Cette contemplation est pour lui un asile, où le souvenir de ses persécuteurs ne peut le poursuivre; où, vivant, par la pensée, avec l'homme rétabli dans les droits, comme dans la dignité de sa nature, il oublie celui de l'avidité, la crainte ou l'envie tourmente et corrompent; c'est là qu'il existe véritablement avec ses semblables, dans un *Élysée*, que sa raison a su se créer, et que son amour pour l'humanité embellit des plus pures jouissances.⁹³

It is fascinating to read in Lenoir's exposition of his Museum this paean to the *lumières* and to the golden posterity dreamed up by the *philosophes*; and, especially, to read it as the single explicitly attributed influence of the Museum's garden. Such ideas as commemoration, death, empathy or the natural world were apparently absent from Condorcet's text, although we already saw how central they were to Lenoir's Élysée. The

⁹⁰ Ibid., pp. 171-195. It is interesting to note that a considerably expanded version of this text found its way into the *Franche-Maçonnerie* dissertation eight years later (1814), as part of the greater exploration of ancient myths and symbols and their survival in contemporary Freemasonry - see LENOIR, op. cit. (note 42), pp. 98-109.

⁹¹ *Musée*, vol. 5 (1806), pp. 190-191. Lenoir does not mention a specific painting, but seems to refer generally to Poussin's *œuvre*.

⁹² Ibid., pp. 191-192.

⁹³ Ibid., pp. 192-193.

philosopher's emotive musings referred to an *Élysée* as intellectual achievement, where the enlightened individual - the "philosopher" - found, simultaneously, respite from and reward for the incessant toil against human error, as well as confirmation of his love of humanity and, thus, encouragement in the continued pursuit of Reason. It would seem that, of the entire Museum, the *Élysée* would fit less the enlightened, rationalist dream, being a place where the nascent Romantic sensibility found an ideal expression, designed in seeming opposition to the halls' taxonomic structure.

This reading of the halls' circuit and the *Élysée* as "opposites" has been largely accepted as the interpretative norm for the Museum of Monuments. Even Dominique Poulot, arguably the most insightful reader of the project to date, writes that the halls, governed by philosophical history, were juxtaposed to the garden, governed by sentiment, forming thus a counterpoint between savant pursuits and reveries, between nature and history, passivity and action, masculine and feminine.⁹⁴ In that case, however, Lenoir's explicit pairing of his *Élysée* with Condorcet's does not make sense. It would not be accurate, of course, to take Lenoir's writings as the final word on his project. This thesis has been suggesting that the hermeneutic significance of the Museum exceeded considerably any single exegesis offered by the curator. In that sense, the Museum's *Élysée* neither was, nor was intended to be simply and exclusively an embodiment of Condorcet's Elysium. At the same time, there is undoubtedly significance in this parallel which requires exploration. My proposal is that Lenoir chose to legitimise his garden as the ideal realm of classic Enlightenment virtue in an attempt to confirm the essential continuity of the whole project. Having gone to great lengths, as we have seen, to "romanticise" the *Élysée* - investing in personality, sentiment and the temporality of man vis. à vis the eternity of Nature - he then changed perspective, emphasising a different dimension of the project with a muted yet unmistakable celebratory character.

With the absence of a chronological circuit to structure the experience as "historical", it would be easy for the *Élysée* to collapse into irrelevance and to be seen as a mere

⁹⁴ POULOT, D., *Musée*, op. cit. (note 1), p. 328.

afterthought to the Museum, a pleasure garden for relaxation after the visit. Or, even worse, to be seen as distracting from the seriousness of the Museum's agenda - which was indeed the case for Courajod, for example. By projecting Condorcet's Elysium in the background, Lenoir was setting the tone for the attentive visitor, clarifying that the same operation which had started in the halls was continuing here - only in different form. To the extent that the halls were about history - beyond mere chronology, as the *order* of history and the temporality of individual existence within that of the culture as a whole - the Élysée was about history as well. Here, in the garden, the focus was broadened further, in order to bring in the realm of the eternal and to link history to the primordial ground of nature. The contemplation of the "tableau de l'espèce humaine" and the "chaîne éternelle des destinées humaines" - to use Condorcet's words - would arise from the halls. Following that, the visitor to the Museum would be offered "asile" from the perpetuity of human struggle in a place where the emphasis on the remains of the virtuous from across the nation's history, placed in the embrace of nature, would herald the re-establishment of man on a higher plane, "dans les droits, comme dans la dignité de sa nature".⁹⁵

In his own words, Lenoir emphasised further the rewarding effect which the Élysée, as natural continuation of the historical project of the Museum, was meant to have on the visitor:

Qu'on suppose ces restes inanimés recevant une nouvelle vie pour ce voir, s'entendre et jouir d'une félicité commune et inaltérable (...) je me fais honneur d'avouer que j'éprouve une émotion douce et nouvelle, toutes les fois que je porte mes pas dans cette auguste enceinte; j'ajouterai que la récompense la plus chère à mon cœur seroit de faire passer dans l'ame de mes lecteurs et de ceux qui visiteront cet Élysée, le saint respect dont, en le formant, j'ai été pénétré pour les lumières, les talents et la vertu.⁹⁶

With the Élysée thus identified as a place about the celebration of the *lumières*, talent and virtue beyond its immediately accessible *jardin anglais* characteristics, it was secured as an integral part of the Museum, a sort of culmination and legitimation of history into a greater order.

⁹⁵ All quotes from Condorcet's text, as reproduced above and in Lenoir, op. cit. (note 93).

⁹⁶ *Musée*, vol. 5 (1806), pp. 203-204.

The sublime

Having started, in this chapter, the exploration of the Museum from its most obvious and rational aspect - that of chronology - several further layers of representation have been revealed, gradually departing from the appeal to the intellect alone and increasingly engaging the senses and emotions in a unified aesthetic experience. I have suggested that these aspects were operating complementarily rather than in conflict, and such was the case with this last element which I would like to discuss before proceeding to the next chapter, even though in many ways the investment in the sublime could be seen as the opposite of rationality.

The notion of the sublime had been enjoying great popularity since Edmund Burke's essay, of mid-century. The *Philosophical Enquiry into the Origin of our Ideas of the Sublime and the Beautiful* (1755) was not the first treatise on the matter, but it was extremely influential no less because it transposed the sublime from the realm of language and literature into the visual and material world. A considerable number of architects and artists contemporary to Lenoir had focused on the sublime as an essential "ingredient" for the work, particularly in relation to themes of divinity, death and nature.⁹⁷ Between J.-M. Morel, the garden theorist who wrote the *Théorie des jardins* in 1776 and E.-L. Boullée, the most famous exponent of the sublime in architecture and, significantly, also a Freemason (1780s/90s), Lenoir would have surely had ample exposure to the idea of the sublime and its role in aesthetic experience. It is also highly likely that Lenoir would have read Burke's translated book itself, being particularly interesting in principle to the Frenchman's concerns.

In any case, the Museum of Monuments invested in the sublime systematically and on a number of levels, confirming the importance of emotion and imagination for the engagement with the project.

⁹⁷ See ETLIN, op. cit. (note 85), chapter 3 : "The Sublime", pp. 101-159.

The most obvious element conducive to the sublime in the Museum was the use of light. Burke wrote: "All edifices calculated to produce an idea of the sublime ought rather to be dark and gloomy (...) darkness itself is known by experience to have a greater effect on passions than light"; but he also suggested that "to make an object very striking we should make it as different as possible from the objects we have been immediately conversant".⁹⁸ Between the gloriously bright and spacious Introductory hall and the twilit vaults of the Thirteenth-century one, it would be hard to believe that Lenoir had not taken Burke's advice in their making. Furthermore, throughout the Museum's halls the emphasis was on the manipulation of light - even the Seventeenth-century hall had light controlled through stained glass windows - and on the contrast of illumination as well as decoration between the halls. Finally emerging beyond the cloistered rooms and into the Élysée, the sustained contrast of ambience would have found its culmination. We already saw how Lenoir justified the manipulation of light in the halls as a mode of communicating the degrees of enlightenment (and lack thereof) of the respective epochs. By translating this intellectual observation in visual terms, incorporating it in his "speaking" design, he was communicating the sublime *feeling* of the "darker" eras, and their contrast with the epochs and the sheer principle of the *lumières*, in a much more immediate, affecting way - while the unmediated daylight of the garden posited the embrace of Nature as the ground of it all.

This was the nature of the sublime, according to Burke, to produce the strongest emotions which "the mind" is capable of feeling. Those emotions, however, were mainly the negative ones, brought on by pain, danger, terror and the encounter with death, rather than the positive ones of joy, pleasure, comfort, etc. "I am satisfied", wrote Burke "the ideas of pain are much more powerful than those which enter on the part of pleasure"; and further "as pain is stronger in operation than pleasure, so death is in general a much more affecting idea than pain"⁹⁹. The dominance of tombs and funerary monuments at the Petits-Augustins, therefore, rendered the experience sublime from the outset. Furthermore, the considerable presence of strife, suffering and all sorts of unpleasantness through the

⁹⁸ BURKE, E., *A Philosophical Enquiry into the Origin of our Ideas of the Sublime and the Beautiful* (London, 1759 - 2nd ed.), pp 147-148.

⁹⁹ *ibid.*, pp. 58-59.

personalised historical figures, would have undoubtedly added to what Burke qualified as "terror". An additional category of the sublime operating in Museum would have been that of "Power". The frequent address of sovereigns with the title of "dread majesty", wrote Burke, was indicative of the direct connection which the power arising "from institution in kings and commanders" had with terror.¹⁰⁰

The medium through which the specific engagement with the personalities would have occurred in the Museum was described by Burke as "Sympathy", also conducive to sublime emotions. This was a sort of substitution, he wrote, by which we are put in the place of another person, capable of being affected in a similar way as he. And he continued:

It is by this principle chiefly that poetry, painting and other affecting arts, transfuse their passions from one breast to another, and are often capable of grafting a delight on wretchedness, misery and death itself. It is a common observation, that objects which in the reality would shock, are in tragical, and such like representations, the source of a very high species of pleasure.¹⁰¹

In the realm of the arts, it was distance which played the key role and guaranteed that the experience of sympathy would be, ultimately, pleasurable. For Burke acknowledged that "when danger or pain press too nearly they are incapable of giving any delight". But at the appropriate distance and "with certain modifications", he continued, "they may be and they are delightful, as we everyday experience".¹⁰² It would be interesting to consider here the ambiguous nature of Lenoir's monuments in terms of their representation of pain and death, and the extent to which they were or were not "art". The monuments were clearly representing real people and real lives and deaths, so they would not have fitted the category of "art" understood as fiction, for the purposes of the sublime. Broadly speaking, they were real tombs and their "sublimity" would be that of any cemetery. The necessary distance would have been provided not by the unreality but by the simple otherness and temporal alienation of the dead. At the same time, the sense of fiction was highly present in the Museum, highly staged as it was, with the extensive presence of *fabriques* blurring the

¹⁰⁰ Ibid., p. 116.

¹⁰¹ Ibid., p. 71.

¹⁰² Ibid., 60.

boundaries between reality and artifice. It would not have been entirely clear to the visitors, for example, whether a certain sepulchre actually contained the remains of the personality it depicted or not, even if they read the catalogue. But this ambiguity, uncertainty and confusion was also conducive to sublime emotions. Burke wrote that nature itself dictated that "dark, confused, uncertain" images, and by implication situations, had "a greater power of fancy to form the grander passions" than those which were "more clear and determinate".¹⁰³

¹⁰³ Ibid., p. 107.

Chapter 6

The *Musée des Monuments français*: synthesis

Despite its rhetoric, the Museum of Monuments was not about the progress of history. Although the catalogue introduction consistently heralded an imminently forthcoming brave new world which would restore society and culture to its glory, the Museum remained focused on the significance of history as a dialectics of continuity and change, rather than committed to a teleology. The experience set up across the Petits-Augustins relied on the "progress" of time and culture as a structuring tool, an initiation to a process rather than its essence. On the backbone of the chronological sequence a great tapestry of visual, intellectual and emotional detail was woven, simultaneously highlighting it as a process and blurring its end. Each hall as a whole - through its decor, arrangement, and its individual introduction in the catalogue - was presented as much as a link on a chain, as it was a total environment, an absorbing context in itself. This repeated and drastic shift of focus and scale, weaving between movement and stasis, microcosm and macrocosm, was a clear challenge to the relentless linearity and simplicity of "progress". Additionally, and although one has to acknowledge the element of necessity and existing conditions, it would not be gratuitous to point out that the actual layout of the Museum itself was a loop. Starting at the Introductory hall and ending at the Seventeenth-century, the visitor would have covered three of the four sides of the cloistered quadrangle - the fourth side consisting of two more rooms which Lenoir envisaged converting into the Eighteenth and Nineteenth-century halls, but never did. In other words, by the end of the visit one was back at the beginning. The visit was then meant to continue and conclude at the Élysée - the most pronounced challenge to the dominance of chronology in the whole Museum. In the garden, the idea of progress/process took an even more implicit and even less teleological form, fragmented by the openness of the layout, the encouragement to wander and stop at

will, the enhanced investment on emotional engagement, and, finally, the fundamental ahistoricity of Nature.

The great investment in and appeal of individual personalities in this process was a challenge both to a purely historicist and a purely commemorative agenda. The passage of time on the grand historical scale would come to a halt in front of Héloïse and Abélard, or Diane de Poitiers, or the villainous Charles IX, with all attention shifted on the microcosm of the individual life and the temporality of human emotion. In that sense also, the Museum was not a Pantheon, because the commemoration of personalities was not always a celebration of virtues and, most importantly, it was never a detached or completed affair. Through the rich tapestry of human life what was celebrated in the end, was its endurance and its ever-elusive yet ever-present sense of identity and order - the most obvious aspect of this being its specificity as French. Even the Élysée as locus of the "reward of virtue" operated beyond mere *Grand-Homme*, being, equally, about Nature as the culmination of history, and human sentiment (here above any other faculty) as the triumph over temporal distance and death. This simultaneous dual scale of temporality - the historical and the ahistorical, the personal and the universal - was essential to the Museum, as it allowed its "narrative" to operate on two different levels. On one hand, there was a process of change and development which allowed for the future to be anticipated as "new" and which, for example, rendered the specific passion of Héloïse for Abélard and its consequences on their lives greatly remote, lost in the depths of time. But, on the other hand, there was a common ground sustaining this change, guaranteeing the continuity and unity of the whole operation - and in that way Héloïse and Abélard were "rescued" from the depths of time through empathy, through the universality of human emotion and its endurance. As opposed to a Pantheon-like *Grand-Homme* where the specificity of the individuals commemorated became irrelevant in view of their abstracted, intellectualised virtues, in the Museum of Monuments the historical personalities transcended the ravages of time in all their humanity - and through the empathy of their audience.

The investment on sentiment and empathy as a crucial medium for the experience of history left the Museum's audience with a large part of the responsibility for the extraction - or construction - of meaning. The Museum of Monuments was clearly not a simple case of a didactic institution dealing in information accumulation, but relying instead on active participation for its completion. This was multiply enhanced by the nature of the exhibits and the display as a whole, which addressed their audience largely through allegory and the half-concealed language of monuments, demanding that the visitors themselves complete their sentences, so to speak, through their own memories and imagination. Furthermore, the Museum's experience was one of self-discovery as much as empathy, implying - and implicating - the visitor in the various layers of its representation and meaning. The truths awaiting to be discovered in the Museum were, ultimately, to be affirmed through their reflection on and reworking by the people who experienced them - whether they be pride in the shared national identity, the universality of feeling, the frivolity or importance of stylistic preferences, the sublime aversion for the early ages of one's own nation, or the equality of all men in the face of death.

With archetypal Origins posited at the beginning of the project and Nature as the primordial ground of human existence at the end, and with the communal and personal, the emotive, empathetic and the rational, the particular and universal constantly playing off each other in between in perpetual engagement, the tale which tentatively emerged from the Museum of Monuments was more like myth than history.

Mythopoesis

Dominique Poulot has already credited the Museum of Monuments with mythopoetic aspirations - that is, with the attempt to go beyond the representation of history into the realm of mythology. Poulot writes: "Loin de viser seulement à la compréhension du passé, l'entreprise antiquaire poursuit donc chez Dupuis et chez Lenoir un dessein d'émancipation fondé sur une lecture proprement mythique".¹ He then quotes Jean Starobinski writing that

¹ POULOT, D., *Musée, nation, patrimoine 1795-1815* (Paris: Gallimard, 1997), p. 334.

the great redistribution of the sacred and the profane in the eighteenth century (also thought of as a paradigm shift), ended up turning back on its tracks by rehabilitating the sense of myth, having previously dismissed it as superfluous and misleading.² The mythopoetic aspect of the Museum is fundamentally important to the reinterpretation of the project that this dissertation is proposing, and, as far as I am aware, Poulot is the only historian who has acknowledged this aspect so far. Nevertheless, his extremely brief observation merely hints at it without pursuing its implications nor revealing its significance. Furthermore, I would suggest that this observation could even be misleading, as it places Dupuis, as well as Lenoir's written work, on a par with the Museum of Monuments. Although these projects, and others, participated indeed in what Starobinski identified as the change of attitude towards myth, I would propose that their crucial difference with the Museum was that they remained captive to their analytic structure and their "scientific"/historicist agenda, while the latter ultimately allowed for their overcoming.

The changing attitude towards myth in the later-eighteenth century was as much a rediscovery of old myths and their relevance to contemporary life as it was an inventive operation. The urgent occupation with a modern mythopoesis was the inevitable consequence of a culture that had been systematically attempting - and nearly succeeding at - the translation of its entire metaphysics into purely scientific terms. As Kolakowski writes, myth is precisely this need which generates answers to questions that are ultimately metaphysical in nature and incapable of conversion into scientific terms.³ The concern behind modern mythopoesis could be seen, therefore, as the refusal of a contingent, impermanent and yet entirely self-referential world; in other words, about the universal legitimation of values and the submission of the experiential world to a permanent order, referring to unconditioned Being.⁴

² STAROBINSKI, J., "Le myth au XVIIIe siècle", *Critique*, no. 366, 1977.

³ KOLAKOWSKI, L., *The Presence of Myth*, transl. A. Czerniawski (University of Chicago Press, 1989/orig. 1972), p. 2. On this discussion, see also Gadamer's essays "Mythos und Wissenschaft" and "Mythos und Vernunft", both in vol. VIII of his *Gesamelte Werke*.

⁴ KOLAKOWSKI, *ibid.*, p. 5.

Modern mythology could finally be understood as the attempt to establish a dialectics of memory with "anticipatory leaps into the future", in the context of a fully self-conscious culture.

Perhaps the most important question that the association of myth and modernity raises, therefore, is the very possibility of such a pairing. Kolakowski himself asks: "Is a consciousness possible which acknowledges the genealogy of myth and at the same time is capable of participating in it?".⁵ The conclusion which I would espouse from the various possible responses here is that, at least *prima vista*, the qualifying factor for the use of the term myth in Lenoir's context is the acceptance of its demise. Myth and the mythical belonged to a traditional cosmology which was necessarily overcome with the historical paradigm and the rationalisation of understanding. The philosophy of the Enlightenment consolidated the process of the illegitimisation of myth, whereby the latter, pitched against the freedom of the Rule of Reason, was dismissed as "superstition". A significant part of the backlash of Enlightenment ideals was the Romantic reaction against this paralysing freedom, and the attempt to re-root the culture in precedent and even prejudice. Gadamer writes that "the world of myth, unreflective life, not yet analysed away by consciousness, in a 'society close to nature', the world of Christian chivalry - all these acquire a romantic magic, even a priority over truth"⁶. The Romantic attempt to reverse the Enlightenment, however, was firmly based on Enlightenment principles, generating the paradoxical quest of authenticity through human invention, the conscious return to the unconscious, and the rational recognition of the superiority of the symbolic age of myth. And Gadamer concludes:

All criticism of the Enlightenment now proceeds via this romantic mirror image of the Enlightenment. Belief in the perfectibility of reason suddenly changes into the perfection of the 'mythical' consciousness and finds itself reflected in a paradisiacal primal state before the 'fall' of thought. § In fact the presupposition of a mysterious darkness in which there was a mythical collective consciousness that preceded all thought is just as dogmatic and abstract as that of a state of perfect enlightenment or absolute knowledge.⁷

⁵ Ibid., p. 118.

⁶ GADAMER, H.-G., *Truth and Method*, transl. Weinsheimer & Marshall (London: Sheed & Ward, 1989), p. 273.

⁷ Ibid., p. 274.

In short, borrowing the expression from Mircea Eliade, the Romantic rediscovery of - and attempted reintegration with - myth was necessarily "artificial, because decreed"⁸.

The great narrative which Lenoir's contemporaries attempted to construct was the other side of the coin of historicism and the invention of history: a mythical realm beyond history, to legitimise and carry the former. Such a narrative, necessarily confined within the framework of the modern historical paradigm, was ultimately a history with metaphysical aspirations - once more, an essentially paradoxical concept.

Read as part of the systematic archeology of myth, the Museum of Monuments would remain one of the lesser projects, almost entirely derivative from works such as Dupuis and de Gébelin, but also Winckelmann and the host of other scholars who marked the movement towards historicisation and the subsequent metaphysicisation of history. But a number of the Museum's features would be contradictory or at least superfluous to this view - such as the obsession with human detail or the extent of the investment on spectacle and theatricality, including the inventiveness of Lenoir's own *fabriques*; or, seen from a different view, the meticulous pursuit of chronological progression and the attempt to fit everything in a causal temporal scheme, only to be abandoned in the garden; or, as Poulot writes, the two overlapping ideologies which governed the Museum, on one hand the classical ideal of Winckelmann (read: history of art), and on the other the idea of science rediscovering the world's truths behind myth and fable (read: metaphysics).⁹

My thesis, however, is that all the aspects of the Museum of Monuments actually operated as a whole and, as such, they were not just meaningful independently, in a tolerant co-existence, but much more so in conjunction with each other. It was the combined presence of all those conflicting features, including Lenoir's idiosyncrasies and shortcomings, which allowed the project to be meaningful as a whole while escaping the trap of the more systematic mythological and mythopoetic projects. The Museum's engagement with myth

⁸ ELIADE, M., *The Myth of the Eternal Return, or Cosmos and History*, transl. W. R. Trask (London: Arkana/Penguin, 1989 [orig. 1954]), p. 153.

⁹ POULOT, *Musée*, op. cit. (note 1), p. 334.

did not occur as a fully-fledged analytic and inventive operation - that is, the Museum was not a scientific treatise-like commentary on myth, nor did it propose the full reconstruction of a mythical narrative. The former is self-evident through the very nature of the project, while the latter, a much subtler matter, I have attempted to show in the previous chapter by tracing the various seemingly conflicting levels on which the Museum of Monuments operated. The different overlaid storylines (the genealogy of epochs and political events, the development of styles, the personal histories), woven around great constants (Nature and the common Origins of civilisation, sentiment, the Enlightenment ideal) and engaging the visitor equally intellectually, aesthetically and emotionally, did not constitute a single coherent and conclusive narrative. There was no specific message awaiting one at the end of the visit, nor was there a single purpose unfolding and sustaining the movement.

Arguably, the Museum of Monuments engaged with myth in a simultaneously more implicit and more immediate way, operating - to borrow Hans Blumenberg's concept - as "work on myth".¹⁰ In response to the dominant view of modernity as fundamentally incompatible with the authenticity of myth, Blumenberg offers a different interpretation which allows for the conscious - i.e. modern - participation in myth. He suggests that, throughout our recorded tradition, our engagement with the mythical has always been self-conscious, simultaneously a "commenting on" as well as a continuation and "handing down" of myth.¹¹ As such, there is no fundamental incompatibility between the *logos* of and the participation in myth. Blumenberg, in his long discussion of this important idea, remains in the realm of the written word and, specifically, the re-working of ancient myths by seminal modern writers. As such, the possibility of creating work on myth - as opposed to mere historicist mythology and mythopoesis - in the broader realm of modern culture remains implied and tentative, and its criteria largely unexplored. Nevertheless, I would suggest that we can infer from Blumenberg's exposition a fundamental characteristic of the work on myth, which is also of particular significance to our discussion of the Museum of Monuments: the necessary openness of the endeavour, that is, its refusal or

¹⁰ See BLUMENBERG, H., *Work on Myth*, trans. R. M. Wallace (MIT Press, 1985).

¹¹ *Ibid.*, p. xiii.

inability to sustain the illusion of a fixed and complete perspective, requiring, instead, repeated participation ("working") for the revelation of meaning. This is where the "work on" myth comes very close to the "work of" art, both understood as a dialectic process of re-enactment and poesis, or imitation and creation.¹²

The Museum of Monuments was like an imaginatively composed map of ideas and trends of its time - such as the quest for objectivity and causality, the fascination with individual genius and the cult of personality, the re-evaluation of the nation's art and architecture, the rediscovery of origins, etc. - tentatively guiding the quest for order and meaning in the historical dimension of human existence. Between the shifting temporalities of the teleology of Progress, the eternity of *Grand-Homme*, the finitude of mortal existence and the transcendence of sentiment, overlapping and manifested throughout the visit, the Museum did not offer a single view of history nor did it represent a consistent narrative-like temporal flow. The fragments of the collection - the monuments - and the ideological "fragments" which Lenoir had availed himself of in the structuring of the project, were all woven together in an open composition which did not present a definitive version of anything, but rather relied on the visitors' participation in order to piece itself gradually, as an ongoing metaphor. As such, I would suggest, the Museum of Monuments transcended its historicist basis by allowing the quest for order to be transformed into a work on myth, that is, a poetic endeavour and a possibility of engagement with the mythical dimension through metaphoric allusion to myth rather than actual construction.

Play/Metaphor/Fragment

In order to explore this suggestion further, I will avail myself of the key ideas of play, metaphor and the poetic fragment, from the context of philosophical hermeneutics and, predominantly, the work of Hans-Georg Gadamer and Paul Ricoeur.

¹² See GADAMER, H.-G., "Art and Imitation", in *The Relevance of the Beautiful and Other Essays*, ed. R. Bernasconi, trans. N. Walker (Cambridge University Press, 1991), pp. 92-104.

Gadamer proposes the notion of play and its relevance to the understanding of symbolic representation and the work of art as an opposite to the aesthetic - the former being an open whereas the latter an essentially closed experience.¹³ One of the key features of Gadamer's "play" is that it cannot exist independently of the participants. It is an entity which is only complete - or rather always in the process of being completed - while enacted. This holds true, although in different ways, for "play" as game, as drama, and as festival/rite. The idea of movement - both as repetition and as change - is central to play, hence expressions such as "the play of light" or "the play of waves". Nature as the primordial ground upon which play occurs, and re-occurs, is even more evident in Friedrich Schlegel's dictum: "All the sacred games of art are only remote imitations of the infinite play of the world, the eternally self-creating work of art".¹⁴ Thinking of art - and the mode of engagement with it - as play, is Gadamer's way of demonstrating the work's fundamental openness and incompleteness, awaiting one's participation to become "complete". Because the participant completes what it is, the work-as-play reveals itself as a process which takes place "in-between". It is a process of structuring meaning rather than a message in itself.

The notion of structure (in its dynamic sense, as structuring-process) is important. Against the idea of a conclusive, fixed object it implies movement and openness, but it also implies that this movement does not occur in a vacuum and, as such, it also posits itself against the limitless openness of chaos. Play, in all its manifestations, implies a given, a common ground and an agreement, which accompanies it throughout and allows it to be recognised in the first place. In that sense it is re-presentation, relying simultaneously on the typical and the unique, the familiar and the unfamiliar. Gadamer writes: "Imitation and representation are not merely a repetition, a copy, but knowledge of the essence. Because they are not merely repetition, but a 'bringing forth', they imply a spectator as well. They contain in themselves an essential relation to everyone for whom the representation exists."¹⁵ And, further on, emphasising the necessary dual aspect of play, he continues:

¹³ GADAMER, op. cit (note 6), Chapter I. II. 1: Play as the clue to ontological explanation; and "The relevance of the beautiful: art as play, symbol, and festival", in *The Relevance of the Beautiful*, as above, pp. 1-56.

¹⁴ From the "Gespräch über die Poesie" - quoted in GADAMER, *Truth*, op. cit. (note 6), p. 105.

¹⁵ Ibid., p. 114-115.

"Play is structure - this means that despite its dependence on being played it is a meaningful whole which can be repeatedly presented as such and the significance of which can be understood. But structure is also play, because - despite this theoretical unity - it achieves its full being only each time it is played."¹⁶

In other words, the structuring process of play is a process of mediation, wherein all elements involved, including the process itself, acquire their proper being in being mediated. This reading implies a constant movement which does away with the concept of objecthood and objectivity - in their radical sense - in the realm of art. At the same time, the immediate implication that the sum is greater than its parts, leads to one of Gadamer's suggestion that "the work of art signifies an increase in being".¹⁷ The philosophical implications of this pronouncement are many and largely inconclusive, and this is not the place to engage with them fully.¹⁸ Nevertheless, what I would like to maintain for the purposes of this dissertation is the idea that a work of art - and representation in general - understood as play, that is, as a fundamentally dialectic experience, offers the possibility of engaging with the familiar in novel and inexhaustible ways.

This interpretation of play helps us understand better the importance of metaphor - the second key notion for our discussion. Paul Ricœur's idea of metaphor is particularly relevant here, despite the fact that his discussion revolves specifically around language. I would suggest that the very nature of his observations makes it entirely possible to expand the concept of metaphor across culture with considerable hermeneutic gain. Ricœur proposes metaphor as a semantic innovation, and, by linking it to poetic discourse, as an emergence of meaning.¹⁹ What is particularly significant about this idea of metaphor is that it is a function of the sentence as a whole, rather than the attribute of individual words -

¹⁶ Ibid., p.117.

¹⁷ "The relevance...", op. cit. (note 13), p. 35.

¹⁸ Professor Crowther, for example, has suggested in his seminars and his essay "Art as a Form of Knowledge", that there is a paradox inherent in this idea. Unfortunately Gadamer has focused only briefly on art and symbolic representation (as a demonstrative means towards his greater philosophical aims) and, as such, there he has left a considerable margin for conflicting interpretations.

¹⁹ RICŒUR, P., "Creativity in Language", in *Language and Language Disturbances*, (ed.) E. Strauss (Duquesne University Press, 1974), p. 49-50.; see also his classic work *The Rule of Metaphor*, transl. R. Czerny (University of Toronto Press, 1997).

only an ensemble of words can be metaphoric. Metaphor is, therefore, something that has to do with the in-between, with the relationships and tensions between the words in the context of language. Through the tensions of metaphor language is "shattered and increased" as established meaning is expanded, ultimately increasing our sense of reality.²⁰ Ricœur also points out, after Monroe Beardsley, that "the privileged procedure of metaphor is self-contradiction. The function of metaphor is to make sense with nonsense, to transform a self-contradictory statement into a significant self-contradiction".²¹ Metaphor, in other words, consists in confusing the established logical boundaries for the sake of detecting new similarities that previous categorisation prevented us from noticing. This is a process of "making strange", of confusing the familiar and thus allowing it to reveal meaningful relationships with the world beyond the established. As with the notion of play, however, the necessary presupposition for this operation is its grounding in language/the world - that is, the situation of metaphor *within* the recognisable and the familiar. Metaphor, like play, mediates between the given and the possible, the expressed and the unexpressed, the perceived and the imagined. Imagination, a key element in the whole process, is "the place of nascent meanings and categories", but also a place inextricably bound with memory.²² Already from Kant, the complementarity of memory and imagination for the perception of - and engagement with - the world has been established. In the play of metaphor the movement between memory and imagination is at its most creative. Furthermore, Ricœur emphasises the role of feeling in this context, writing that the operation of imagination and feeling is intrinsically linked. Ultimately, he concludes that the combined role of memory, imagination and emotion in the engagement with metaphor does not operate as a substitute for a lack of informative content but is an essential requirement for the revelation of its full cognitive intent.²³

²⁰ *ibid.*, p. 71

²¹ *Ibid.*, p. 63.

²² *Ibid.*, p. 67. On the importance of imagination in this context see also RICŒUR, P., "The metaphorical process as cognition, imagination and feeling", in S. Sacks (ed.), *On Metaphor* (University of Chicago Press, 1978).

²³ "The metaphorical process...", as above, p. 151-157.

This latter observation is significant, because it specifically underlines the hermeneutic increase which occurs through the engagement with metaphor. In other words, metaphor potentially introduces a richer mode of engagement with the world which transcends the limitations of other modes of cognition. What is also significant here is that this very observation, albeit in slightly different terms, was articulated for the first time already in 1735 by Alexander Baumgarten, in his *Reflections on Poetry*.²⁴ As Karsten Harries points out, Baumgarten stated that the work of the poet resembles that of the metaphysician in that both imitate the world, attempting to capture something of the perfection of God's creation.²⁵ The decisive difference, however, lies in the abstraction of the latter against the concreteness of the former. The metaphysician's descriptions are essentially inadequate because they can only consist of abstract ideas. For the sake of clarity and distinctness he surrenders the concrete and sensuous, so his work remains a mirror which cannot capture the richness of the real world. The work of the poet, on the other hand, is not a pale representation of the world but a whole new world - a parallel, or metaphoric world we would say today - which addresses itself to the spirit and the senses alike. "Fusing matter and form into a perfect whole", writes Harries after Baumgarten, "the poet satisfies our demand for both completeness and concreteness as even God's creation cannot, for its order, although perfect, is infinitely complex and thus incommensurable with out finite faculties".²⁶ To be sure, Baumgarten then went on to say that the poet's price for this richness was no less than truth itself, which remained the exclusive privilege of the positive sciences (it would not be for at least another century that the possibility of a secular yet non-scientifically-defined truth would be fully envisaged). Nevertheless, what I would like to retain for our discussion is the fact that a distinct privilege of the poetic work in terms of its capacity to represent the world, had already been identified several decades before Lenoir.

²⁴ See BAUMGARTEN, A., *Reflexions on Poetry*, transl. Aschenbrenner/Holther (London, 1954/orig. 1735).

²⁵ HARRIES, K., "Metaphor and Transcendence", in Sacks (ed.), op. cit. (note 22).

²⁶ Ibid. p. 74.

A particular manifestation of the possibilities of metaphor which is of the greatest significance here, constituting the third key concept of this section, is the idea of the poetic/restorative fragment.²⁷ Although fragmentation is usually associated with isolation and disruption of meaning, there is a possibility of accessing the memory of the original situation residing latent in the fragment through a process of poetic reconstruction. Both "reconstruction" and "access" are emphatically not used here in their scientific sense, where an objective, unsituated datum is independently lost and recovered. What is restored, rather, is the communicative potential of the piece *as part of* a greater whole, ultimately referring back to the world. This reference whereupon the meaning of the fragment depends is accessed through a process of analogy rather than causality, and, as such, the recovered meaning is equally conditioned by the process of its recovery as it is by its origins. The capacity of the fragment to refer beyond itself, and thus to overcome its isolation, is metaphoric and dialectic; as such, the "whole" that it refers back to cannot be understood in the sense of completion. Metaphor speaks of what remains absent, writes Harries²⁸, so the possible recovery implied by the fragment remains precisely that: latent and inconclusive, albeit perpetually active, as a "process of becoming".²⁹ This crucial observation refers us back to the "increase" associated with metaphor, and identifies the potentially privileged position of the fragment as a communicative medium.

Much like the tension between mere mythology and the active work on myth, the ambiguity between alienation and restoration of the fragment is largely conditioned by a relationship, or, rather, by a network of relationships which pertain to the fragment's *situation*. Dalibor Vesely writes that : "Meaning depends on the continuity of communicative movement between individual elements and on their relation (reference) to the pre-existing latent world."³⁰ The fragment can only be interpreted as restorative through the play of metaphor - that is, through the *metaphorà*, the transportation beyond its current state of ruinous

²⁷ For this idea I am largely relying on Dalibor Vesely's essay "Architecture and the Ambiguity of the Fragment", in R. Middleton (ed.), *The Idea of the City* (London: AA Publications, 1996), as well as his seminars at the University of Cambridge between 1993 and 1996.

²⁸ HARRIES, op. cit. (note 25), p. 82.

²⁹ Martin Heidegger's thought is crucial here. See, for example, "The Thing" in *Poetry, Language, Thought*, transl. A. Hofstadter (N.Y. & London: Harper & Row, 1971).

³⁰ VESELY, op. cit. (note 27), p. 118.

autonomy into a realm of meaning. But we have already seen that the possibility of metaphor resides in the in-between of elements and their relationship with the whole - that is, in situation. It is, in other words, largely a question of context - in the broadest sense of the word - whether a fragment may become restorative or not; whether, that is, it may be perceived as part of a latent order extending beyond the confines of the immediate context, or whether it shall remain bound to its present, literally fragmented condition.

Restorative order emerges through fragmentation as more than just an archeological operation, but rather as a poetic project - as much about recovery as it is about creation. It becomes clear, therefore, how the poetic fragment would be particularly relevant in the realm of history, where the vastness and elusiveness of the "whole" to be recovered culminates in the fact that it is also constantly in the process of developing. Taking up the considerable challenge issued by hermeneutics to the prevailing ideas of historical truth, Paul Ricœur brings the notions of metaphor and the poetic fragment to bear upon the problem of history³¹. He states that the only way to write history is through the recognition and empowerment of the "trace", or fragment, as "standing-for". In the absence of the eternal presence of the present - of the traditional paradigm - and against a "history" entirely conditioned by the prevailing prospect of the future, metaphor is the only medium through which the reality of the historical past can be rendered. It is only in Analogy understood as the dialectic between Same and Different, between Re-Enactment and Distance, concludes Ricœur, that history can make sense:

The past is indeed what is to be *re-enacted* in the mode of the identical. But is so only to the extent that it is also what is *absent* from all our constructions. The analogue, precisely, holds within it the force of re-enactment and of distancing, to the extent that being as is both being and non-being.³²

In the light of all this, an understanding of the Museum of Monuments as poetic and restorative becomes possible.

³¹ Gadamer, for example, had already written that in view of the finitude of our own existence there is something absurd about the idea of a unique correct interpretation of history.

³² RICŒUR, P., *The Reality of the Historical Past*, The Aquinas Lecture 1984 (Marquette University Press, 1984), p. 36.

The project at the Petits-Augustins was, essentially, a museum of fragments. The fact that Lenoir worked assiduously to restore them from their often ruinous state did not affect this. They were still fragments, still *parts of* a greater whole - whether architectural, socio-political, or metaphysical in any case a whole that was largely lost, only potentially retrievable through those pieces. The Museum of Monuments managed to establish a latent communicative, metaphoric space between the fragments where a whole world of possible associations, transformations and interpretations became manifest. Like Ricoeurian traces, the fragments in the Petits-Augustins became historically relevant and meaningful through analogy and metaphor.

Through its open and enthusiastic investment in theatrics, *fabriques* and the total blurring of boundaries between exhibits and exhibition operating alongside the pursuit of objectivity, the Museum of Monuments fused fact and fiction into one great scheme, challenging its own authority - ultimately, raising questions about the very nature and possibility of representation. Truth was not presented as a given in this project, but was sought out between the layers of representation, pieced together from shifting threads of meaning. The Museum needed the active participation of the spectator for the completion of its "picture", for the imaginary restoration of the fragments and the tracing of the traces. Paraphrasing Gadamer, I would say that the visitors of the Museum of Monuments were the ones who secured its identity - that is, which ultimately concretised the "truths" that it was to communicate - by the way in which they participated in it.³³ Crucially, because of the Museum's own structure, this participation occurred on multiple levels, from the intellectual to the sensuous and emotional. We could safely say with Baumgarten that, beyond the abstraction of ideas, the Museum of Monuments was not a pale representation of the world but a "world" in its own right - that is, a poetic reference to the world, addressing man himself as a whole, both spirit and senses.

³³ See *Truth...*, op. cit. (note 6), p. 140, and "The relevance...", op. cit. (note 13), p. 28.

Rather than a systematic mythology - which would have been ultimately self-defeating, as we already saw - the Museum engaged with the *possibility* of myth through the active allusion to and re-working of the mythical dimension of history. The Museum was not a mere attempt to narrate myth as the origins of history, but rather to *become* myth - that is, a "work on" myth. The explicit mytho-*logical* writings of Lenoir and his contemporaries - such as Dupuis - maintained that truths which had travelled across history were concealed in the guise of allegories and, therefore, by appropriately displaying and exposing them one could reveal those truths while, simultaneously, confirming them *as* truths by their force of survival through time. The Museum of Monuments, however, transcended the fundamental historicism of this project by, on one hand, failing to compile a single and consistent mythology - that is, an explicit and systematic account of those "truths" - while, on the other hand, implying that this process of meaning-formation and communication was somehow still active in culture, continuing to find its way into symbolic representation and the arts.³⁴ Ultimately, this is the "history" which I have been suggesting that the Museum of Monuments had been writing: not *a* history but rather histories - chronologies, genealogies, love-stories, morality tales, mythologies, art-histories, etc. etc. - incomplete and ongoing, uncommitted to any common *telos* yet still, somehow, revealing a much-sought-after pattern, an order, which emerged elusively and simply through their mutual relationship. This order belonged to the mythical and metaphysical dimension, apprehensible in the in-between spaces, in the common ground between monuments, histories, visitors and the world at large.

The Museum of Monuments was a multi-layered response to the drastic changes in worldview, accelerated by the Revolution and consolidated through the backlash to both Revolution and Enlightenment. Although emphatically not an exclusively personal project, it was nevertheless sufficiently reliant on the input of one man, as well as having from the outset a sufficiently ambiguous task, to find itself in the unique position where the large public could be addressed with a largely open agenda. The deeply uncertain policies

³⁴ In this light, the perpetual incompleteness of the Museum in general, and specifically the projected Eighteenth and Nineteenth-century halls, become particularly significant.

towards art, religion and the idea of the past of the various regimes, combined with the personal interpretations of key officials, resulted in fairly erratic guidance (both material and ideological) reaching the Museum throughout its life. A considerable factor was also the fact that this was a project simply not big or high-profiled enough to sustain the kind of attention which the Louvre, for example, continuously had. Because it operated on tenuous ground, being incomplete and even elliptical - certainly contradictory - the "narrative" it presented was, in the end, not a narrative at all in the normative sense, but a multi-layered, open-ended affair, more like a poem. Having gathered a great wealth of fragments - of monuments, ideas, emotions - and then by resisting, or even fortuitously *failing* to complete the picture, Lenoir managed to set up a metaphoric communicative space which offered the possibility of a restorative engagement with those fragments. Operating on a terrain interspersed with considerable restrictions and uncertainties, but also with a continuous sense of acute topicality, Lenoir proceeded to weave his metaphoric tapestry in a variety of patterns, albeit with a single purpose: the mapping of reality - both the particular reality of contemporary France and its place in the universal - and the representation of its underlying order. It was almost as if Lenoir was constructing a vast work of art himself, an expansive *fabrique* which would engage with the great metaphysical questions and quests of his time.

Chapter 7

Musée des Monuments/Quatremère rapprochement

The respective interpretation of Quatremère's writings and of the Museum of Monuments in the previous chapters has already highlighted the issues which inform the main premise of this thesis - that Quatremère de Quincy's opposition to the Museum of Monuments was largely circumstantial, and that the latter was in fact a project essentially in tune with Quatremère's own ideas and concerns. In this chapter, these issues will be brought together and discussed as a whole, in order to firmly establish this rapprochement.

"Enseignement public"

Perhaps the most immediately obvious and, in many ways, the most pervasive similarity between Quatremère and Lenoir was their mutual interest in a modern notion of broader education for the general public - that is, an idea of cultivation available to, and increasingly *necessary* for, every citizen, based on the arts and their relationship to history. There was an aspect of the Museum of Monuments which was specifically promoted as relevant to the education of artists - the progress and decline of style, as well as the different costumes and decorative ornaments from different ages. This was the aspect which aimed to be erudite and rigorous, appealing to scholars of all relevant disciplines who would use it for study.¹ But at the same time the Museum was aiming to be relevant to the "enseignement public". On a number of occasions, Lenoir suggested that the succession of the ages, which the visitor would be encouraged to observe at the Petits-Augustins, was "un livre ouvert à l'instruction", "une école savante et une encyclopédie". In this, its broadly educational character, the Museum was supposed to approximate the role of "les Musées des anciens

¹ See DURO, P., "Un livre ouvert à l'instruction: Study Museums in the Paris in the Nineteenth Century", *Oxford Art Journal*, 10, no. 1, 1987.

peuples, dont nous aimons encore le souvenir".² Beyond the chronological arrangement and its directly instructive character, Lenoir envisaged the Museum of Monuments as a further cultivating experience, through its commemorative and contemplative aspect. We have already seen, for example, how he wrote that the Élysée aimed to "faire passer dans l'âme des visiteurs le saint respect pour les lumières, les talents et la vertu", and that this was a space where "on suppose ces restes inanimés recevant une nouvelle vie pour se voir, s'entendre et jouir d'une félicité commune et inaltérable".³ Finally, the broadly cultivating role of the Museum was latent in its very structure as historical representation and as a work on myth. The participation of the public was essential for the "completion" of the project - that is, for the emergence of meaning and the revelation of the variety of truths which the project sought to establish. The "enseignement public" in the history of the nation through its art, which Lenoir consistently offered as the aim of the Museum, encompassed the establishment and communication of the order of history and, one would be tempted to say the very nature of history, alongside the various layers of implicit historical "narratives" which were on offer.

The education of the public played a crucial role in Quatremère's work as well, alongside his more academic, ongoing quest for an artistic model. Like Lenoir, although there was an aspect of his work which was aimed at scholars, there was also a fundamental concern for the cultivation of the public. In the Fourth Letter to Miranda he expressed his concern about the capacity of the people to get the most out of works of art should those be isolated, because they would never be able to access the contextual significance necessary for the communication of the works' meaning. Scholars like himself always carried the necessary "points de parallèle" in their mind and could thus complete the context at will even at the most alienating of settings, whereas "le commun des spectateurs" remained hugely disadvantaged.⁴ Furthermore, the Alexandria-like establishment which he envisaged in the *Considérations* (1791) as an "institut national des sciences, lettres et arts" and a "lycée

² See for example, *Description* an VI, pp. 4-5, and *Musée*, an VI, p. 52.

³ LENOIR, *Musée*, 1810, p. 293.

⁴ QUATREMÈRE DE QUINCY, A.C. de, *Considérations morales sur la destination des ouvrages de l'art* - edition including the *Lettes sur l'enlèvement des ouvrages de l'art antique à Athènes et à Rome* [Letters to Miranad and Canova] - (Paris: Fayard, 1989), p. 218.

universel", was addressed both to artists and public alike, being "un point central d'instruction pour toute la France".⁵ Throughout his work, the discussion of "white" museums - that is, collections that he approved of, such as the whole of Rome, the casa Buonaroti or even the British Museum - was conducted from the point of view of the public as well as the artist and scholar. The improvement of the "goût publique" was always one of the background goals of these establishments; but above all the communication of the morality of art and its intrinsic link to society. We have seen at length that there was considerable ambiguity in Quatremère's position on the museum, which, inevitably, also implicated the "white" versions of the institution. It would appear that the pursuit of the improvement of public taste would be contradictory to the premise of the *Considérations morales* where aesthetics seemed overshadowed by the concept of moral utility.

Nevertheless, among the consistencies which lay beyond the ambiguity in Quatremère's thought was the importance of the public vis. à vis art. Whether as visitors to Rome, to the British Museum or to the churches of Paris, Quatremère was always concerned with the idea of social edification and self-improvement through art.

This mutual position was further reinforced by Lenoir and Quatremère's statements on the "higher" role of art. In the *Considérations morales* Quatremère wrote:

La croyance religieuse, le besoin d'élever l'homme à une beauté plus qu'humaine, la grandeur de la destination, cette importante obligation de se mettre au niveau de l'imagination de plus en plus exaltée d'un peuple passionné: voilà quel fut le foyer qui donna la chaleur et la vie aux ouvrages de l'Art.⁶

On a more practical level, in the same text, he meticulously distinguished true art from mere items of curiosity and products of the "frivolité du luxe", mainly by identifying the "idée la plus élevée" which characterised the former in contrast to the two latter.⁷ In a similar vein, and in the opening pages of his catalogue, Lenoir wrote that such a collection as the Museum of Monuments was necessary in order to secure that art did not remain degraded as a mere "métier" for the satisfaction of the arrogance of the despots - such as it had

⁵ *Seconde suite aux considérations sur les arts...* (Paris, 1791), p. 88.

⁶ Op. cit. (note 4), p. 63.

⁷ Ibid., pp. 15-16.

become in the recent past - but rather that it may become elevated again to its befitting position as product of true and inspired genius.⁸

The broadly edifying and cultivating role which Quatremère and Lenoir both identified for art through their respective projects, was implemented in a variety of ways, also largely in accord.

Science v. Sentiment

In different degrees of explicitness and consistency, both Lenoir and Quatremère were against scientific rigour in the context of art, and of pure aesthetic connoisseurship. We saw at length in the previous chapters how Lenoir understood the idea of accuracy and authenticity as it applied to the whole character of his halls and the appropriate effect on the visitor, rather than in any strictly archeological sense, using the rigour of chronology as the mere backbone on which a multi-layered spectacle was strung. As far as Quatremère is concerned, this issue was one of the most ambiguous. We saw how he oscillated between the explicit condemnation of "cold science" and the "spirit of criticism" in the *Considérations morales*, on one hand, and their seeming embrace in the Letters to Canova, on the other. Nevertheless, in his consistent pursuit of the idea of a unified and meaningful experience of art, Quatremère also implied the ultimate inadequacy of the connoisseurial attitude - or, for that matter, of the purely historicist.

The reason for the above was that both Lenoir and Quatremère placed the role of sentiment and the imagination above that of rationality in the engagement with art since the soul was the way through which art would achieve its precious "higher" aim. Quatremère wrote at length on the primacy of sentiment, as we have seen, both positively and negatively - that is, nominating profound sentiment as the crucial factor for the definition of the "beaux ouvrages de l'Art", but also describing the impoverishing and alienating results from the

⁸ *Description an V*, p. 2.

failure of art to excite the spectator's feelings in such places as the museum.⁹ Lenoir was less explicit about the primacy of sentiment in his writings, although he never failed to imply as much in his catalogue, through the description of the pieces and, mainly, the evocation of the personalities which they represented.

Having established the backbone of its narrative with the use of chronology - and, thus engaging the visitor initially on the intellectual level - the Museum of Monuments proceeded to offer perhaps the most extensive opportunities for emotional engagement than any other such project of its time. The meticulously constructed setting, combining decor and monuments in an almost theatrical unity, excited the imagination and conjured up images and ideas from the widest literary and pictorial sources. In such a setting, the presence of an array of deeply pathetic personalities, simultaneously great in their virtues and all-too-human in their emotions, most of them known from folklore or fiction, demanded an empathetic and sentimental response from the visitors. In the Élysée, the decorative explosion and chronological order gave way to Nature and the semantics of death, appealing to sentiment in an even more direct and sombre way. However, we have seen in detail how the commemorative/empathetic aspect of the Museum - perhaps the greatest pole for sentimental engagement - was as much at work in the halls as it was in the Élysée. Michelet's highly emotive descriptions of the Museum's halls are perhaps the most eloquent example - although by no means the only - of this.

Ambience

The mutual belief in the primacy of sentiment in the experience of art led both Lenoir and Quatremère to appreciate the importance of theatrical illusion and absorption. We saw how, in his *Rapport* of year 8 Quatremère wrote about the "charme de l'illusion" which was necessary for the fruitful engagement with art;¹⁰ and, in the *Considérations morales*, the emphasis he placed on imagination coupled with illusion and absorption as the necessary

⁹ Respectively in the *Considérations morales*, op. cit. (note 4), pp. 25-26, and the *Rapport fait au Conseil Général, le 15 thermidor an 8 ...* (Paris, 1800), pp. 37-39.

¹⁰ *Rapport*, as above, p. 38.

means to stir the soul through art. All the means conducive to the seduction of illusion, experienced through the faculty of imagination "enveloppent le spectateur" while they give to art "un sorte de vie", wrote Quatremère; and, further, that the unique virtue of the "beaux ouvrages de l'Art" is "de faire travailler l'imagination".¹¹ Lenoir wrote about the importance of imagination in the experience of art on a number of occasions, such as in his *Histoire des Arts en France* (1800), where he identified it as a tacit and natural "attraction" that links the subject with its object through the senses, this effect taking centre stage in the case of the "beaux-arts".¹² But, of course, he also invested in the powers of imagination extensively throughout the Museum, structuring both halls and garden very close to theatrical sets.

The role of decoration in the creation of a unified and "meaningful" ambience was also appreciated by Quatremère. More clearly than in any of his writings on the museum, we can see that in the only actual project which Quatremère undertook as architect. The project is, of course, the conversion of Soufflot's Sainte Geneviève into the Revolutionary Pantheon, a project of which Quatremère was placed in charge between 1791 and 1793, as was already mentioned in chapter 4. Because of the highly charged political climate under which Quatremère worked during his brief involvement with the Pantheon - resulting in its abrupt interruption and his condemnation as a counterrevolutionary - I would be disinclined to examine the project as accurately representative of Quatremère's museological position - hence it has not been mentioned before in this thesis. Furthermore, the very nature of the Revolutionary Pantheon would only allow a partial comparison with a museum project such as the Petits-Augustins, more often than not resulting in overall contrasts, as we have already seen. However, what is interesting here from that project are some ideas and choices of Quatremère concerning the setting up of the space, which show his appreciation of the role of decoration and "atmosphere".

¹¹ *Considérations morales*, op. cit. (note 4), pp. 50-53, and 70.

¹² Cited in POULOT, D., "*Surveiller et s'instruire*": *La Révolution française et l'intelligence de l'héritage historique*, Studies on Voltaire and the eighteenth-century, vol. 344 (Oxford: Voltaire Foundation, 1996), p. 377.

Clearly manifesting his belief in the power of "speaking" architecture and the symbolic language of monuments, Quatremère proposed to adorn the interior exclusively with allegorical sculptural decoration. He explained his choice by pointing out the necessity to make clear and manifest a specific character for the Pantheon of the nation's Great Men, which was absent from the actual edifice of the former church. "Les ressources de la sculpture", he wrote, "lui rendent ce qui lui manque: elles expliquent ce qui étoient indécis; elles développent ce qui étoit caché".¹³ The role of the decoration, therefore, was to communicate to the people ideas which were not immediately available otherwise, and to thus assist the visitors in their understanding of what the Pantheon was all about. The manipulation of light was also recruited for this purpose: Quatremère proposed to drastically reduce the brightness of the interior by suppressing all the lower windows of the building, explaining that this was "le moyen le plus active propre à redonner à se masse le caractère de gravité qu'indiquoit la destination".¹⁴ It is also interesting to note that Quatremère envisaged the Pantheon in a natural setting. In his first report on the project, Aug. 1791, he suggested the planting of an extensive *Elysium* which would surround the building in order to isolate it from the noise and commotion of the city. Quatremère wrote that the "silent shadows" of a "sacred woods" would provide occasion for "philosophical promenades", instilling the suitable feelings of contemplation and veneration in the visitors to the nation's temple of Great Men.¹⁵

Restoration

In the context of the attempt to convey the meaning of art as fully as possible, both Quatremère and Lenoir subscribed to the practice of restoration. This may seem surprising on the part of Quatremère, since one of the key objections he had to the Museum of Monuments concerned Lenoir's extensive restorations.¹⁶ Furthermore, in the *Considérations morales* Quatremère condemned the interventions which tampered with the

¹³ *Rapport* on the Pantheon, 17 Nov. 1792, p. 72.

¹⁴ *Rapport* on the Pantheon, 13 Nov. 1792.

¹⁵ See ETLIN, R., A., *The Architecture of Death: The Transformation of the Cemetery in Eighteenth-Century Paris* (MIT Press, 1984), p. 233.

¹⁶ See the *Rapport* of year 8, op. cit. (note 9), pp. 35-36.

"ancieneté" of the works, again mentioning the Museum of Monuments, albeit implicitly.¹⁷ This position, however, would have to be understood as largely circumstantial and even specific to Lenoir's project, since Quatremère consistently defended restoration in the rest of his work. The Letters to Canova present the most systematic such defence. Quatremère wrote that, although the restoration of sculpture could be done abusively, nevertheless the glory of Antiquity would never have had the effect it did on public taste in the last half century had the works of art been left in the state of mutilation in which they were found. As long as restoration did not damage the original and did not make false additions, he continued, there was no reason for refusing

à faire revoir dans leur ensemble des ouvrages qui tirèrent souvent de cet ensemble la plus grande partie de leur valeur, et qui ne peuvent réellement plaire à tous les yeux, que par le complément de ce que les accidents du temps leur avoient enlevé.¹⁸

In principle, therefore, Quatremère was in agreement with Lenoir who believed that it was necessary to restore the damaged monuments to their original splendour for the benefit of contemporary viewers and in order for them to properly convey the style and character of the age to which they belonged. Still, it could be said that what Quatremère disapproved of was Lenoir's *fabriques*, that is, the pieces which he effectively invented - such as the tomb of Héloïse and Abélard, or that of Diane de Poitiers, among others. Indeed, those pieces could not be thought of as "restorations" since the element of invention was strongly present in their construction. Yet I would still maintain that Quatremère was, in principle, of the same mind as Lenoir vis. à vis such creations. Quatremère himself proposed reconstructions which he believed enhanced the experience of art in a number of ways. As Anthony Vidler has observed, Quatremère sought to establish a basis for the restoration of statues in his volume *Le Jupiter Olympien* (1814) on which he made a number of studies in view of reconstructing the great temple and statue of Jupiter in Sicily. He later applied those principles in his projected full restoration of the Venus of Milo. Furthermore, entirely on a par with Lenoir, he engaged in the imaginary evocations of destroyed monuments from contemporary descriptions or remaining fragments, projects which he did

¹⁷ *Considérations morales*, op. cit. (note 4), p. 47.

¹⁸ Fourth Letter to Canova, in the collective volume of Quatremère, op. cit. (note 4), pp. 140-141.

not hesitate to call "restitutions".¹⁹ Finally, in the Letters to Canova, he proposed no less than an abstracted reconstruction of a part of the Parthenon within the British Museum, so that the Elgin marbles could be placed in similar positions to the ones they originally had in the building and, therefore, appreciated better as a whole, with all the possible implications this would have on their totalising effect on the visitor, rather than individual fragments.²⁰

Although there is a greater semblance of archeological accuracy in the reconstructive projects of Quatremère my proposal is that, in essence, they were not unlike the more "licentious" fabrications of Lenoir. Both men were concerned with the accuracy of feeling and character of art, interested in the ideas of context and state of completion of the work's on display to the extent that they allowed for the unity and the richness of meaning of art to be conveyed. Quatremère, despite his arguments against "cold science", had a more systematic archeological sense of what that state should be, whereas Lenoir, in a more artistic vein, seemed to be convinced that the imagination with which he composed his pieces resulted in an even more communicative composition than a faithful reconstruction. But the essence is that both men approved of constructive interventions on art - even if in different degrees - in the name of the enhancement of the communicability of the works.

History/Order/Unity

This identification of the primacy of the meaning of art - and the ensuing recognition of art's continuing reference to and relevance for culture - was one of the key mutual beliefs of Lenoir and Quatremère. This was manifested repeatedly in their work, but perhaps nowhere more so than in the book analogy which both curator and scholar used to describe the nature and significance of their subjects. In Lenoir's "encyclopedic" collection "la jeunesse trouvera mot à mot tous les degrés d'imperfection, de perfection et de décadence

¹⁹ See his "Mémoire sur la restitution du Temple de Jupiter Olympien à Agrigent, d'après la description de Diodore de Sicile, et les fragmens qui en subsistent encore", *Histoire et mémoire de l'Institut Royal de France, Classe d'Histoire et de la Littérature Ancienne*, 2, 1815; see also VIDLER, A, *The Writing of the Walls: Architectural Theory in the Late Enlightenment* (Princeton University Press, 1987), pp. 162-163

²⁰ First Letter to Canova, op. cit. (note 4), p. 104.

par lesquels les arts dépendants du dessin ont successivement passé"²¹. This could have been a quote straight out of Quatremère. The text analogy is implied consistently throughout the latter's work, since the parallel between art/architecture and language is one of his most important premises. In the Third Letter to Miranda, he wrote: "Que'est-ce que l'antique à Rome sinon un grand livre dont le temps a détruit et dispersé les pages, et dont les recherches modernes remplissent chaque jour les vides et réparent les lacunes?"²²

What is of additional interest here is that Quatremère used the concept of the book and the museum interchangeably to describe the indivisibility of Rome's historical identity. The indissoluble unity which the "muséum de Rome" had become through the centuries was what allowed it to be meaningful and potentially legible like a book.²³ Earlier, in his Prix Caylus essay, we find Quatremère's definitive statement binding the linguistic structure of architecture with its role as social expression and public instruction:

Destinés à recevoir sur toutes leurs surfaces des inscriptions en caractères symboliques, il faut les regarder comme de grands *livres toujours ouverts à l'instruction publique*. (...) Tous les monumens étoient des espèces de bibliothèques publiques, leurs ornemens étoient des légendes (...) des monumens qui étoient sans aucune métaphore des dépositaires des rites, des dogmes, des exploits, de la gloire; enfin *de l'histoire philosophique ou politique de la nation*. [my italics]²⁴

This description of the exemplary monument (represented by the pyramids) as books open for the instruction of the public in the philosophical and political history of the nation sounds like it could, in turn, have been taken out of Lenoir's texts on his own project. The Museum of Monuments presented its fragments precisely as depositories of the history of the nation and through it, of the order of history as a whole. Despite their fragmentation, disparity and temporal distance, through their unification in the museal experience, this history would become accessible once more for the benefit of the contemporary public.

The book analogy brings us to the heart of the similarity between Lenoir and Quatremère vis à vis the museum, which revolves around history. The historical dimension of art and architecture as the essence of their continuing relevance for culture was central to the

²¹ LENOIR, *Description*, op. cit. (note 8).

²² Letters to Miranda, op. cit. (note 4), pp. 205-206.

²³ Quatremère did not seem concerned with the paradox in his proposal: Time had woven Rome into such a coherent book, yet Time was also responsible for the dispersal of its pages.

²⁴ *De l'architecture égyptienne...* (Paris, 1803), p. 59.

projects of both Quatremère and Lenoir. Quatremère's disapproval of the Petits-Augustins was largely based on what he read as a mishandling of the monuments' capacity to be historically "active". But what Quatremère understood as historicity and what Lenoir had attempted to set forth in the Museum was essentially the same: a sense of unity and coherence between representation and reality which extended across the centuries, linking the present and the future with the originary moment, and with the primordial and Nature itself. The essence of this order was eternal and, therefore, there was a fundamentally ahistorical dimension to the "histories" of both Lenoir and Quatremère, which belonged to the mythical and metaphysical dimension, confirming the concern of both scholars beyond mere historiography.

One of Quatremère's most famous iterations was that the depots were "killing art to make history", but it would be misleading to interpret this statement as a categorical distinction between art and history - although it has been repeatedly interpreted as such. Quatremère did not end his sentence with the much-quoted "c'est tuer l'Art pour en faire l'histoire", but goes on to say "ce n'est point en faire l'histoire, mais l'építaphe".²⁵ The problem, therefore, was that the establishments which Quatremère referred to simply failed to "do" history properly, rather than by doing history killing art. Hence the topicality of Blanchot's "black" and "white" versions of the same thing - in this case the museum - with Rome the archetypal "white" version for Quatremère, because there history remained alive and coherence was perpetually established. The proper engagement with history was that which alluded to continuities beyond the science of history itself. Quatremère, like Lenoir, acknowledged his great debt to Winckelmann, but he also identified the latter's limitations concerning the understanding of history. He wrote:

Le savant Winckelmann (...) est le premier qui, en classant les époques, ait rapprocher l'histoire des monumens, et comparé les monumens entre eux, découvert des caractéristiques sûres, des principes de critique, et une méthode qui, en détruisant beaucoup d'erreurs, a préparé la découverte d'un grand nombre des vérité. (...) Quelque estimable que soit son histoire *Histoire de l'Art*, elle ressemble toujours plus à une chronologie qu'à une histoire.²⁶

²⁵ *Considérations morales*, op. cit. (note 4), p. 48.

²⁶ Third Letter to Miranda, op. cit (note 4), p. 208. It is interesting that Quatremère dismissed Winckelmann's history as mere chronology, since the German scholar himself made it clear that what his really after was history at its broadest sense, as a "system", which was ultimately Quatremère's goal as well. Winckelmann wrote : "Je prends la mot *Histoire*, dans la signification la plus étendu qu'il a dans la

Throughout his career Quatremère distinguished history from chronology which was itself only one aspect of the former. He was interested in mapping the continuity of history and its existence as a unified field wherein multi-layered relationships unfolded, as a process for understanding the essence of art and architecture. Edouard Pommier goes as far as saying that by historicising the masterpiece - that is, by making its status relative to context - Quatremère created the theoretical foundations of a new - and distinctly modern, I would add - discipline, which was already being called "the history of art".²⁷ But history itself was a means to an end, part of the greater quest for order and truth. In the *Considérations morales*, he proposed that the situated monuments were the "true historians" of the nation, since they communicated no less than its "moral existence"²⁸. He presented his own dictionary of architecture as encompassing "la partie historique et descriptive, la partie métaphysique, la partie théorique, la partie élémentaire ou didactique, et la partie pratique" of the subject, aiming to be the "traité universel de cet art" which he considered essential for contemporary culture.²⁹ Despite Quatremère's inclusion of the "partie métaphysique" as merely another aspect of the larger unit of knowledge he was constructing, it was actually a sort of metaphysics which he was trying to compose through his entire work.

The extensive common interest of Quatremère and Lenoir in the question of the origins of civilisation and the identification of unifying principles and common ground behind all cultures reinforces considerably their approximation. To this purpose they both wrote at length on Egypt as well as composing comparative studies of world monuments, as we already saw. It is interesting to note here that Quatremère, like Lenoir, was also involved with Freemasonry. He was a member of the Thalie lodge at least from 1782 to 1786.

Unlike Lenoir, Lavin writes that there is no evidence to suggest that his interpretation of

langue Grecque, et mon dessein est de donner un essai d'un système de l'Art." [From the French translation of his *Geschichte*, entitled *Histoire de l'art chez les anciens* (Paris, 1783) p. i.]. Even if one could argue that they were differently understood systems, still the Frenchman's dismissal seems rather rash.

²⁷ POMMIER, E., *L'art de la liberté: Doctrines et débats de la Révolution française* (Paris: Gallimard, 1991), p. 430.

²⁸ *Considérations morales*, op. cit. (note 4), p. 47.

²⁹ *Dictionnaire d'architecture*, part of Panckoucke (ed.) *Encyclopédie méthodique*, (Paris, 1788-1825), vol. 3, p. 313.

Egyptian architecture was specifically determined by his association with Freemasonry.³⁰ Nevertheless, I would suggest that this association cannot but confirm Quatremère's concern with the greater problem of the order of reality, and his ongoing quest for ways of representing it on a purely secular and Enlightened yet metaphysically valid way.

Beyond - or rather *through* - history, both he and Lenoir sought to articulate the unifying order governing human endeavour, which would be simultaneously transcendental in its universality and secular/rational. This ultimately ahistorical principle was, nevertheless, to be reached at through the necessary passage of a historical narrative, and, thus, articulated in historical terms. This meeting of history and metaphysics was, of course, not exclusive to Lenoir and Quatremère but a fundamental characteristic of the modern historical paradigm and its attempt to claim universal legitimacy. In that sense, both Lenoir and Quatremère were participating in the articulation of a new mode of understanding the representing the world, each in their own way, but through largely similar means.

Rapprochés, but...

While both Quatremère and Lenoir accepted the historicity of art as highly significant for contemporary culture, and while both sought to articulate a sense of metaphysical order through its interpretation and representation, the key difference was that Lenoir appeared to believe that this could be achieved in the museum, whereas Quatremère was in deep ambiguity about the matter, ultimately choosing to condemn the museum through the prosecution of Lenoir's project.

The main premise on which Quatremère's condemnation rested was the argument of context. Repeating his well known premise that monuments of art were the characters of a symbolic language, he condemned the pieces in the Petits-Augustins as "signes d'une écriture perdue"³¹. For the signs to be meaningful, the whole framework of the language

³⁰ LAVIN, *Quatremère de Quincy and the Invention of a Modern Language of Architecture* (MIT Press, 1992), p. 206.

³¹ *Rapport an VIII*, p. 35.

to which they belonged needed to be present and active, which was not the case in the inevitably fragmented setting of the Museum. But, by Quatremère's own admission, this language-framework was also incomplete even *in situ*, because of the passage of time, and it now had to be completed through the efforts of the "recherches modernes". Specifically about Rome he also wrote: "Tous ces monuments ne sont pour la philosophie que des signes, dont l'intelligence une fois acquise et complète doit être d'un grand secours à la recherche de la vérité".³² What Quatremère acknowledged here was the necessity of some kind of reconstructive process for the access of *all* monuments of the past. In the Letters to Miranda, where Quatremère showed the largely analytic side of his thought, this process was modern archaeology.³³ But in the *Considérations morales*, where analysis and "science" were much debased in favour of sentiment and imagination, a process of reconstruction during the experience of art was also identified as necessary. "Un effort d'imagination" was required, as well as the "preparation" of the soul through various "sentiments accessoires", so that the multitude of relationships which rendered the work meaningful could emerge.

The significance of this point is great. By positing a process of reconstruction at the basis of the experience of art, Quatremère undermined his argument of site-specificity even further. We already saw that there was extensive contradiction across his writings concerning the idea of context - between, that is, his arguments for the necessity of the *in situ* preservation of art or simply its collection in as complete a unit as possible. But by positing a reconstructive process at the basis of the relationship to art - and particularly to the monuments of the past - he implicitly allowed for the possibility of reconstructing this experience *elsewhere*. Thinking of the ultimate expression of his site-specificity argument, in the Letters to Miranda, where the features of the land itself were deemed necessary to contextualise the art of Rome, the "elsewhere" became impossible. But the specific

³² Third Letter to Miranda, op. cit (note 4), p. 209.

³³ He wrote: "Je parle de cette science qui doit rattacher nos connoissances à celles du passé, qui doit faire revivre une foule de notions perdues, qui doit porter à la philosophie et aux arts des lumières toujours nouvelles. Hé bien! cette science ne fait que de naître. Comment pouvoit-elle exister avant les découvertes de ce siècle? Tout étoit sans cohérence, sans ordre; rien n'avoit été analysé; rien n'avoit été comparé. Il n'y avoit pas une assez grande masse de faits ou de monumens, pour que l'esprit d'observation pût s'y introduire." - *ibid.*, p. 207.

mention of hills and valleys aside, the experience of art which he seemed to be describing was essentially moveable.

We already saw that Pommier suggests that, according to Quatremère, based on the study of Rome as the integral archetype the *knowledge* of Rome could be accomplished elsewhere. Quatremère himself wrote: "Mais le vrai résultat de la science de l'Antiquité peut être dû à des peuples qui ne posséderaient pas d'antiquités et à des hommes qui n'en auraient jamais vu".³⁴ In other words, if the study of monuments necessitated context, their understanding did not, since the principles of the system which governed them could be transported and recreated out of context. Linking this with the earlier point about the implicit unsituatedness of Quatremère's experience of art, I would suggest that it was the inevitable conclusion that this experience could in fact happen elsewhere, based on the historicist assumption that the archetypes ("Rome") was safely intact in the past and accessible through historical consciousness. The criteria, then, for judging this "elsewhere" as appropriate or inappropriate - a "black" or a "white" museum - were shown to be entirely circumstantial, in no way challenging the main premise of the unsituatedness of the experience of art. So long as the principles governing the structure of the collection were right - acknowledging and evoking the unity of the relevant context which was left behind temporally and/or geographically - then the collection would have to qualify as "white".

Which is exactly what Lenoir was trying to do: to re-integrated his fragments in a context that would allow for the necessary process of reconstruction to take place - that is, for an interpretative framework to emerge, as part of which his fragments would become *significant* again. Referring to the signs of the language of architecture, Quatremère wrote "il faut, pour qu'ils disent quelque chose, qu'on veuille bien ne pas les employer à rien dire."³⁵ But this is also what Lenoir was concerned about with the monuments in his project: he implied that they remained unexploited in their original contexts, the public not being able to understand what they were really about - that is, their relevance to

³⁴ Third Letter to Miranda, op. cit. (note 4), p. 212.

³⁵ *Dictionnaire d'architecture*, op. cit. (note 29), vol.1, p.508.

construction of the historical paradigm and the identity of the nation. The collapse of traditional structures left these pieces mute and meaningless in the midst of their original settings - they needed explanation and integration in a new structure in order to make sense again, to become meaningful and relevant to the contemporary culture. From this point of view it could be argued that the crime was not the removal of the monuments in the first place (as Quatremère would have it), but rather their abandonment *in situ*, depriving them from the essential interpretative context in which they could finally achieve their true potential. The churches were becoming like museums without the ordering principles of history, while Lenoir at the Petits-Augustins proposed the ultimate ordering scheme. The inevitable moment of modern irony in all this is that the Petits-Augustins itself was originally a monastery, with its actual church space turned into the most museum-like hall of the whole project - the wonderful Introductory hall - where the historical paradigm was represented in a single expansive frame from the contemporary to the primeval, from the *lumières* to myth.

Ultimately, the true difference between the two was their outlook. It would not be amiss to suggest that Quatremère was deeply suspicious of the changes in culture and in popular sensibilities which he was witnessing around him. He particularly resented the effect on art and architecture and their alienation from the fabric of society. In the Fourth Letter to Miranda he included a *cri de cœur* which speaks most eloquently about his deep concerns:

ce n'est ni au milieu du tumulte des grandes villes d'Europe, ni au milieu de ce chaos de distractions d'un peuple nécessairement occupé de soins mercatiles, que peut se développer cette profonde sensibilité pour les belles choses, ce sixième sens que la contemplation et l'étude du beau donnent aux élèves des art. Quelque chose que l'on fasse, il faudra toujours que ceux qui s'y livrent aillent respirer ailleurs un air dégagé de toutes ces vapeurs, qui obscurcissent à nos yeux les images du beau et du vrai.³⁶

Quatremère resented the chaotic and distractive commercialisation of the world and its consequences, which rose like vapours to conceal truth and beauty. In the midst of all this, Rome stood as the idealised "ailleurs", the outstanding reminder of a clarity and unity which the modern world was deprived of.

Déotte writes:

³⁶ Letters to Miranda, op. cit. (note 4), p. 222.

Mais existe (...) en particulier chez Quatremère, la très nette conscience de la fin d'une époque, d'une rupture inquiétante, qui n'est pas seulement la fin d'un régime politique, rupture qui se signale par un bouleversement des conditions de la réception et de la production des œuvres. C'est, à suivre les premières pages des *Considérations morales*, la fin de l'art, tout simplement (...) Pour Quatremère, ce n'est nullement l'aboutissement nécessaire de l'histoire de l'art. Le musée n'accomplit pas, ne réalise pas l'art, comme totalité: il déréalise.³⁷

As the alienating institution *par excellence* of a new epoch which was as irrelevant of specific regimes as it was inevitable, the museum embodied for Quatremère a "de-realisation", a cancellation of all that was valid and meaningful in art. But all this was for the "black" version of the museum alone, and not for the host of "white" versions which Quatremère had innocently approved of throughout his work (a point which, surprisingly, Déotte himself does not clarify in this text). Quatremère's critique of the museum survives as a confident and unified condemnation, foreshadowing the museum-debate of our times, when in fact Quatremère himself was never that clear. He was not against museums, but against what he saw as the ensuing loss of meaning in the majority of museums. While resenting one version of the museum as an embodiment of all that was worst in the new order of things, he also accepted another version as an essential tool in the improvement of culture. He demonised the museum as one of the means through which his ideal unity of culture was abolished, while failing to detect that this unity was itself largely museal. As Déotte points out, Quatremère failed to see that the essence of the museum is essentially retroactive: as soon as it becomes possible to address a collection as legitimate and meaningful in the museum, it is impossible to stop any "collection" from being addressed as museal anywhere. This is, in fact, a rephrasing of Adorno's observation that the Quatremèrian critique was somewhat don-quixotic in its accusation of the museum of destroying the work of art, since even those works which had remained in their original places had become museum-pieces without the museum.³⁸

Lenoir's project, being the direct product of this "museal" shift, wholly embraced it as irrevocable and even necessary, and used it as its starting point for the negotiation of the problems of fragmentation. Lenoir accepted that the place of the monuments was now in

³⁷ DÉOTTE, J.-L., *Le Musée, l'origine de l'esthétique* (Paris: L'Harmattan, 1993), pp. 84-85.

³⁸ ADORNO, T., "Valéry Proust Musée", in *Prisms*, trans. S&S Weber (London, 1967).

the museum, being as alienated from their original context as that was from contemporary culture. The hope of return to the unity of the old order by repairing its physical manifestations was nostalgic and futile. If any reinstatement was possible it would have to occur on the level metaphor - that is, through the complete acceptance of fragmentation on the level of the everyday. Quatremère, on the other hand, was too nostalgic and literal - thinking almost like an antiquarian. Perhaps his exclusively theoretical engagement with the issues afforded him an ultimately misleading view of the problem. He had defined his system and identified the unifying core of culture so meticulously, that it seemed possible to somehow recreate it through a complete reversal of the process. Lenoir, perhaps because of his scholarly shortcomings, operating as an enthusiast and an amateur lacking the material and intellectual means to pursue the ideal unity literally, attempted instead to compensate for fragmentation and incompleteness in more imaginative and poetic ways.

Both Quatremère and Lenoir participated in their own way in the great inventive project of history of their times. They had come to understand the emerging importance of the historical dimension of art and its relevance in culture, as well as the ensuing necessity for an ahistorical root and backbone for history which would legitimise it beyond human fallibility and mortality. Hence they were both involved with myth and the metaphysical dimension of culture. But Quatremère's efforts remained in the realm of mythology, as can be seen from his various studies and comparative analyses. Despite the fact that he passionately sought a structure that could fit the increasingly uncertain future into a meaningful order somehow inherited by the unambiguous past, the future remained as chaotic and terrifying as before, this mythology failing to imply the continuities which needed to be engaged with in order to harness the new into some kind of comprehensibility. But in the Museum of Monuments, on a much lower key, the possibility of a continuing order emerged implicitly, with the various interlaced threads of the represented histories revealing the perpetual structuring of myth as a process, alive and "working" as the visitors engaged with the project.

In that sense, I would suggest that the Museum of Monuments was a fundamentally celebratory project. In the multi-layered and incomplete scheme of the Petits-Augustins, history was not confronted as a "great inventive project" after all, but rather as a tentative, metaphoric and playful engagement. Instead of attempting to capture it and understand it head on, as a clear and distinct narrative with an inevitable beginning and, of course, an end, the Museum of Monuments represented it as a realm of multiple and often contradicting possibilities emerging and expiring at every turn. As such, history failed to appear as a terrifying linear procession whose definitely causal yet still unknown workings man was struggling to decipher. The superficial linearity of the scheme at the Petits-Augustins introduced what was in many ways a multi-dimensional celebration of time as the primary dimension of our existence, and our experience of it as a perpetual dialectics of continuity and change, universal and particular, identity and difference.

Ultimately, it could be said that both Quatremère and Lenoir's interpretation of the phenomenon of the museum, in their different ways, saw it as an attempt to construct a much-needed map of reality through the medium of art and its relationship to the newly-forming notion of history, at a time of profound changes and great uncertainty. The intellectual paths which they followed in this attempt were largely similar as were their goals, which is why I have proposed that the Museum of Monuments, beyond circumstantial features, was almost an answer to Quatremère's own questions and concerns vis à vis the museum. The ultimate conflict between them was not at all what turned Quatremère into the Museum's enemy *par excellence*, but rather, paradoxically, that it conducted the aforementioned mapping "better" than Quatremère's own vision.

To illustrate this, I would avail myself of a brilliant observation on Quatremère by Dominique Poulot. This observation is basically a parallel which Poulot draws between Quatremère's identification of the ideal museum with the place itself - as the latter did repeatedly with Rome, in the Letters to Miranda - and a short story of Jorge Luis Borges.³⁹ Quatremère, as we have seen earlier in this thesis, stated in the Fourth Letter that "le

³⁹ POULOT, D., *Musée, Nation, Patrimoine 1789-1815* (Paris: Gallimard, 1997), p. 280.

véritable museum de Rome" was composed "de statues, de colosses, de temples, d'obélisques, de colonnes triomphales, de thermes, de cirques, d'amphitéâtres, d'arcs de triomphe, de tombeaux, de stucs, de fresques, de bas-reliefs, d'inscriptions, de fragmens d'ornamens, de matériaux de construction, de meubles, d'ustensiles, etc., etc."; but, he added, it was no less composed "des sites, des montagnes, des carrières, des routes antiques, de positions respectives des villes ruinées, des rapports géographiques, des relations de tous les objets entre eux, des souvenirs, des traditions locales, des usages encore existans, des parallèles et des rapprochemens qui ne peuvent se faire que dans le pays même".⁴⁰ In other words, in Quatremère's scheme of things, points out Poulot, the ideal museum was understood as in the imaginary city of Urbs, from the eponymous story by Borges, where the desire for comprehensiveness and detail was such that the map of the territory had to finally coincide with the actual expanse of the territory itself.⁴¹

It could be said, therefore, that the great investment of the Museum of Monuments in the metaphoricity of representation rendered it a better map, predominantly in that it was a map at all. Unlike Quatremère's Rome, it accepted that it could only operate allusively, through implications and traces - like Ricoeur's historians - rather than in any literal and comprehensive way. As likely through circumstance as through Lenoir's sensitivities, the Museum of Monuments managed to articulate a tentative but meaningful response to fundamental uncertainties and impasses in culture, which Quatremère was quickest and most eloquent in identifying, but to which his own schemes failed to respond to creatively.

⁴⁰ Letters to Miranda, op. cit. (note 4), p. 207.

⁴¹ The story is in the collection *Ficciones* (1956).

Conclusion

The dates of both depot and museum phases at the Petits-Augustins (1791-1816) coincide with what was arguably the most troubled and most consequential period in the history of museums. Never had so much significance or controversy been attached to the collection of art - a significance transcending the realm of art itself and affecting the very structure and identity of a whole culture. Neither in the Louvre nor in the Museum of Monuments themselves do we find the main weight of this "consequence", but rather in every museum project of the extended nineteenth century (the Great Museum era) and, ultimately, in the whole modern attitude to art and heritage. I shall avail myself once more of Dominique Poulot's insight in these matters:

Le musée est, dans cette perspective, l'institution propre à une société qui tient le passé pour une ressource limitée est soumise à des règles de crédibilité et de légitimation, alors que le sens de la hiérarchie social n'est plus liée à une tradition. L'établissement répond au besoin d'ordre et de cohérence de la gestion du passé dans le présent. De fait, il code utilement l'information, crée des catégories, définit des frontières qui canalisent la mémoire individuelle en lui fournissent des repères stables. Bref, le musée incarne, pour détourner une formule de Leroi-Gourhan, un dispositif d'"extériorisation de la mémoire" capable de lier concepts culturels et activité sociale.¹

In the context of this deeply changing culture and the emerging sensibility that demanded the museum, both Quatremère and Lenoir made highly significant contributions from opposite sides of the debate, which, I have suggested, have been largely underestimated, whether in terms of their scale or the quality, or both. Besides the re-interpretation of the Museum of Monuments as a much more substantial projet than it has been credited for, it has been one of the main proposals of this thesis that Quatremère's opposition was actually circumstantial and that, in essence, the scholar's eloquent concerns were neither ignored nor contradicted in the curator's project, but rather accounted for and responded to. But,

¹ POULOT, D., *De l'héritage monumental à l'entreprise du patrimoine. Pour un histoire de la transmission culturelle en France, XVIIIe-XXe*, EUI Working Papers ECS No. 91/3 (Florence: European University Institute, 1991), p. 8.

ultimately, there was a difference between the two and it was a crucial one, although one which emerges only through the hermeneutic rapprochement that I have proposed here.

Despite the fact that he was highly perceptive of the dramatic changes in culture and that, in essence, his thought had already embraced the inevitability of the museum, Quatremère still argued for the irreplaceable of the original context of art, placing the museum in the role of the scapegoat for a fragmentation and an alienation that run much deeper. Lenoir, on the other hand, embraced enthusiastically the possibilities opened up by precisely this fragmentation, addressing the pieces he was left with as the beginning of a new process, a new structure, rather than the end of an old one.

Quatremère with the great erudition and eloquence articulated the emerging problem of the museum incomparably better than Lenoir, the latter not even recognising it as a problem in his writings. It was the latter, however, who came up with the germs of a "solution" - not intellectually but implicitly, *artistically* one could even say. Nevertheless, the model which went on to inform the great museum projects of the nineteenth century was the one so eloquently yet misleading defined by Quatremère as the "black" museum of alienation, where works of art became mute, like signs of a lost language, and situated meaning gave way to labels. From Paul Valéry and Theodore Adorno to Douglas Crimp and Jean-Louis Déotte - just to mention a few - a host of authors compose, in their different ways, the philosophical debate on the museum of the last two centuries which evolves from the problematic model of the museum institution as identified by Quatremère de Quincy. "The German word *museal*", writes Adorno "has unpleasant overtones" because "it describes objects to which the observer no longer has a vital relationship and which are in the process of dying".² Worse even than death, the museum at the other end of modernity is a place of total chaos, where "anything goes", responds Crimp: "Nothing could testify more eloquently to the fragility of the museum's claims to represent anything coherent at all".³

² ADORNO, T., "Valéry Proust Museum", in *Prisms*, trans. S. & S. Weber (London, 1967).

³ CRIMP, D., "On the Museums Ruins", in *On the Museum's Ruins* (MIT Press, 1993), p. 54.

The Museum of Monuments was also pioneering modern museum in that sense, to the extent that it complied with Quatremère's analysis; and, on a first level, it obviously did. The *raison d'être* of the project at the Petits-Augustins was the physical and semantic decontextualisation and relativisation of the monuments - that is, a fundamentally modern act, immediately resulting from the radicality of the Revolution but, ultimately, transcending it. As the earliest project where the religious was transformed into the museal in the name of history, almost literally overnight, the Museum of Monument claims a prominent place in the development of the modern museum. But what is quite fascinating is the fact that, as I have proposed with this thesis, this was only half the story. Rather than performing this musealisation in accordance with the deeply historicist and aestheticist assumptions of its time - which went on to systematically inform later museums - Lenoir's project somehow managed to overcome them. This observation becomes particularly poignant in the light of the fact that, as we have seen in Chapter 1, the Museum ought much to circumstance and external interventions of all kinds, rather than being a tightly controlled personal project - like one might have expected a work of art to be...

From the second Museum of French Monuments at Trocadero (envisaged by Viollet-le-Duc) and the German National Museum in Nuremberg, to the British Museum and the Greek Archeological Museum in Athens, the principles dominating the rapidly proliferating museums of the nineteenth-century overlooked the aspects which gave the Petits-Augustins its potentially restorative dimension. The openness, richness and ambiguity of the latter was substituted by increasingly rigorous scientific principles of archaeology or aesthetic appreciation, fixed narrative schemes of history and rigid institutional values. Although the idea of the restorative fragment did not survive in the mainstream of the museum world, it has been making its mark in individual movements and projects across culture. Cézanne, Surrealism, Synthetic Cubism, the writings of James Joyce and the art of collage in various manifestations, some works of architecture such as those of Carlo Scarpa, and even a very few museal projects, are among those that have engaged with the modern problem *par excellence* of fragmentation in a conscious and poetic/creative way, eschewing the

mainstream solution of attempting to avoid the problem by substituting the fragmentation with a fictitious whole.⁴

In many ways, the *raison d'être* of the museum in modernity has been to recapture and articulate the sense of unity and coherence which, with the discrediting of the traditional paradigm, could no longer be articulated through the media of the church and the palace, nor could it survive latent in everyday life. But, in the course of two centuries, it has become abundantly clear that the dominant model of the institutional museum is fundamentally problematic, especially in terms of articulating a unity beyond invented narratives. The context of the museum has remained the opposite of communicative space, the opposite of poetry and life. Perhaps this attempt at a re-interpretation of the Museum of Monuments can join other instances of brilliant divergence from the classic museum model - such as Sir John Soane House and the fascinating Museum of Jurassic Technology in Los Angeles - to articulate a viable proposal for the necessary radical re-thinking of the role and possibilities of the museum in our culture.⁵

In retrospect, therefore, the real subject of this thesis was perhaps not the Museum of Monuments as such, but rather the problem of the representation of order in a modern institutional form - a problem which acquired unprecedented urgency and acuteness in the last couple of centuries, and which I hope I have shown to be at the very heart of both Lenoir and Quatremère's projects. In this light, I think it would be appropriate to end with

⁴ Outside the actual texts of such seminal writers as Joyce, Andre Breton et al., there is relatively little secondary literature still on the subject of the fragment in its restorative potential. Dalibor Vesely's essay "Architecture and the Ambiguity of the Fragment" remains key, and of great relevance is his earlier "Surrealism, Myth, Modernity", *Architectural Design*, vol. 48, no. 2-3, 1978; I would also mention Charles Rosen's *The Romantic Generation* (MIT Press, 1995), ch. 2: "Fragments" and PÉREZ-GÓMEZ, A. *Architectural Representation and the Perspective Hinge* (MIT Press, 1997), especially "Variation Three"; finally, the crucial - yet less explicit vis. à vis. the role of the fragment - philosophical works of Martin Heidegger and Maurice Merleau-Ponty demand mentioning in this context - as an indication I would single out "The Thing" from HEIDEGGER, M., *Poetry Language Thought*, trans. A. Hofstadter (N.Y.: Harper & Row, 1971), and "Cézanne's Doubt" from MERLEAU-PONTY, M., *Sense & Non-Sense* (Northwestern U. Press, 1964).

⁵ Just before the submission of this thesis appeared an essay by Robin Middleton on the Soane Museum, which discusses it in relation to the notion of the fragment as it has been used here, even acknowledging the important essay of Dalibor Vesely (see above). This essay is MIDDLETON, R., "Soane's Spaces and the Matter of Fragmentation", in *John Soane: Master of Space and Light*, exhibition catalogue, (eds) M. Richardson & M.-A. Stevens (Royal Academy of Arts, 1999). The Museum of Jurassic Technology is a sort of modern curiosity cabinet in Los Angeles, which definitely requires further attention in the context of these ideas - see RUGOFF, R., "Beyond Belief: The Museum as Metaphor", in *Visual Display: Culture Beyond Appearances*, (eds) L. Cooke & P. Wollen (Dia Centre for the Arts: N.Y., 1995).

Michel Foucault's opening lines from the Preface of his seminal book *The Order of Things*, where both "order" and "things" remain in perpetual play, only, potentially, to be stilled in the reader's imagination:

This book first arose out of a passage in Borges, out of the laughter that shattered, as I read the passage, all the familiar landmarks of my thought - *our* thought, the thought that bears the stamp of our age and our geography - breaking up all the ordered surfaces and all the planes with which we are accustomed to tame the wild profusion of existing things, and continuing long afterwards to disturb and threaten with collapse our age-old distinction between the Same and the Other. This passage quotes 'a certain Chinese Encyclopedia', in which it is written that 'animals are divided into: (a) belonging to the Emperor, (b) embalmed, (c) tame, (d) sucking pigs, (e) sirens, (f) fabulous, (g) stray dogs, (h) included in the present classification, (i) frenzied, (j) innumerable, (k) drawn with a very fine camelhair brush, (l) etcetera, (m) having just broken the water pitcher, and (n) that from a long way off look like flies'. In the wonderment of this taxonomy, the thing we apprehend in one great leap, the thing that is demonstrated as the exotic charm of another system of thought, is the limitation of our own, the stark impossibility of thinking *that*.⁶

⁶ FOUCAULT, M., *The Order of Things: An Archaeology of the Human Sciences*, ed. R. D. Laing (Vintage Books: N.Y., 1973), p. xv. It has been suggested that Foucault may have actually believed that the "Chinese Encyclopedia" did exist in reality rather than being a figment of Borges' imagination. If anything, I believe that this possibility adds to the relevance of this excerpt here, sharpening the play between truth and fiction, order and its representation.

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 - *Description historique et chronologique des monumens de sculpture réunis au Musée des monumens français* (6 editions, Paris, an V [Jan 1797]-1806).
 - *Musée des Monumens français* (4 editions, Paris, 1810-1816).
- *Les amis du temps passé. Comédie en un acte et en prose* (1786).
- *Essai sur le muséum de peinture* (an II [1793-4]).
- *Compte rendu sur l'état actuel du Musée des monumens français...présenté au général Bonaparte* (an VIII [1799-1800]).
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Illustrations



Fig. 1. Skecth (after Père Augustin Lapin) of the convent of the Petits-Augustins as seen from the rue de Petite-Seine (later rue des Petits-Augustins)



Fig. 2. J.-L. David, *Alexandre Lenoir*, 1809 (Paris, Musée du Louvre, Département des Arts Graphiques).



Fig. 3. Anonymous (engraving), *Antoine Chrysostome Quatremère de Quincy* (Paris, Bibliothèque Nationale).

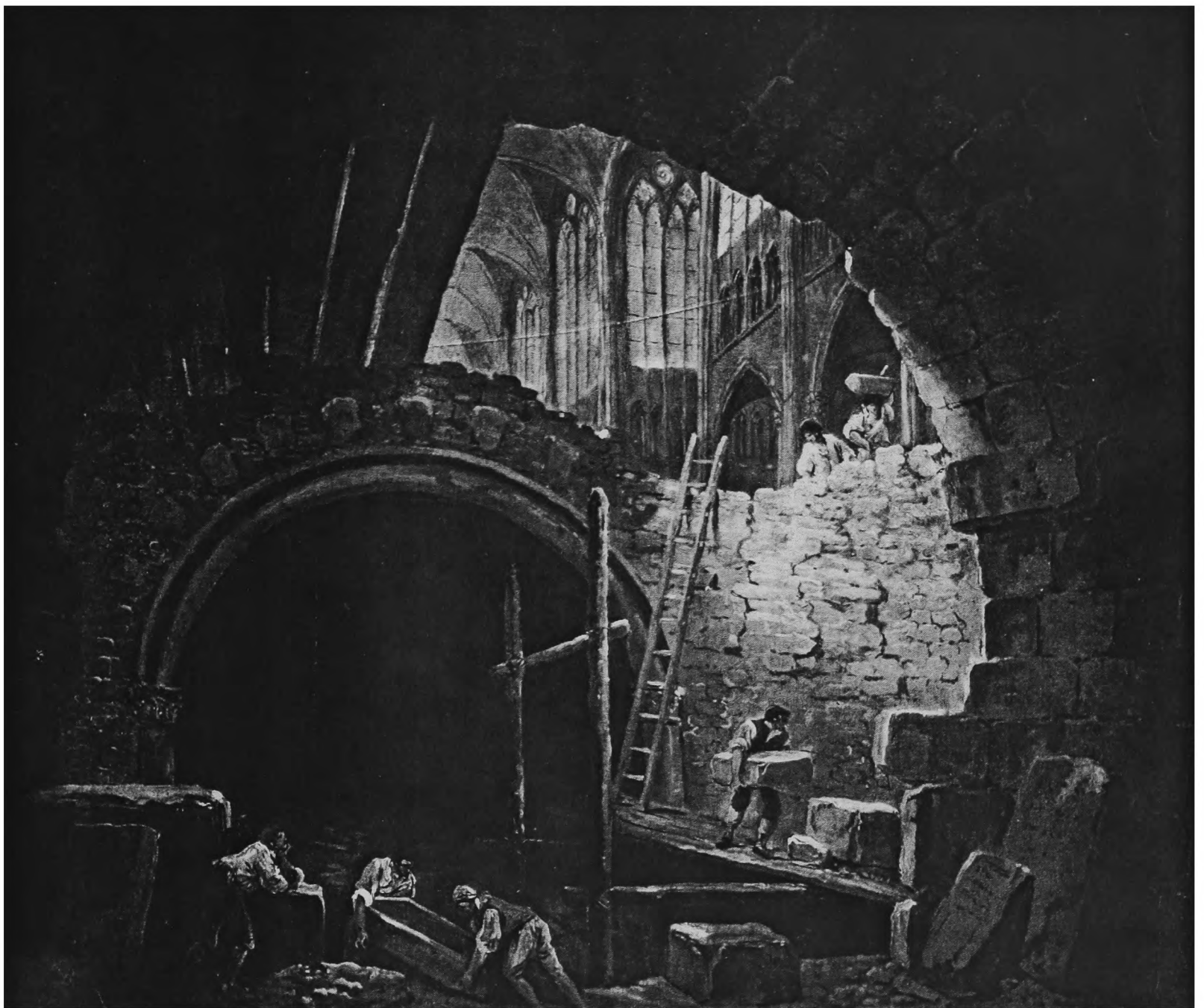


Fig. 4. Hubert Robert, *Desecration of the Tombs at St Denis* (Paris, Musée Carnavalet).

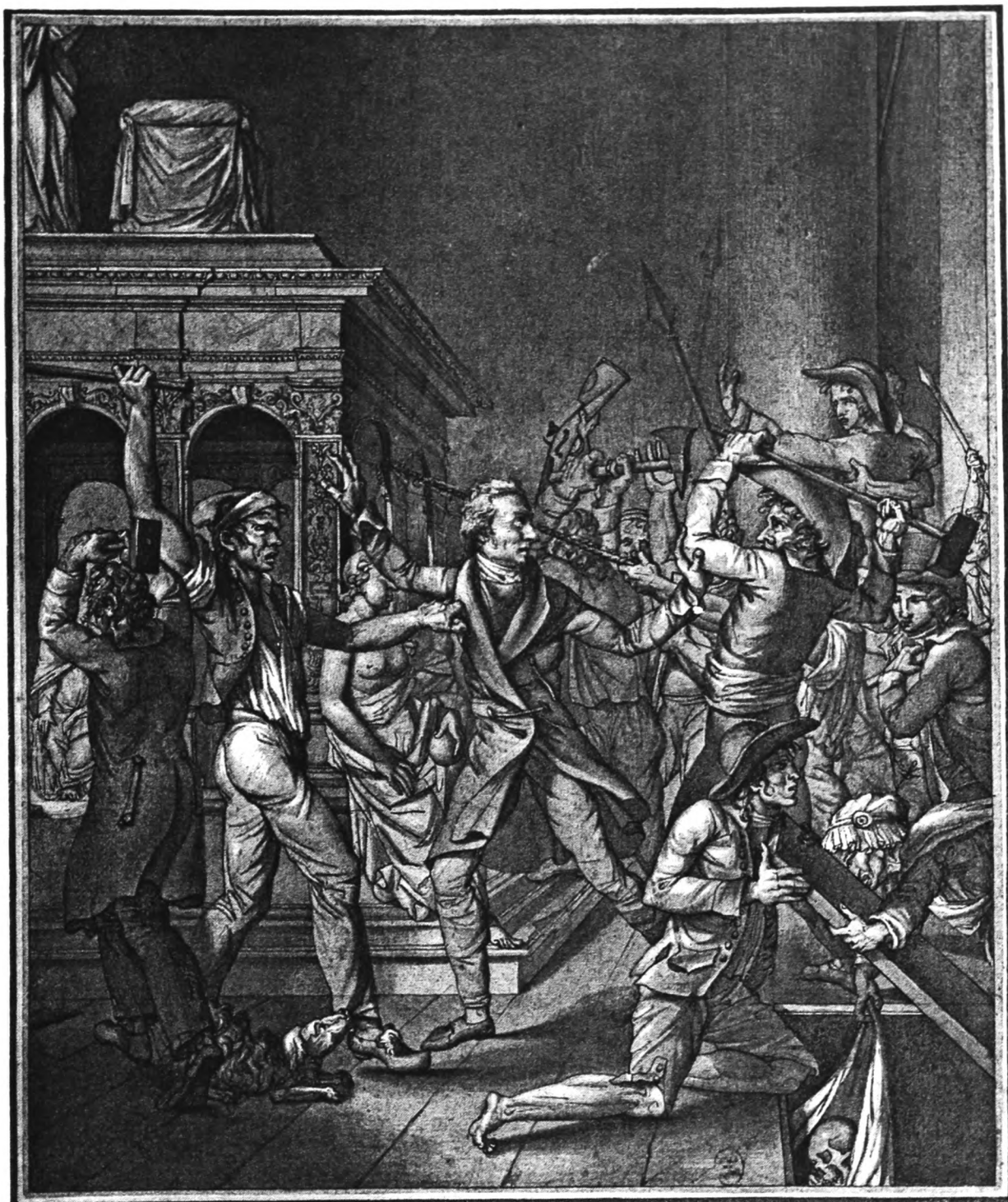


Fig. 5. P.-J. La Fontaine, *Lenoir Defending the Tomb of Louis XII at St Denis* (Paris, Musée Carnavalet).

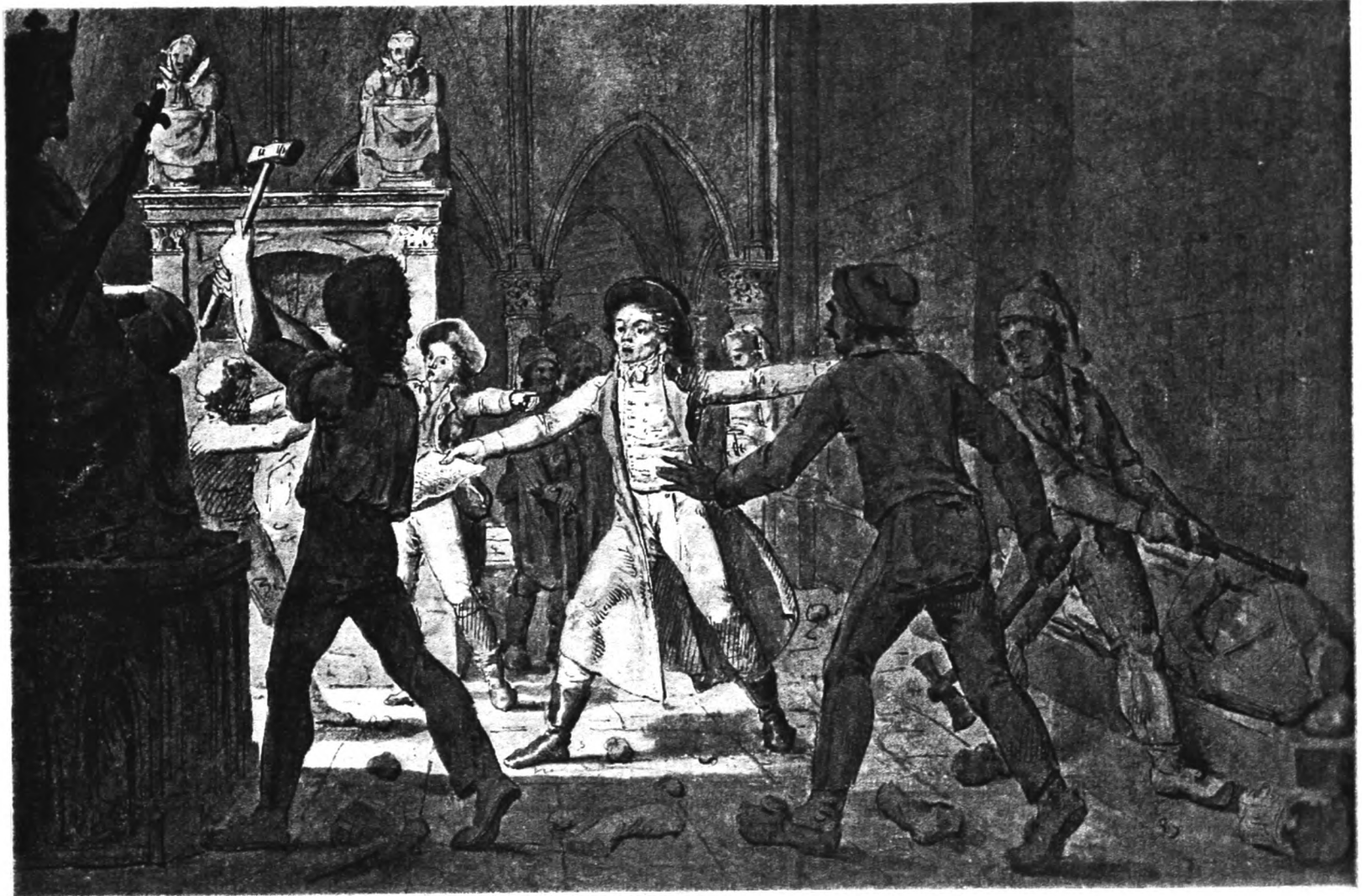


Fig. 6. Anonymous, Alexandre Lenoir trying to prevent the destruction of the monuments at St Denis (Paris, Musée du Louvre - Soulavie collection).

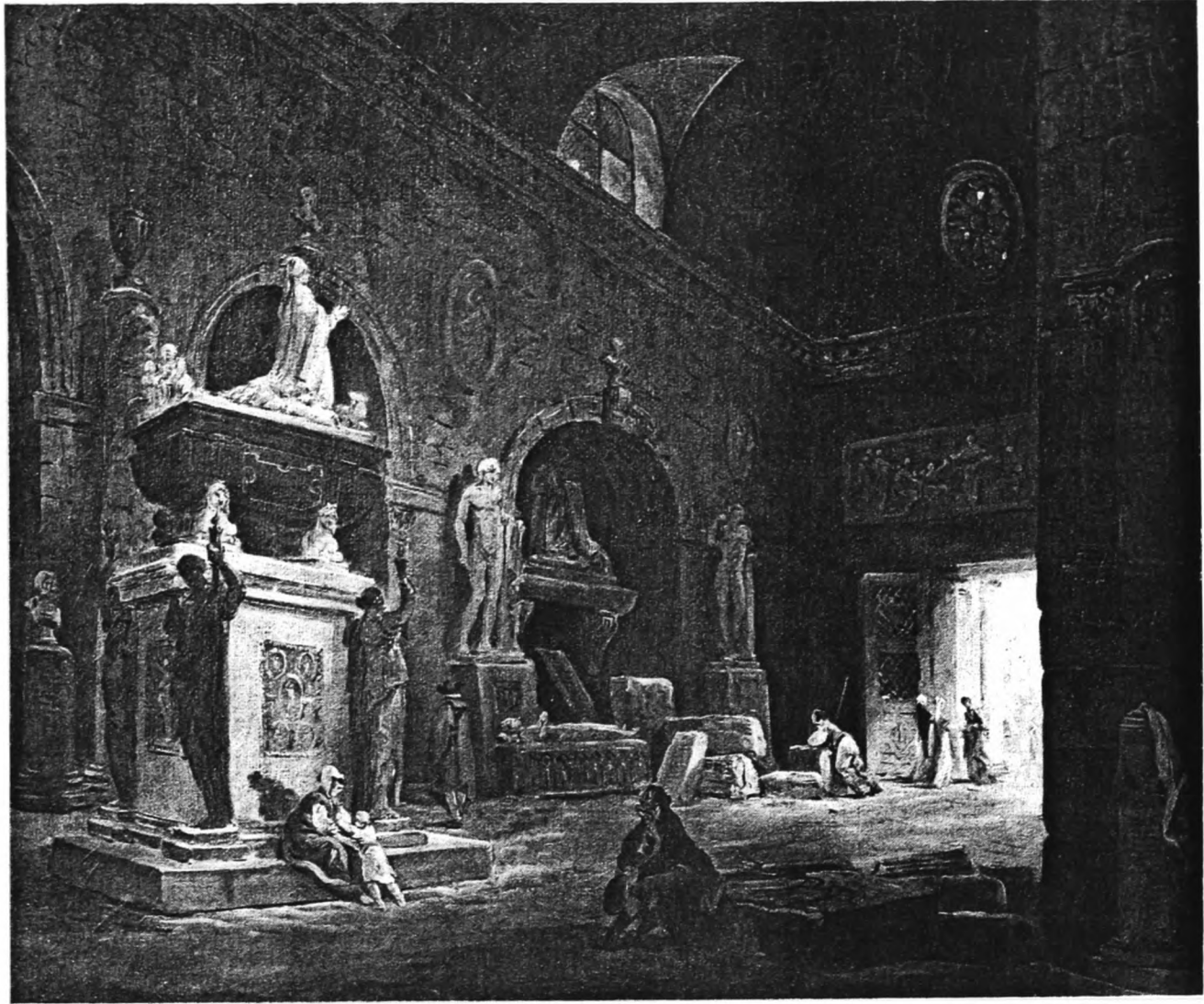


Fig. 7. Hubert Robert, *The visit to the Musée des Monuments français*, 1796 (Paris, Musée du Louvre). The scene depicts the church of the Petits-Augustins (later the Introductory hall) during the early days of the Museum's official recognition. Monuments are still scattered around, including classical pieces which were soon transported to the Louvre. It is interesting to find Lenoir's *fabrique* to Diane de Poitiers already there.

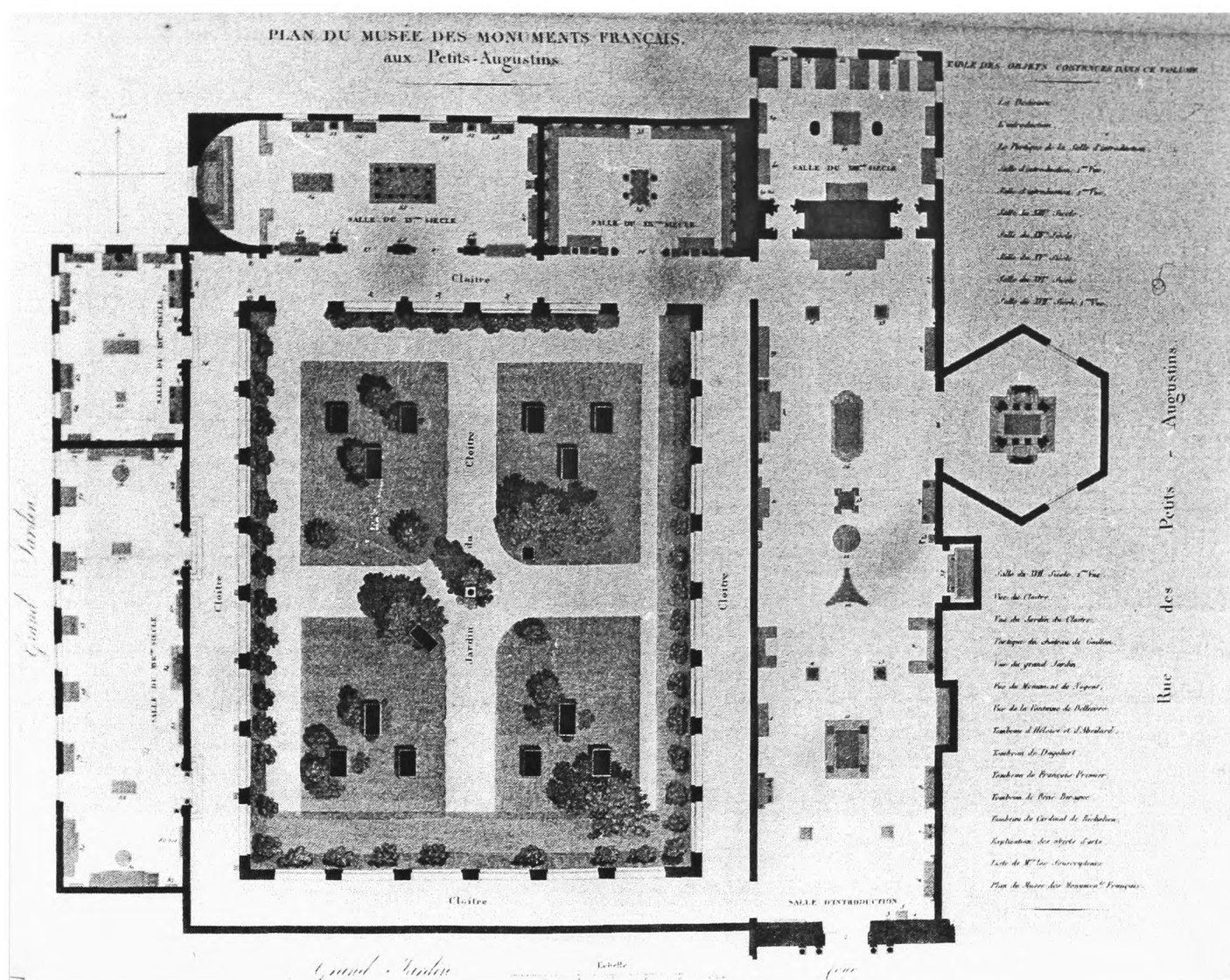


Fig. 8. Réville & Lavalée, *Vues pittoresques et perspectives des Salles du Musée des monuments français* (Paris 1816). Plan of the Museum.

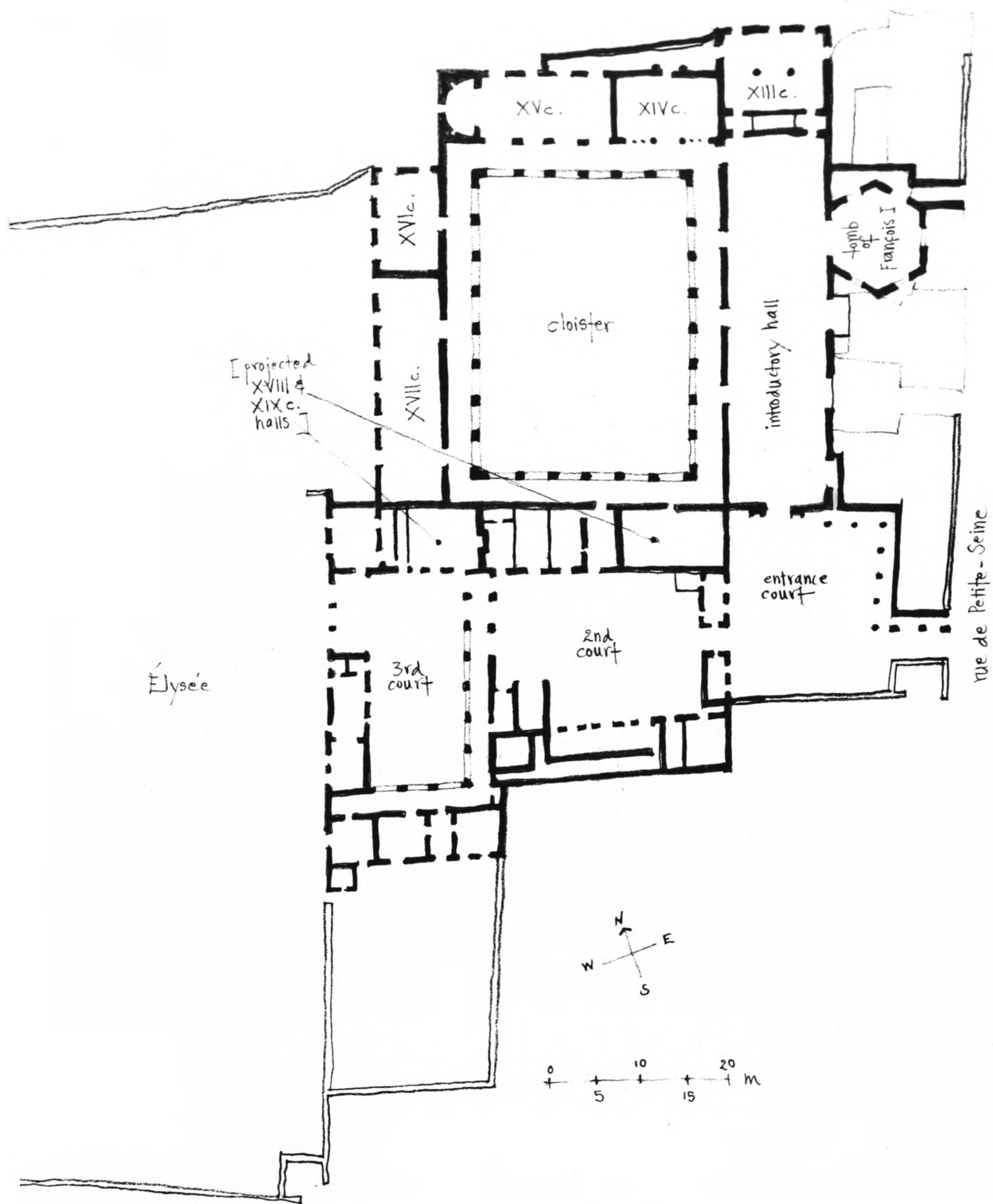


Fig. 9. Sketch of the Museum's Plan.

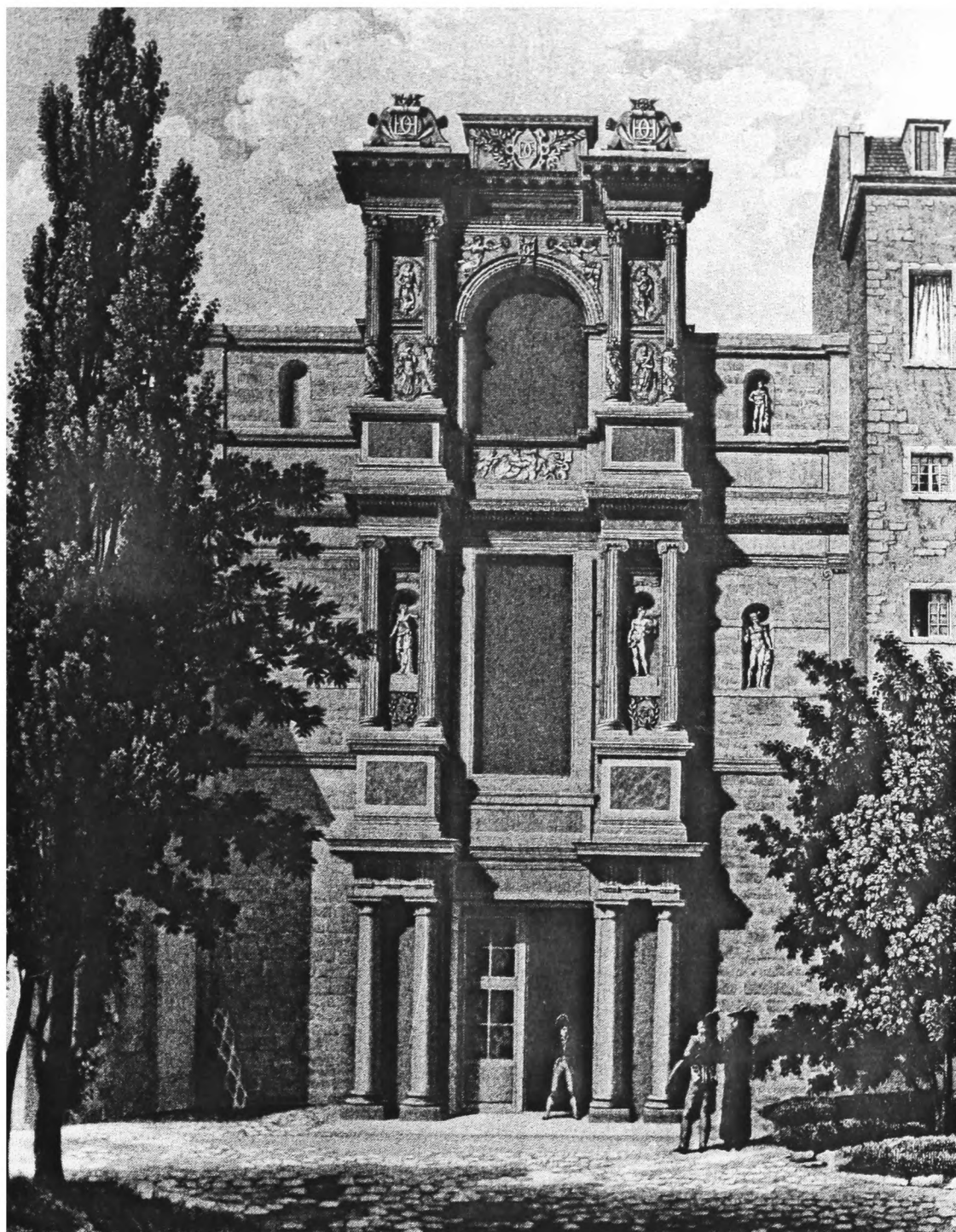


Fig. 10. Réville & Lavalée, *Vues pittoresques et perspectives des Salles du Musée des monuments français* (Paris 1816). The facade from the château d'Anet installed over the entrance to the Introductory hall.

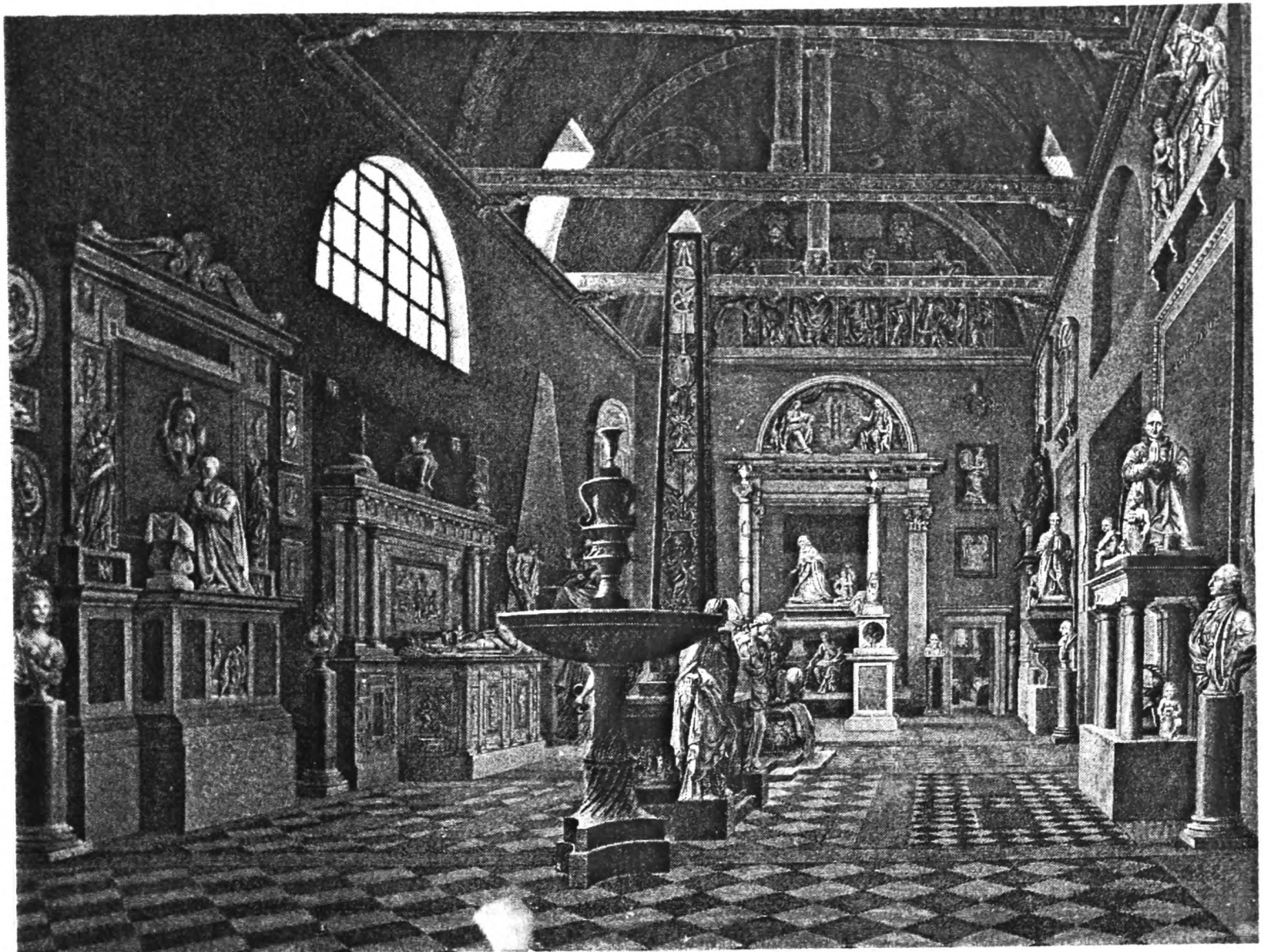


Fig. 11. Réville & Lavalée, *Vues pittoresques et perspectives des Salles du Musée des monuments français* (Paris 1816). Introductory Hall.

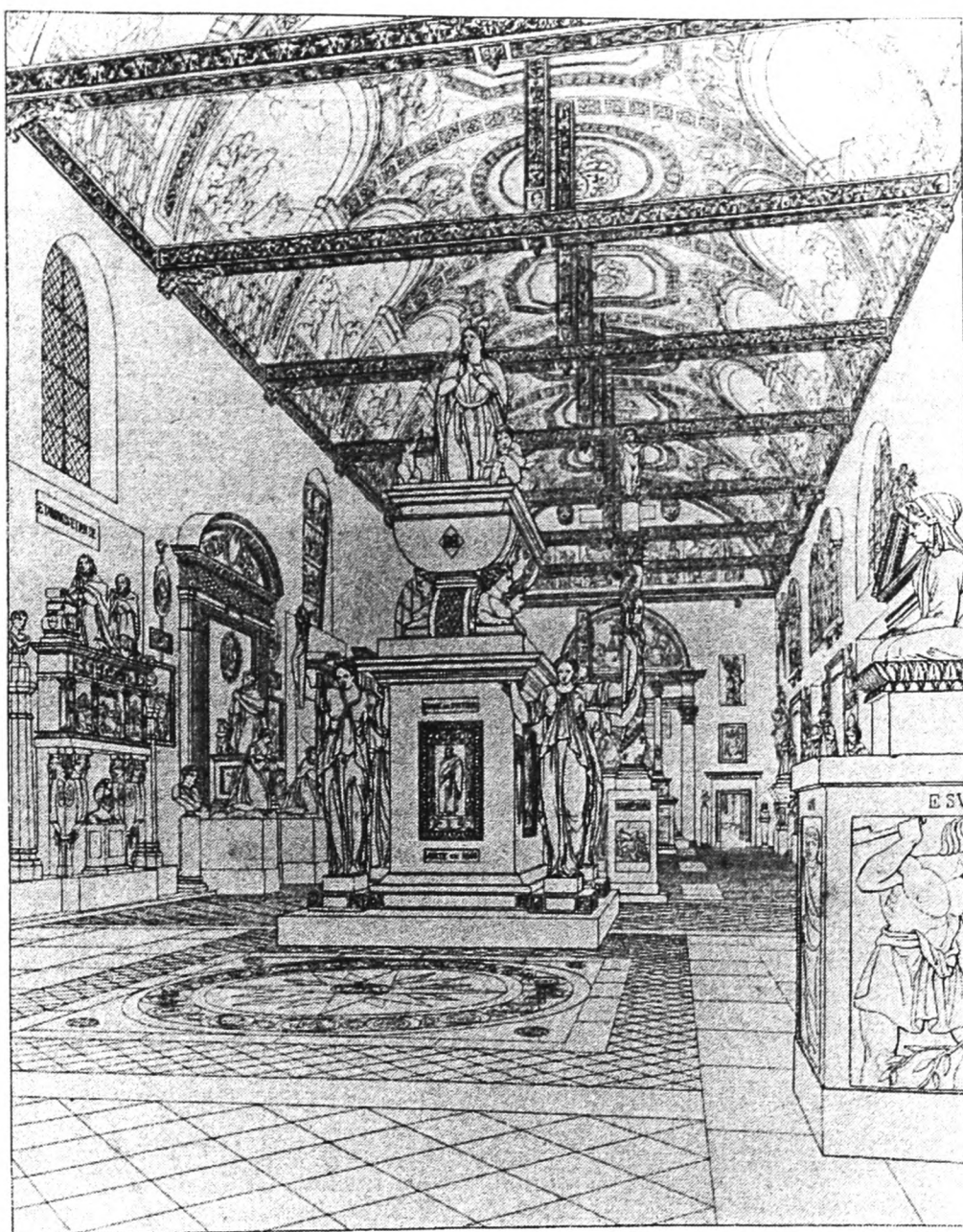


Fig. 12. Biet & Brès, *Souvenirs du Musée des Monuments Français* (Paris, 1821-1826).
Introductory hall. In the middle of the picture is Lenoir's tomb to Diane de Poitiers.

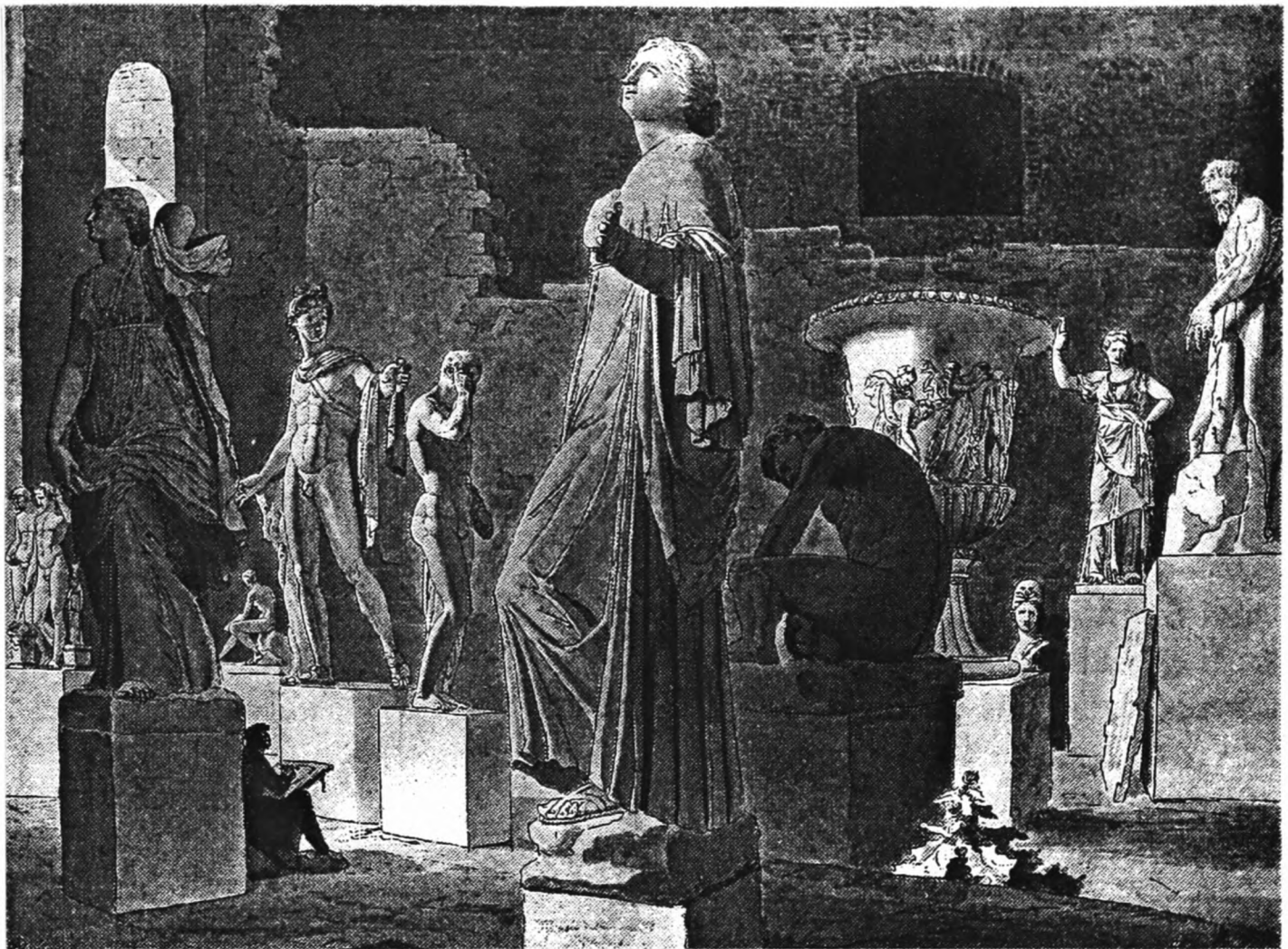


Fig. 13. Alexandre Lenoir, Imaginary view of a hall of classical antiquities in the Museum of Monuments (Paris, Musée du Louvre, Cabinet des Dessins). This fantasy of Lenoir's is illustrative of the importance that classical antiquities held in his vision of the Museum. One cannot help but notice the monumental scale of the "archétypes antiques", dwarfing the contemporary artist at their feet.



Fig. 14. Alexandre Lenoir (engraving after), *Musée des Monuments français*, vol. I (Paris, 1800). *Archétypes antiques*, in the Introductory hall (and, later, only in the catalogue).

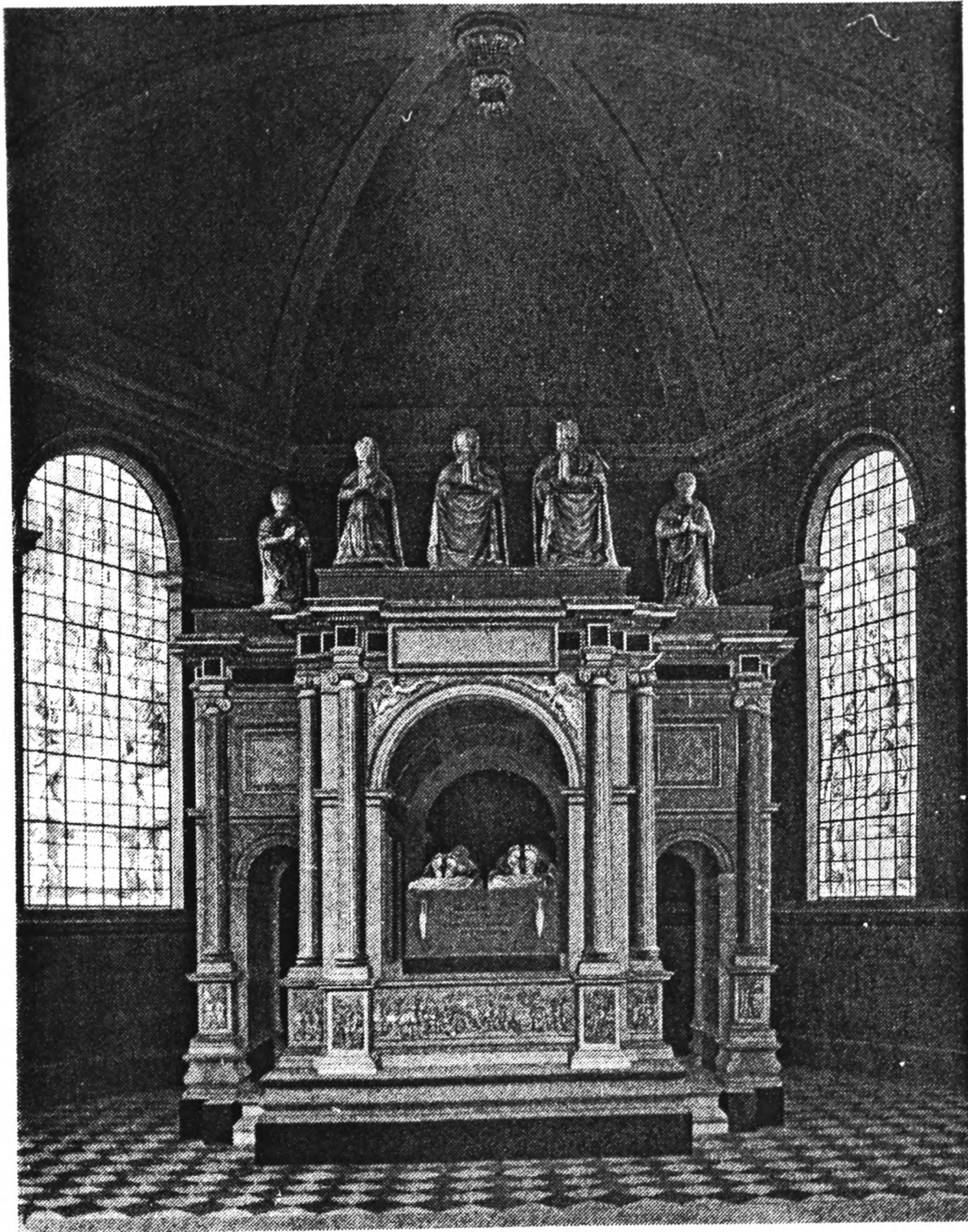


Fig. 15. Réville & Lavalée, *Vues pittoresques et perspectives des Salles du Musée des monuments français* (Paris 1816). Tomb of François I in the Chapelle des Louanges.

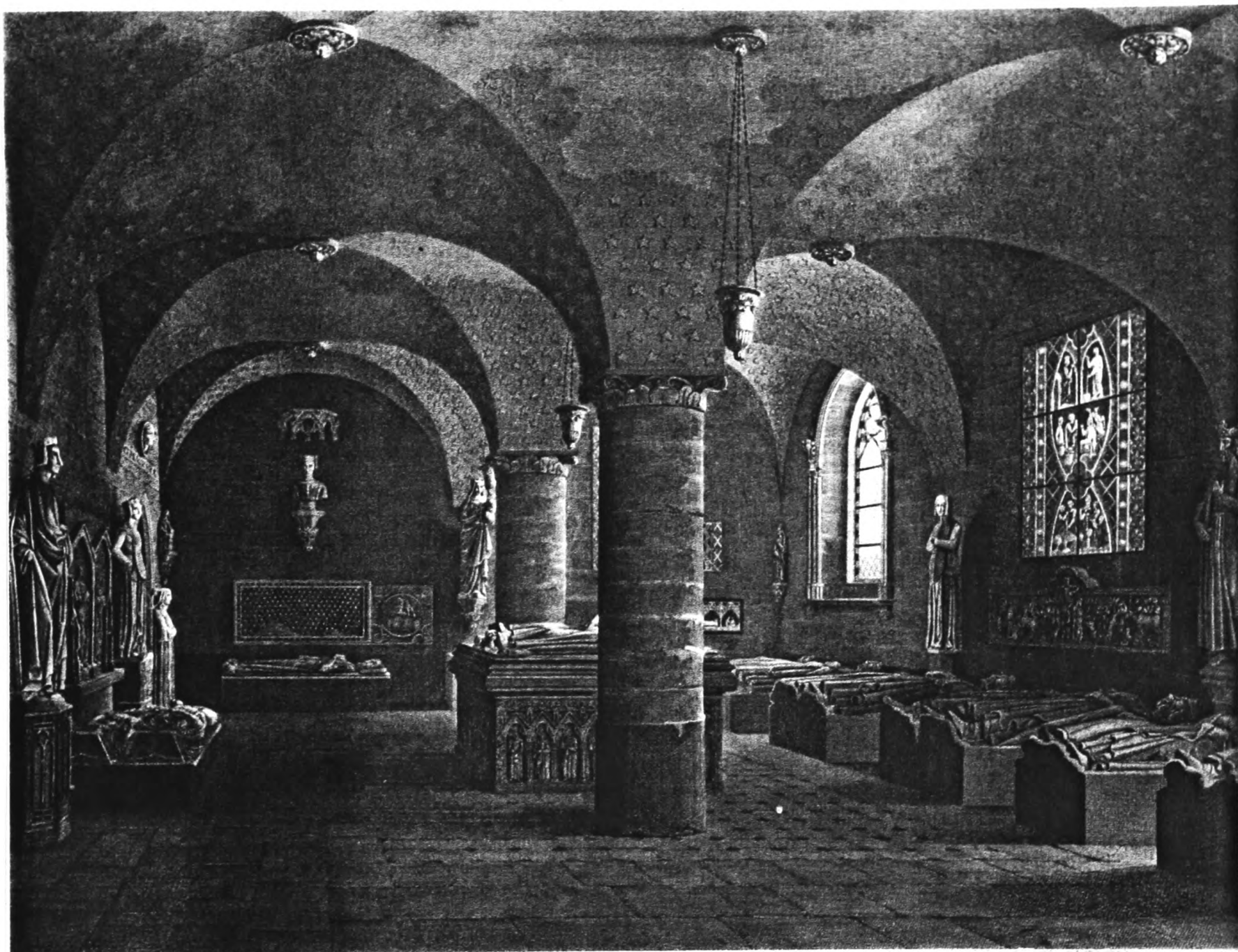


Fig. 16. Réville & Lavalée, *Vues pittoresques et perspectives des Salles du Musée des monuments français* (Paris 1816). Thirteenth-century hall.

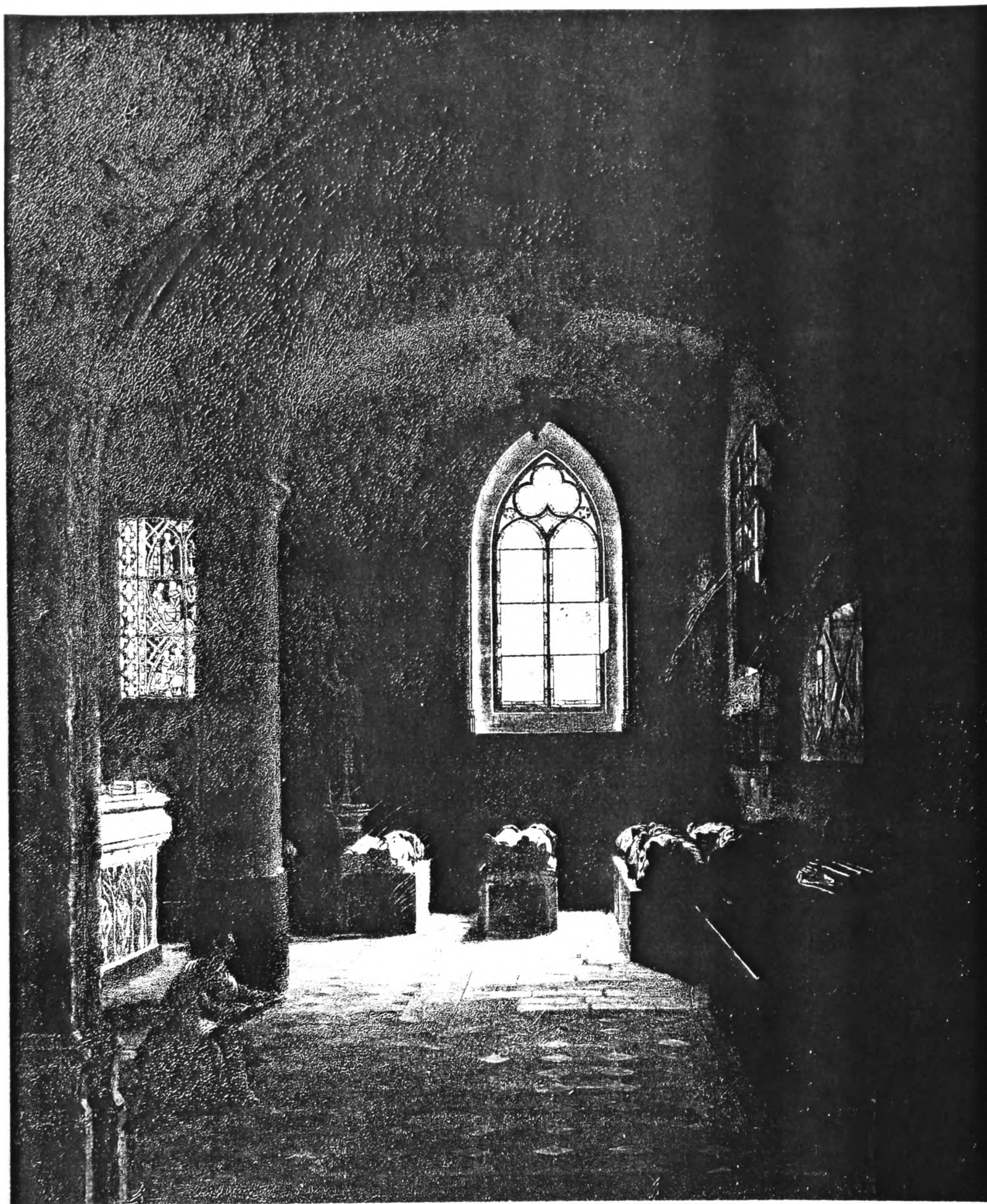


Fig. 17. L.- M. Cochereau, *Artist drawing in the Musée des Monuments français* (Paris, Musée Carnavalet). The scene depicts a particularly tenebrous Thirteenth-century hall.

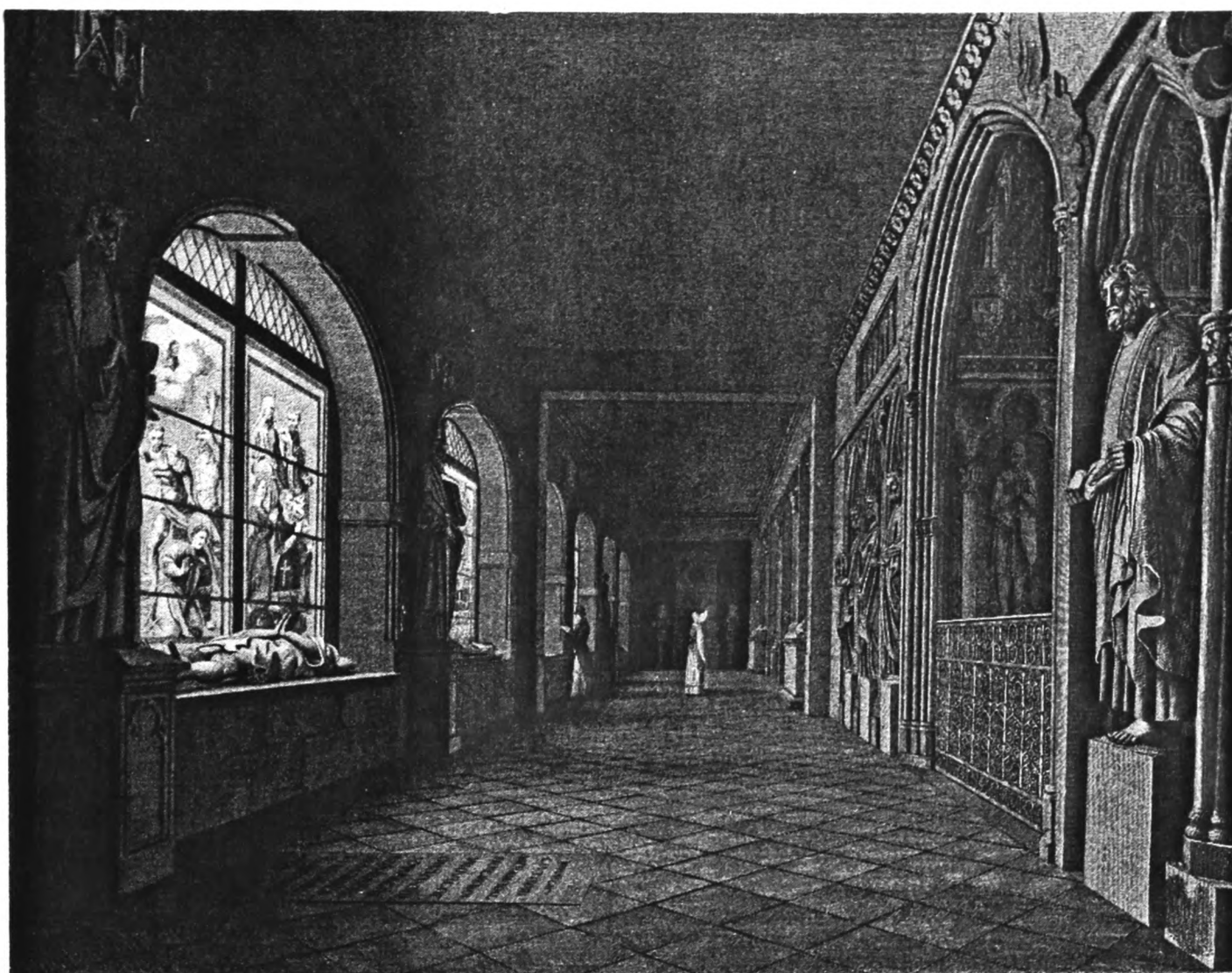


Fig. 18. Réville & Lavalée, *Vues pittoresques et perspectives des Salles du Musée des monuments français* (Paris 1816). Cloister corridor leading to the Fourteenth- and Fifteenth-century halls.

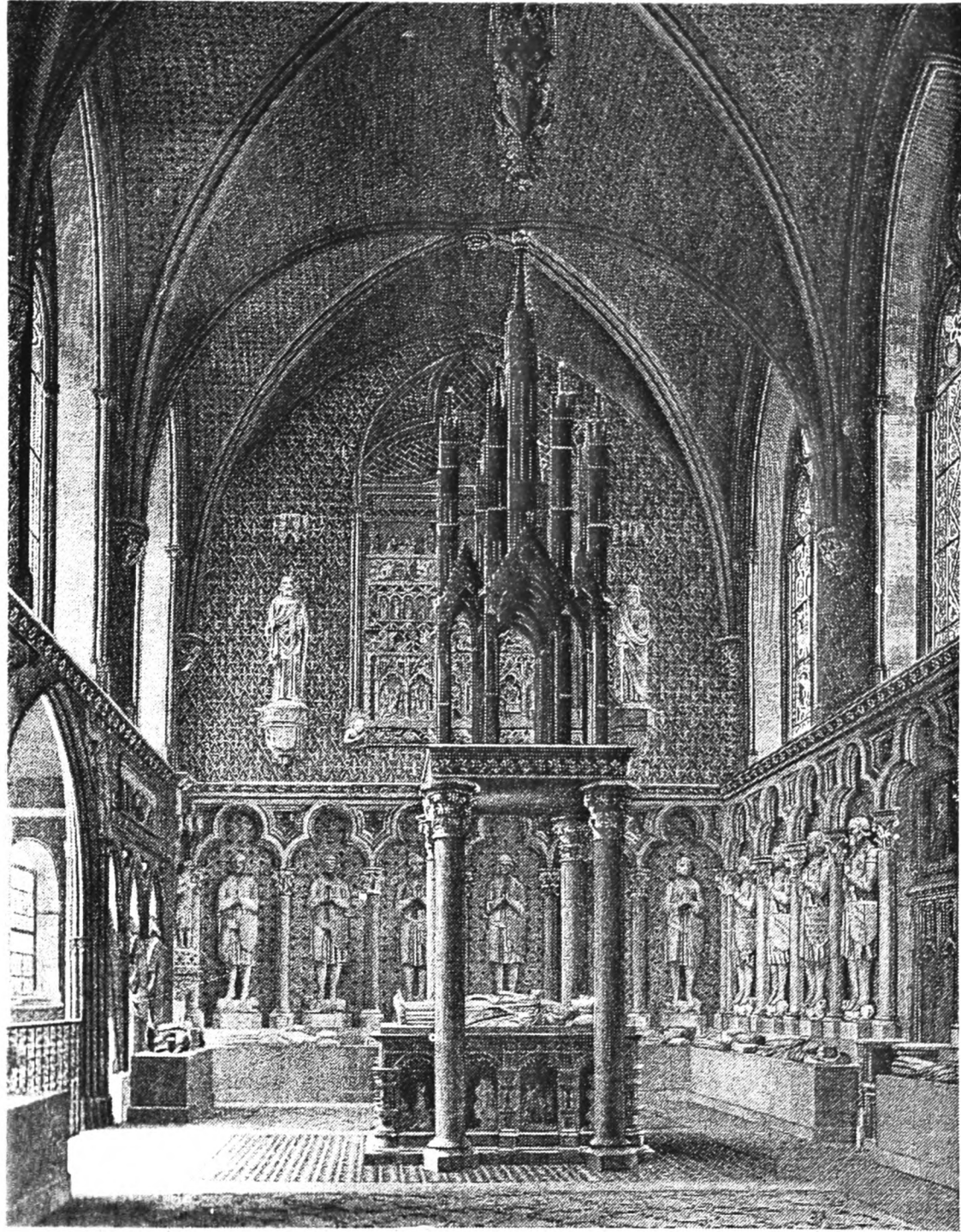


Fig. 19. Biet & Brès, *Souvenirs du Musée des Monuments Français* (Paris, 1821-1826).
Entrance to the Fourteenth-century hall.

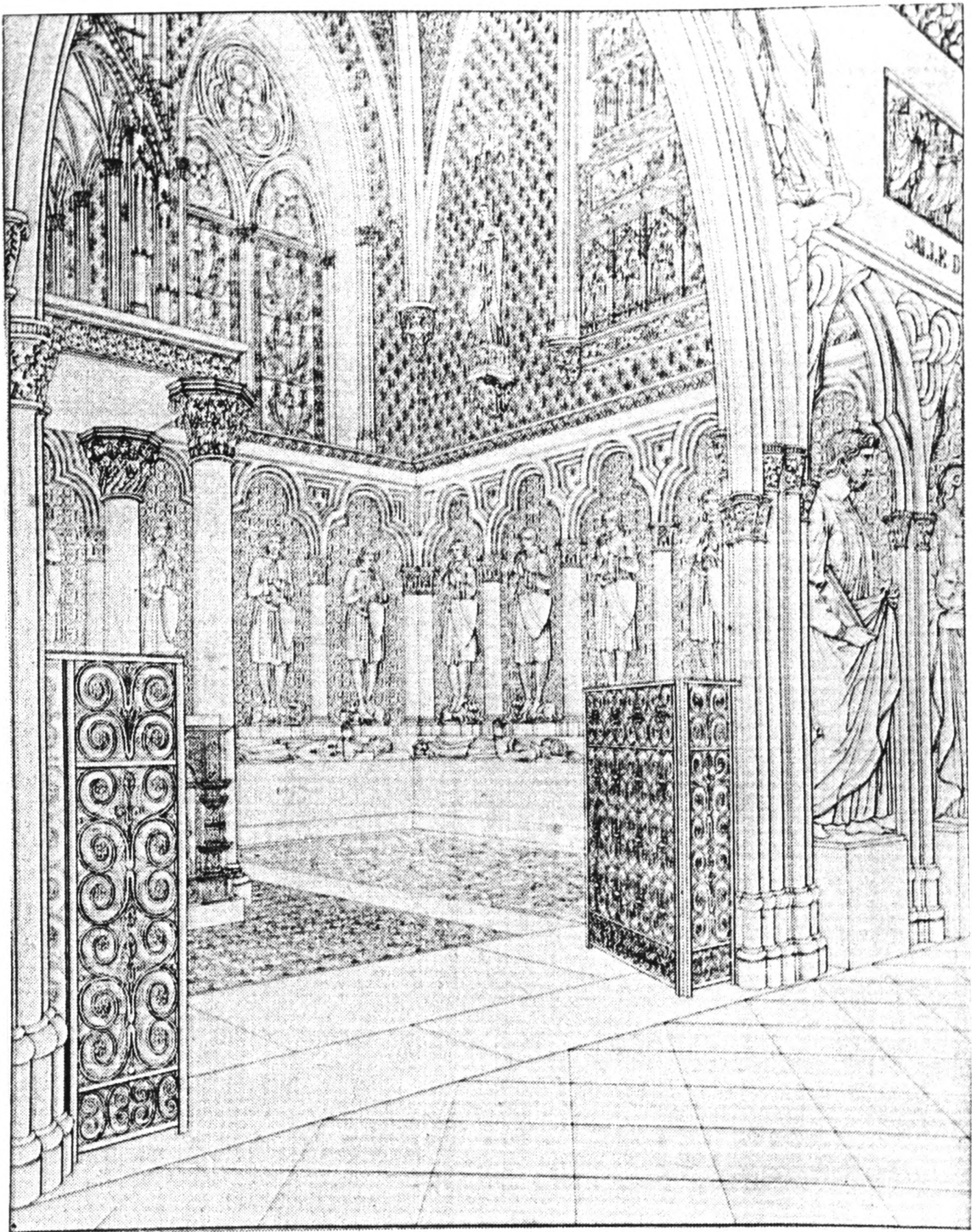


Fig. 20. Réville & Lavalée, *Vues pittoresques et perspectives des Salles du Musée des monuments français* (Paris 1816). Fourteenth-century hall.

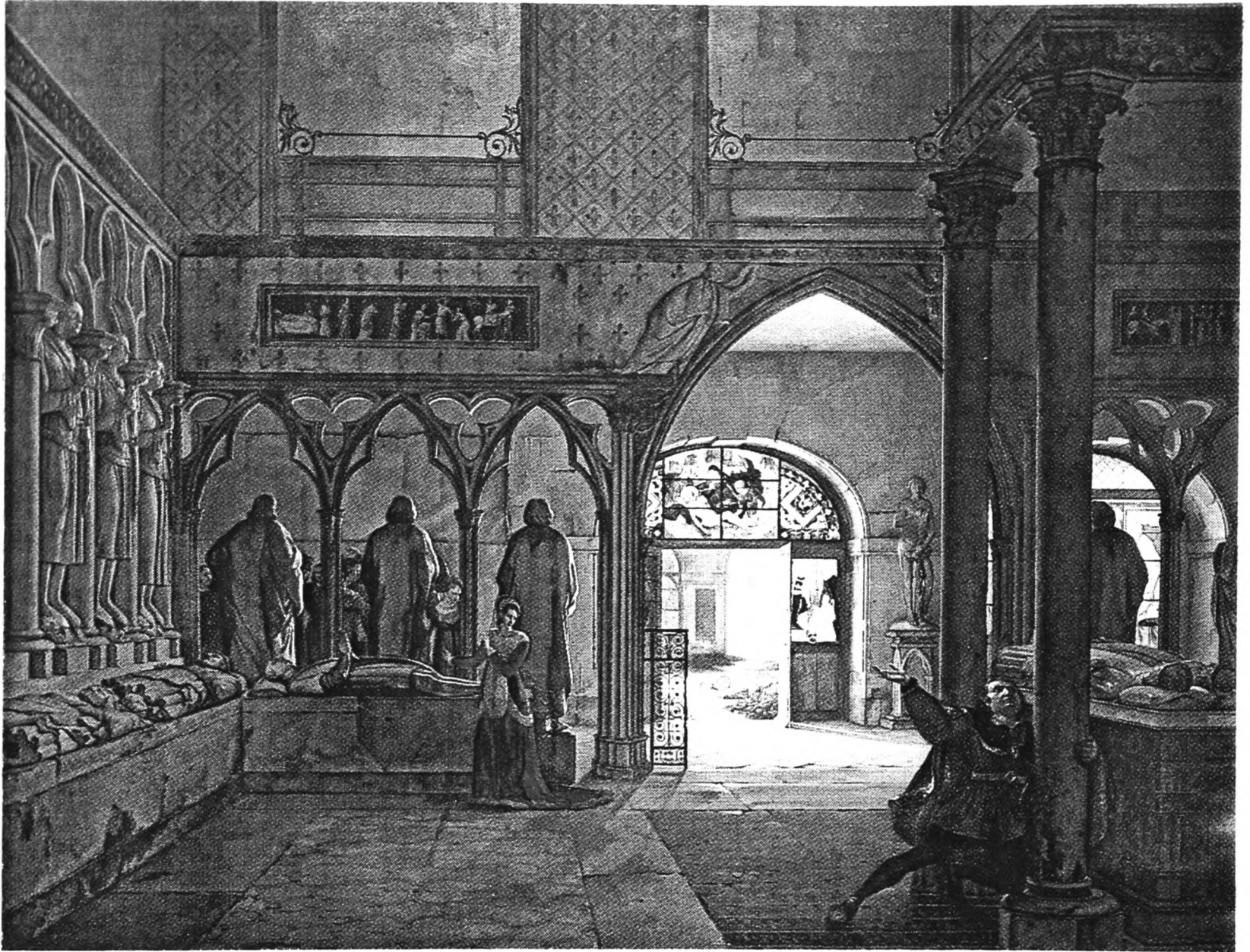


Fig. 21. C.-M. Bouton, *Folie de Charles V*, 1817 (Bourg-en-Bresse, Musée de Brou).
The setting is a fairly accurate reproduction of the Fourteenth-century hall of the Museum of Monuments.

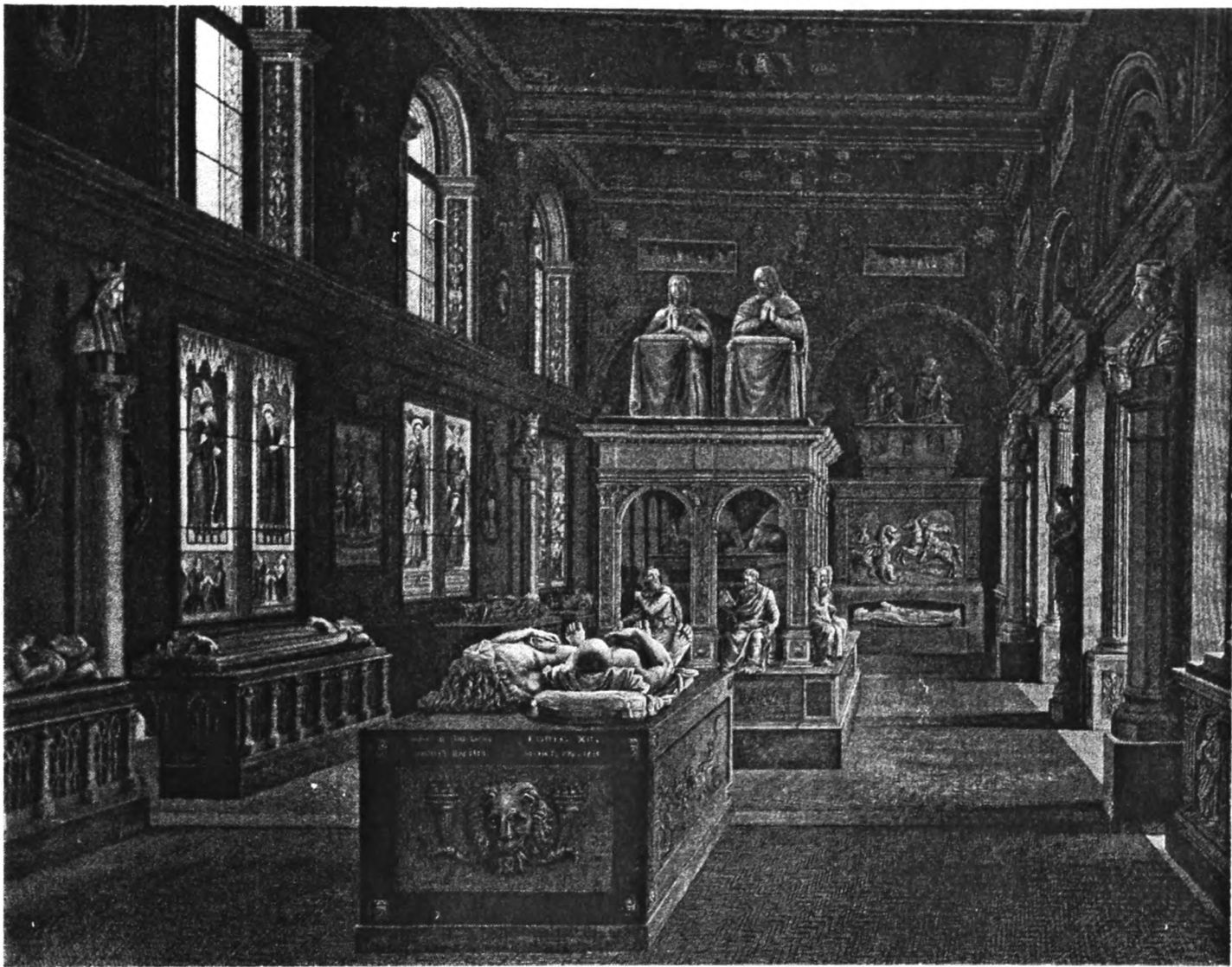


Fig. 22. Réville & Lavalée, *Vues pittoresques et perspectives des Salles du Musée des monuments français* (Paris 1816). Fifteenth-century hall.

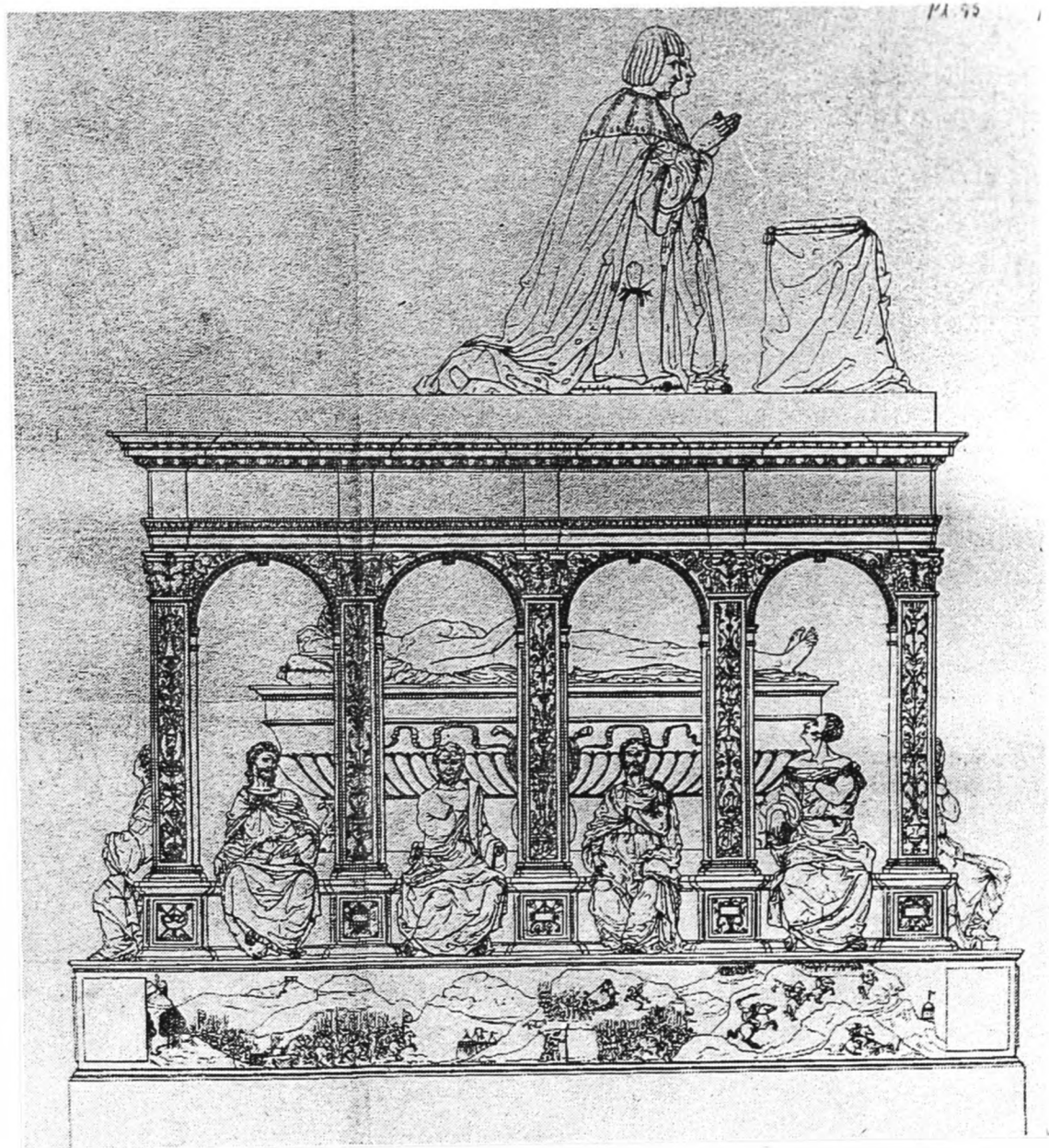


Fig. 23. Alexandre Lenoir (engraving after), *Musée des Monuments français*, vol. II (Paris, 1801). Tomb of Louis XII, from the Fifteenth-century hall.

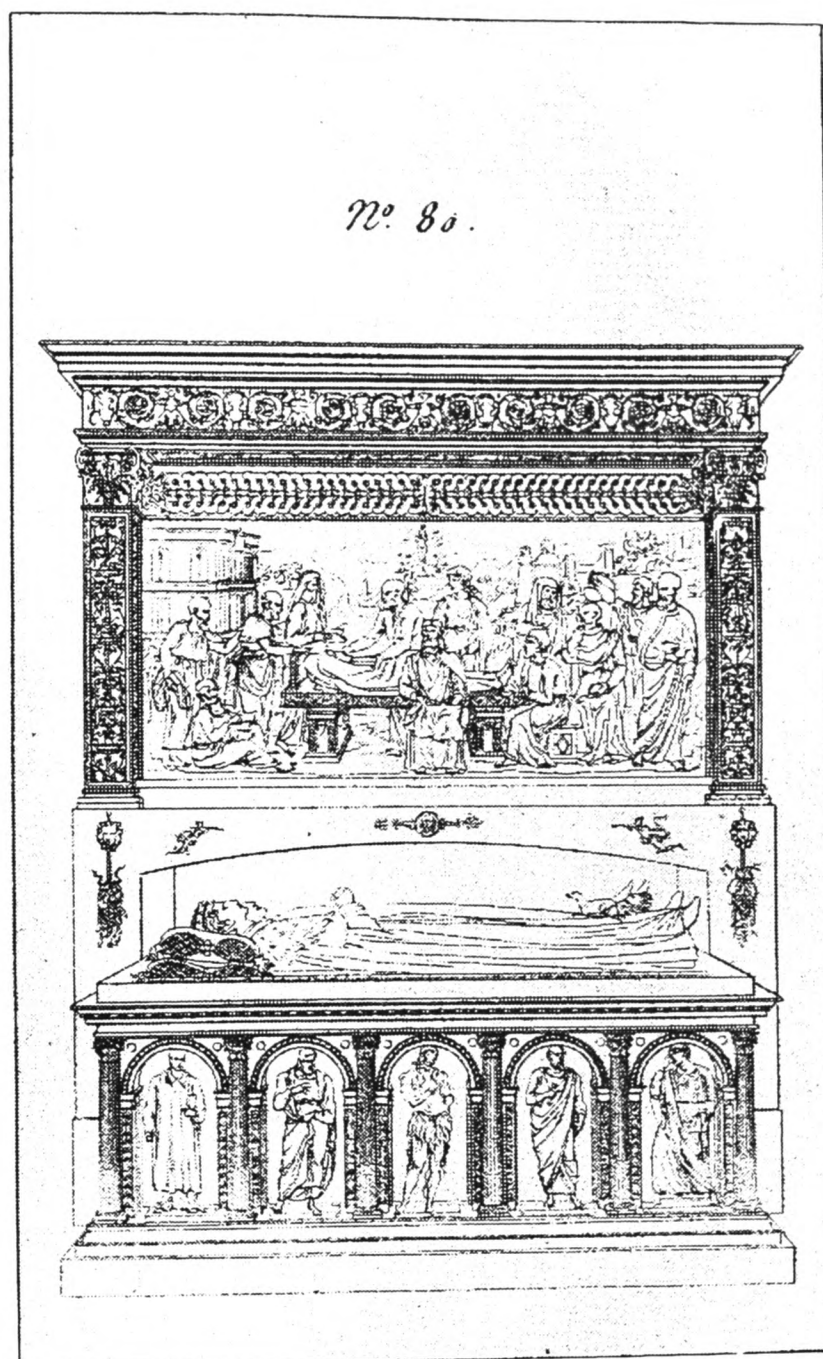


Fig. 24. Alexandre Lenoir (engraving after), *Musée des Monuments français*, vol. II (Paris, 1801). Tomb of Charles d'Orléans, from the Fifteenth-century hall.

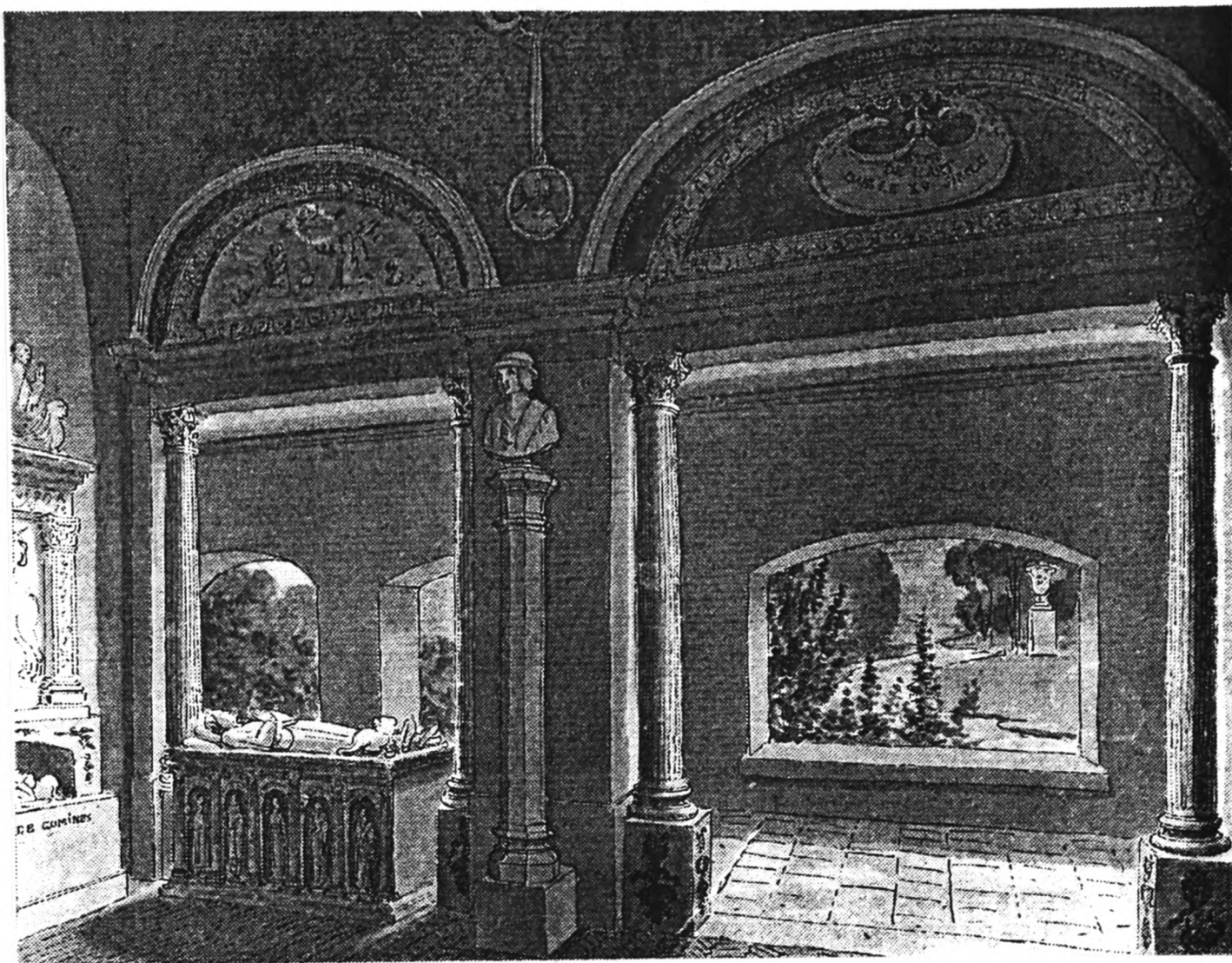


Fig. 25. Alexandre Lenoir, Imaginary view from the Fifteenth-century hall of the Museum of Monuments (Paris, Musée du Louvre, Cabinet des Dessins). Lenoir has exaggerated the view across the cloister making it look like a larger garden (perhaps the Élysée), thus emphasising the importance of vistas in his project.



Fig. 26. Réville & Lavalée, *Vues pittoresques et perspectives des Salles du Musée des monuments français* (Paris 1816). Sixteenth-century hall.



Fig. 27. Réville & Lavalée, *Vues pittoresques et perspectives des Salles du Musée des monuments français* (Paris 1816). Seventeenth-century hall.

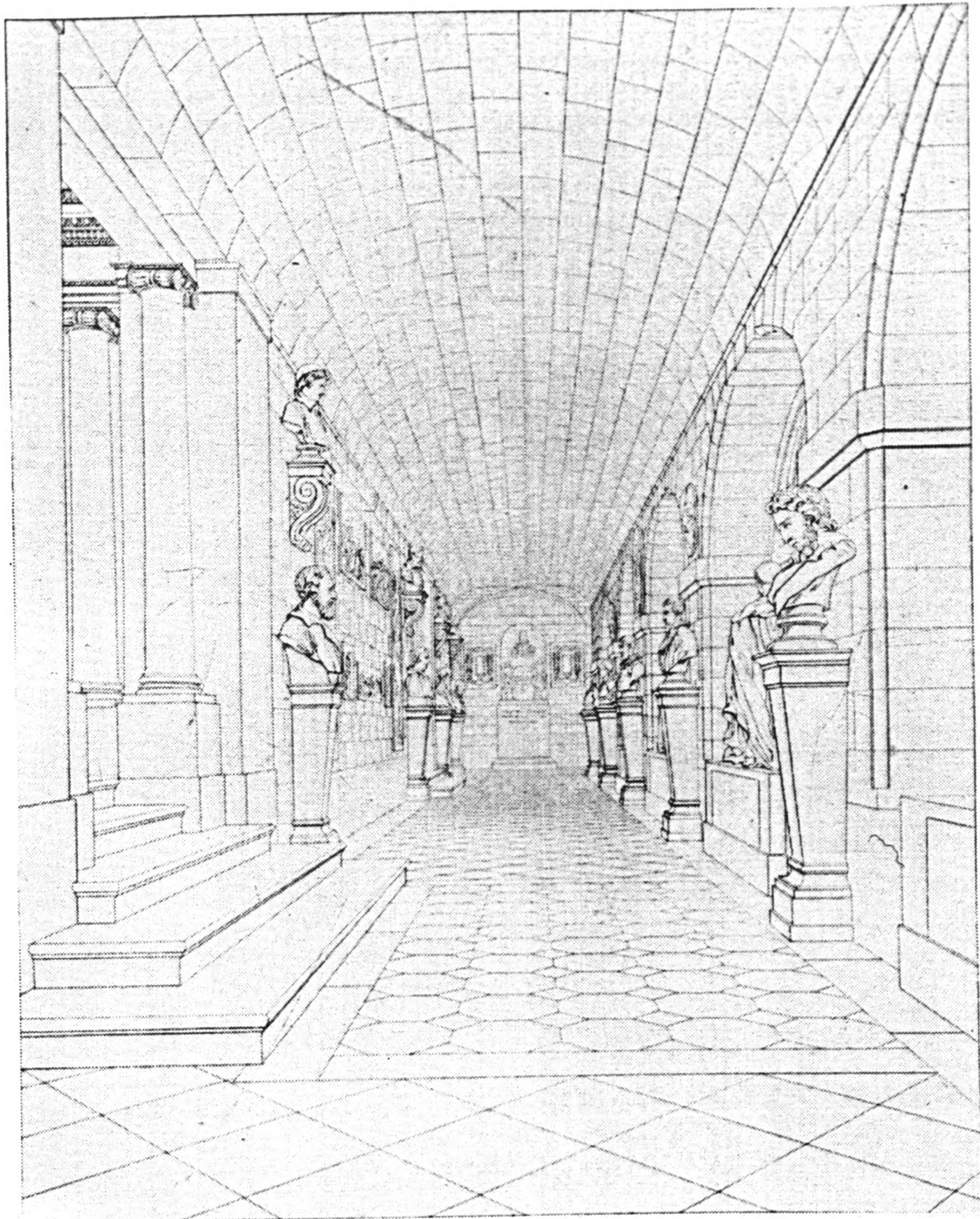


Fig. 28. Biet & Brès, *Souvenirs du Musée des Monuments Français* (Paris, 1821-1826). Cloister corridor leading to the Sixteenth- and Seventeenth-century halls. This served as the "Eighteenth-century" corner of the Museum, with the monuments to those prominent eighteenth-century figures who were not in the Élysée.

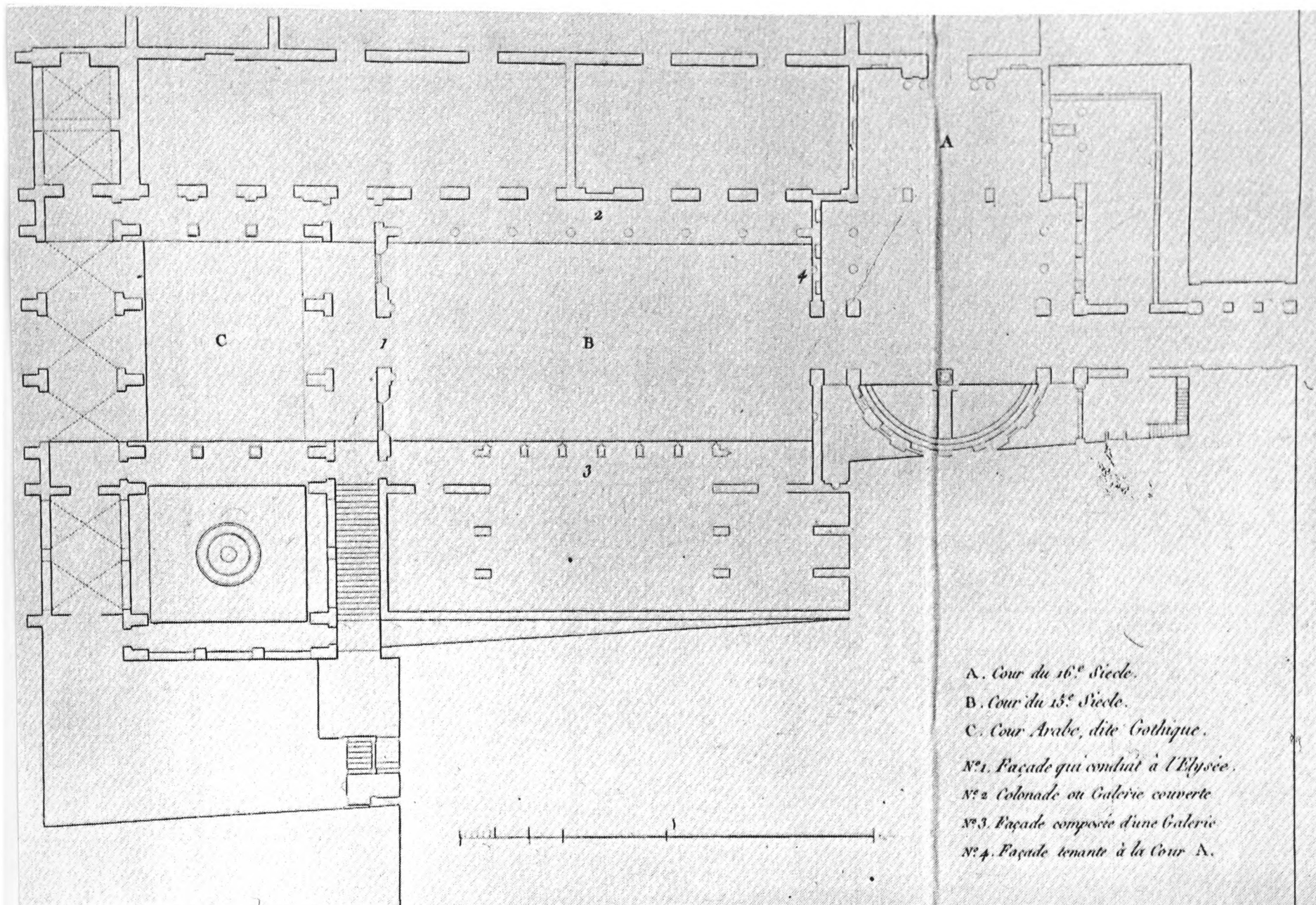


Fig. 29. Alexandre Lenoir, (engraved by Percier), Plan for the development of the three courts at the Museum of Monuments, 1802 (Paris, Musée du Louvre, Cabinet des Dessins).

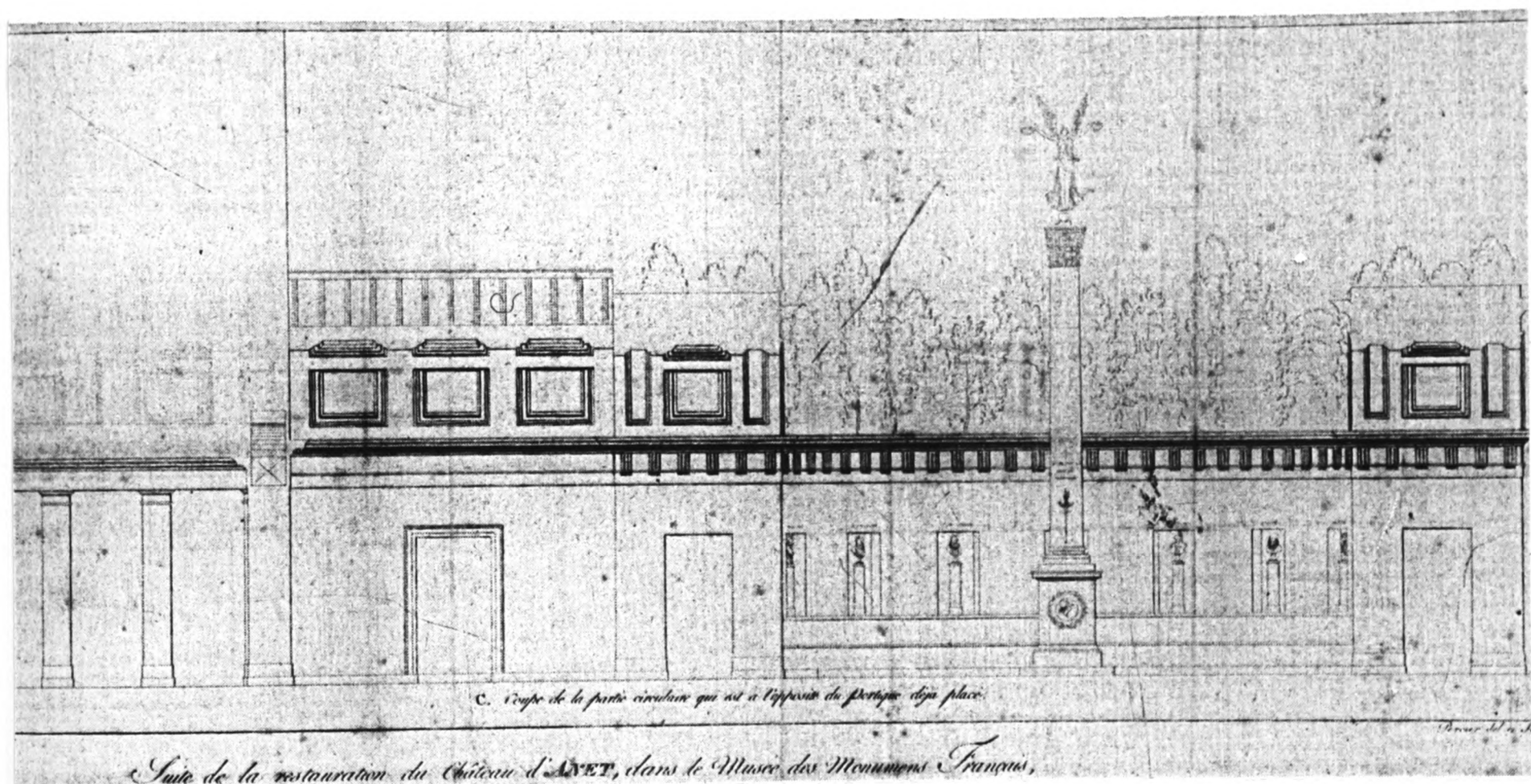


Fig. 30. Alexandre Lenoir, (engraved by Percier), Plan for the development of the three courts at the Museum of Monuments, 1802: Section through the entrance court (Paris, Musée du Louvre, Cabinet des Dessins).

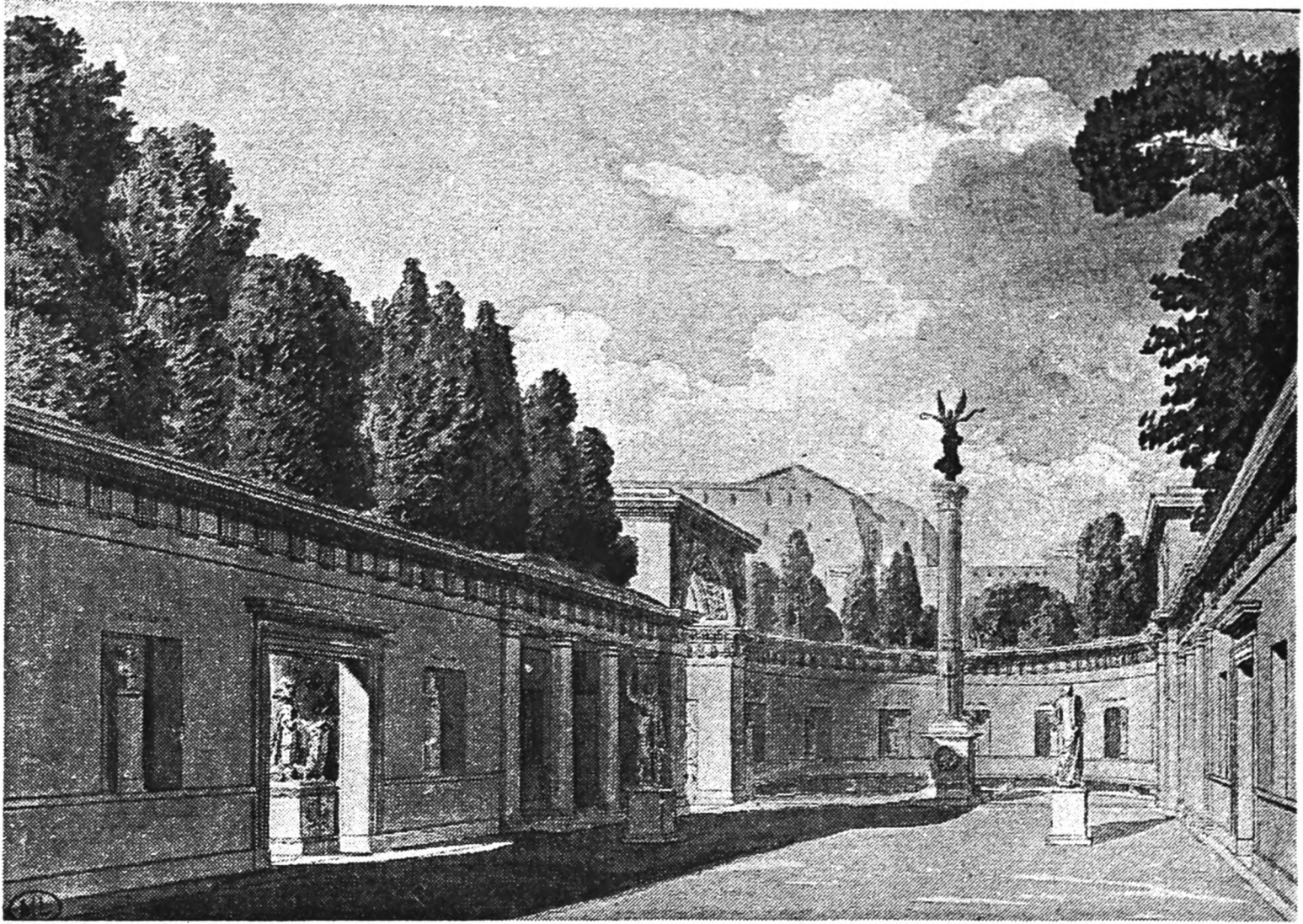


Fig. 31. Alexandre Lenoir, Plan the development of the three courts at the Museum of Monuments: Perspective of the entrance court (Paris, Musée du Louvre, Cabinet des Dessins). We can discern the column with the winged Fame, surrounded by the niches with the busts of Great Men of Arts and Letters.

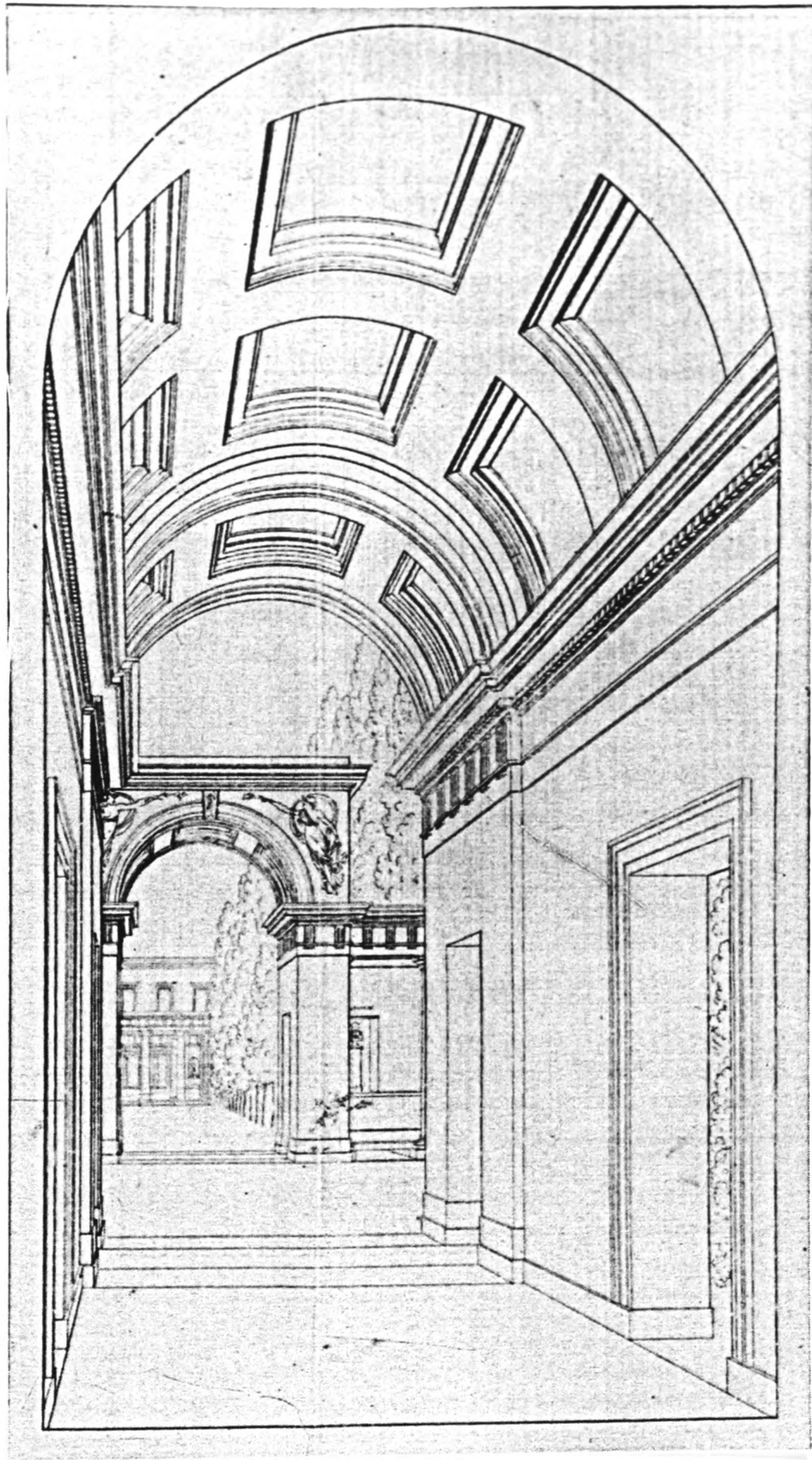


Fig. 32. Alexandre Lenoir, (engraved by Percier), Plan for the development of the three courts of the Museum of Monuments, 1802: Entrance to the Museum, looking across the first and second courts (Paris, Musée du Louvre, Cabinet des Dessins).



Fig. 33. Alexandre Lenoir (engraving after), *Musée des Monuments français*, vol. v (Paris, 1806). Élysée.

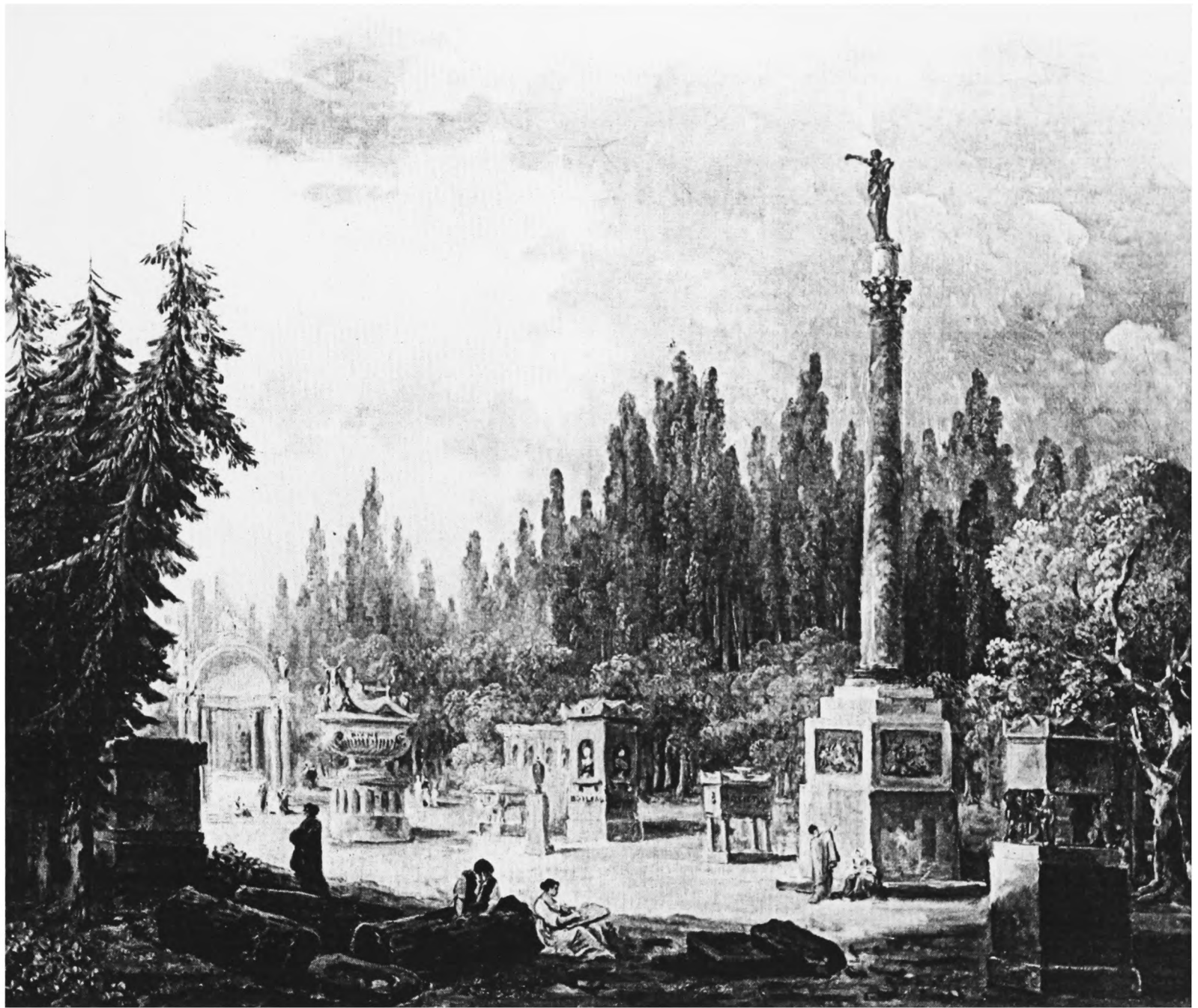


Fig. 34. Hubert Robert, *The Élysée of the Musée des Monuments français*, 1800 (Paris, Musée du Louvre). In this picture we can identify, from left to right, the tomb of Descartes, the monument to Diane de Poitiers as goddess Diana, the simple funerary urn to Boileau, the composite monument to the four greats of seventeenth-century letters, the tomb of Molière, the funerary column of Anne de Montmorency, and the tomb of Montfaucon.

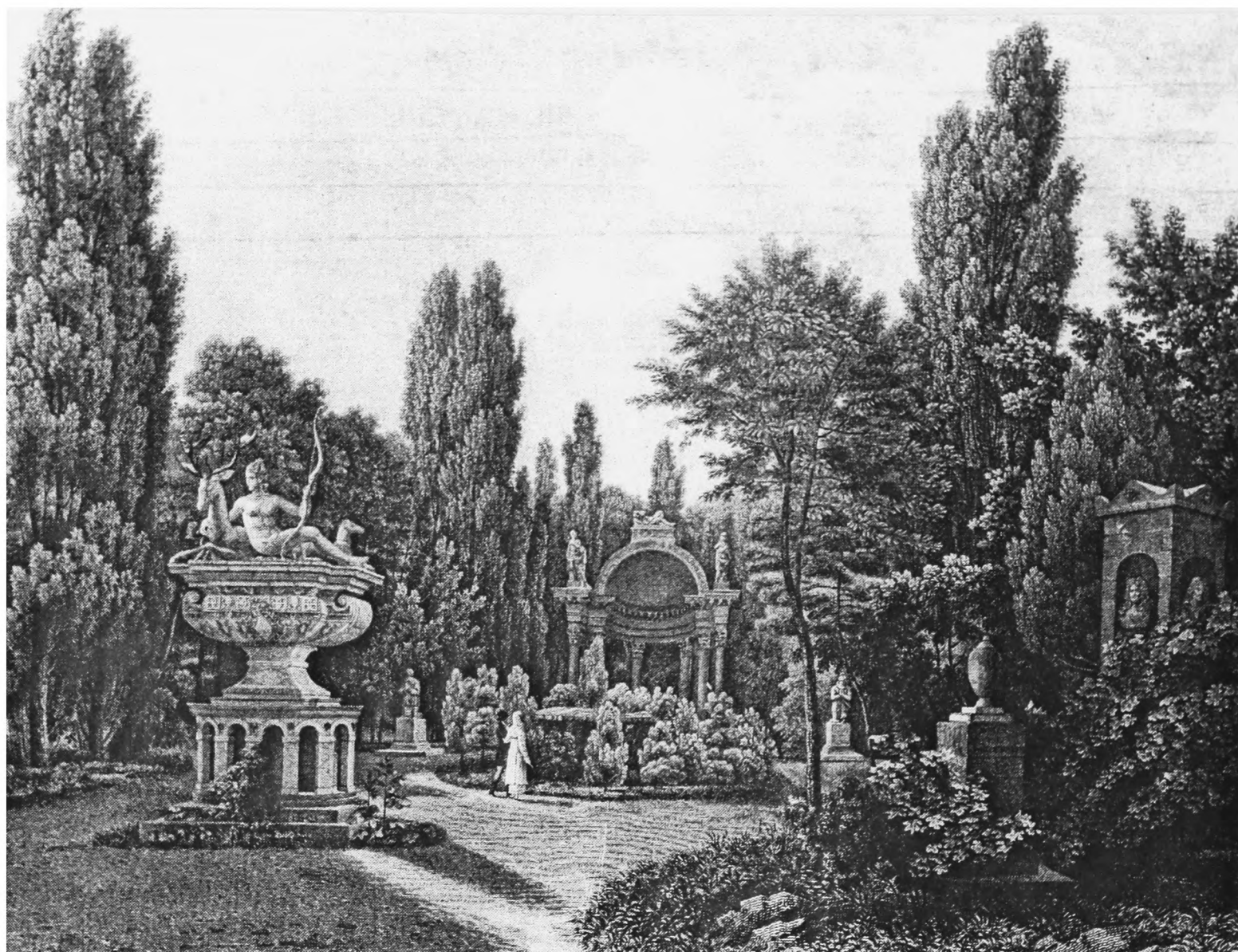


Fig. 35. Réville & Lavalée, *Vues pittoresques et perspectives des Salles du Musée des monuments français* (Paris 1816). Élysée.

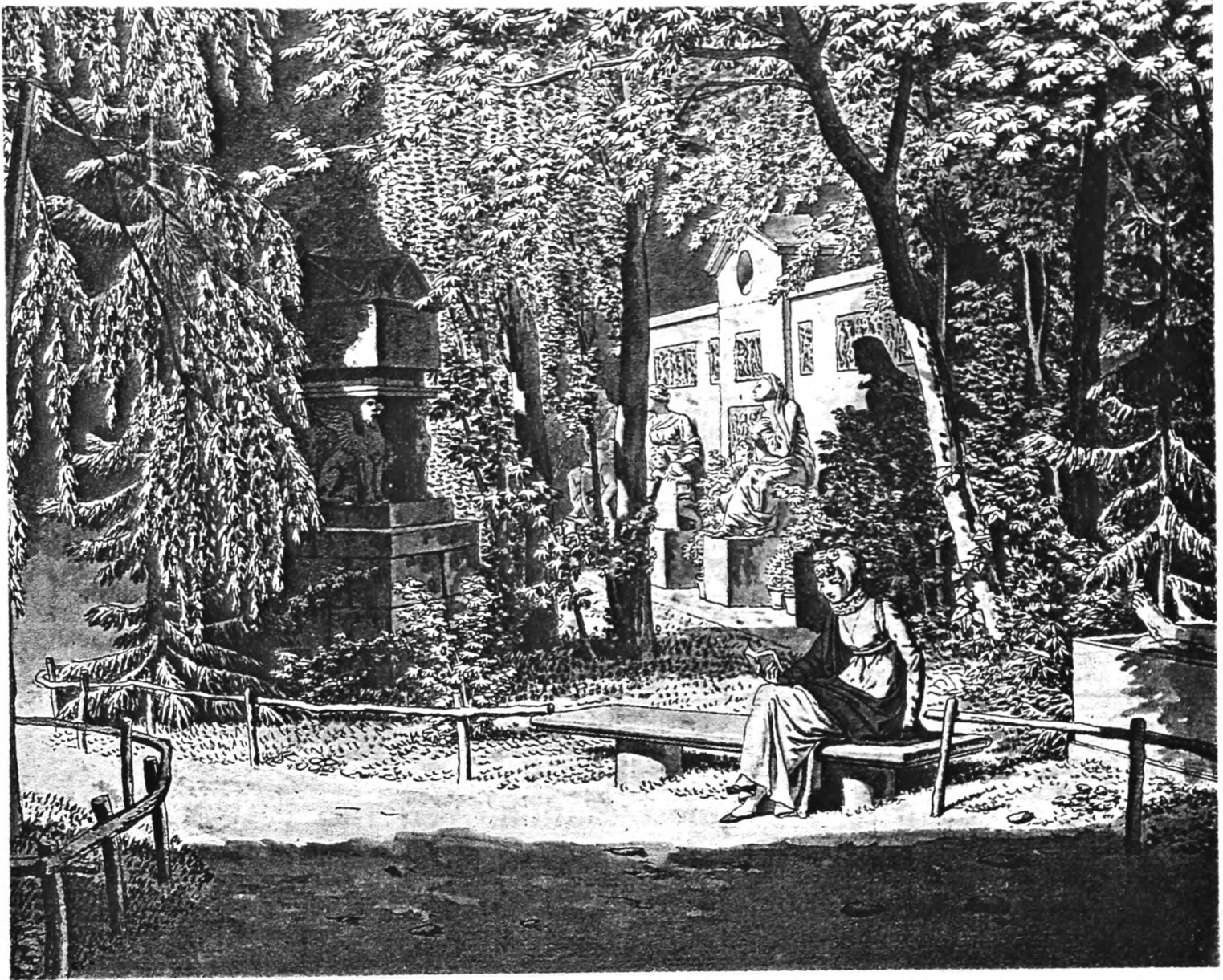


Fig. 36. C. W. Eckersberg, *Woman seated in the Élysée of the Musée des Monuments français*, 1811 (Copenhagen, Statens Museum for Kunst).

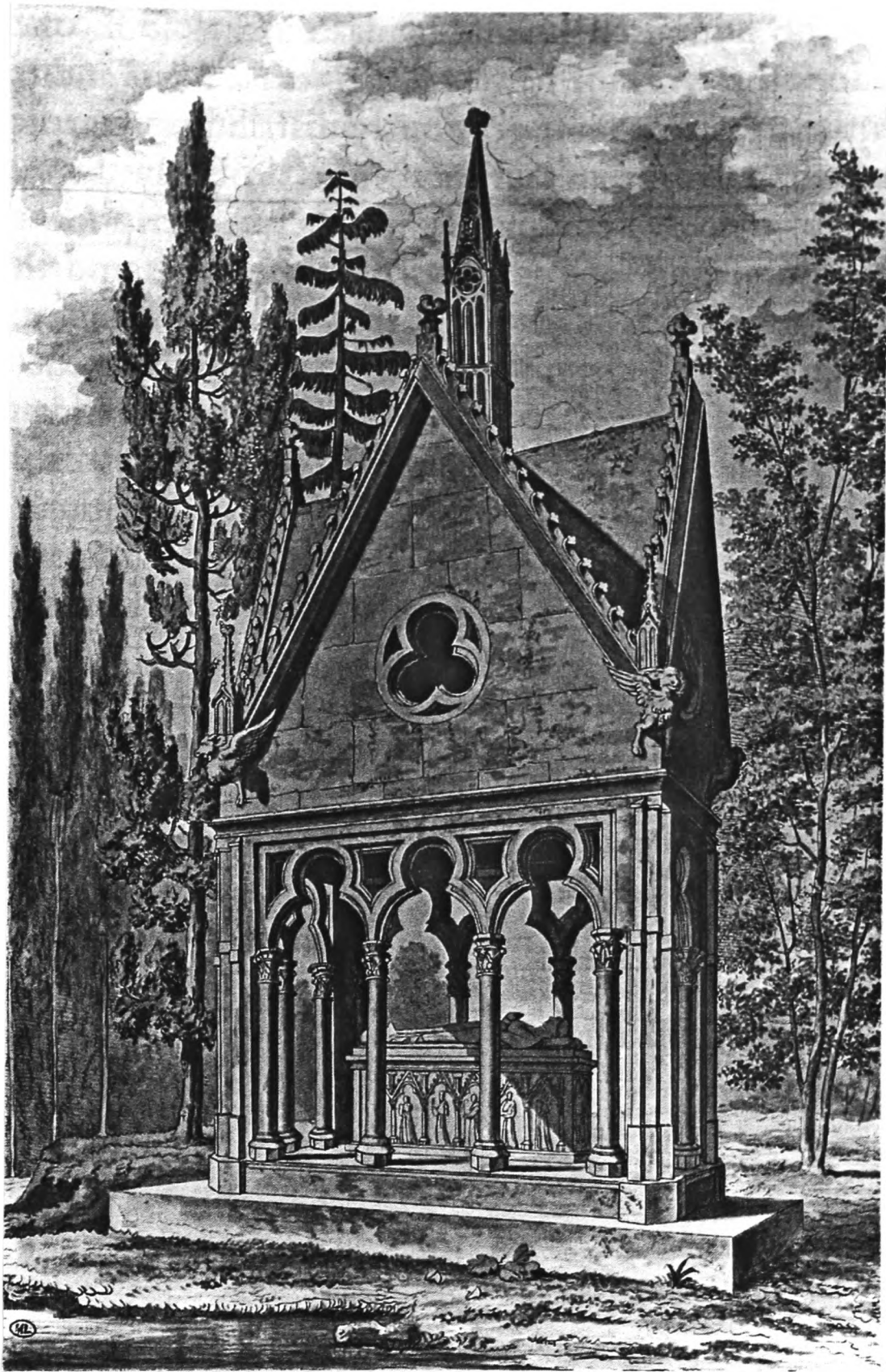


Fig. 37. Alexandre Lenoir, Tomb of Héloïse and Abelard in the Élysée of the Museum of Monuments (Paris, Musée du Louvre, Cabinet des Dessins).

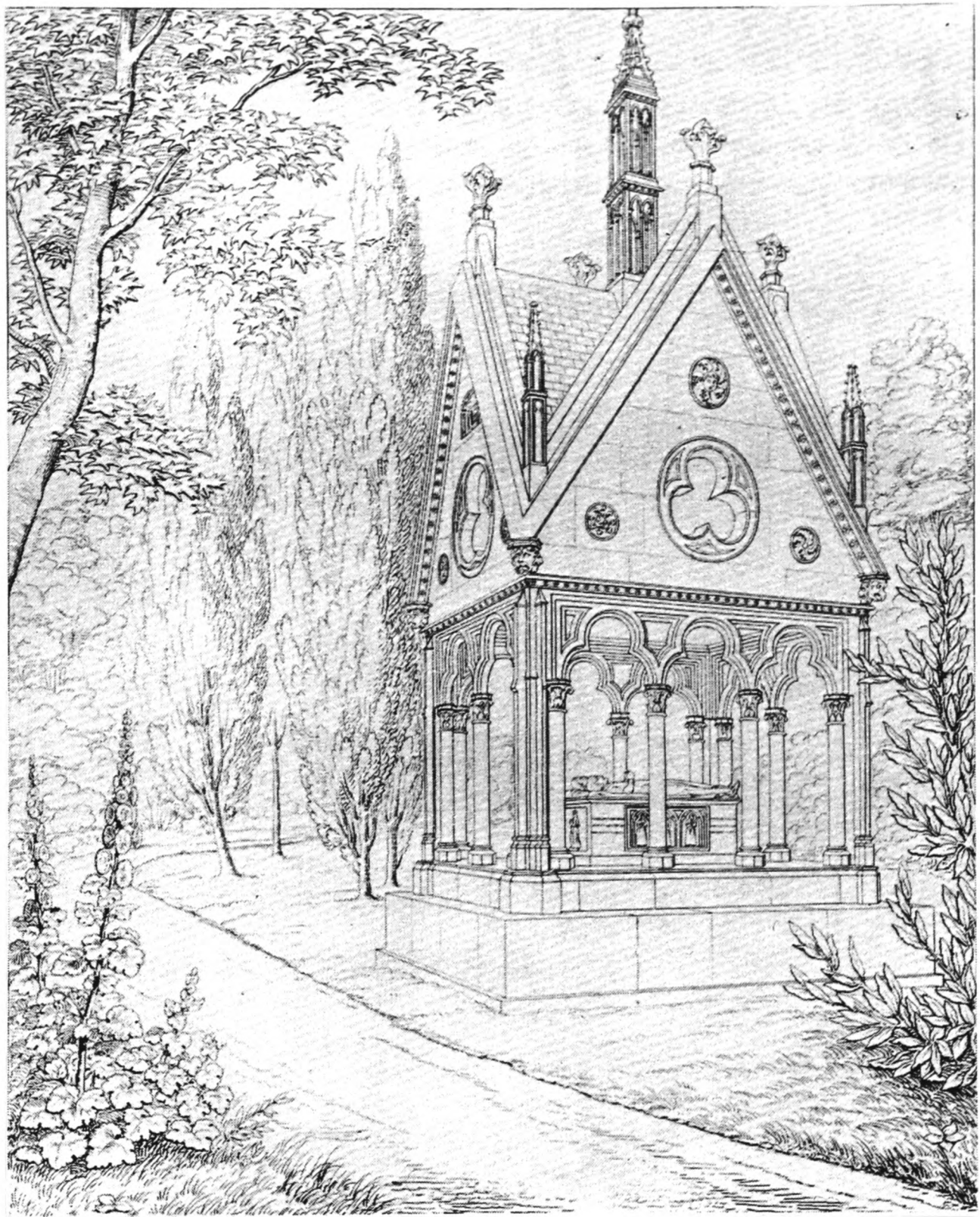


Fig. 38. Biet & Brès, *Souvenirs du Musée des Monuments Français* (Paris, 1821-1826).
Tomb of Héloïse and Abelard.

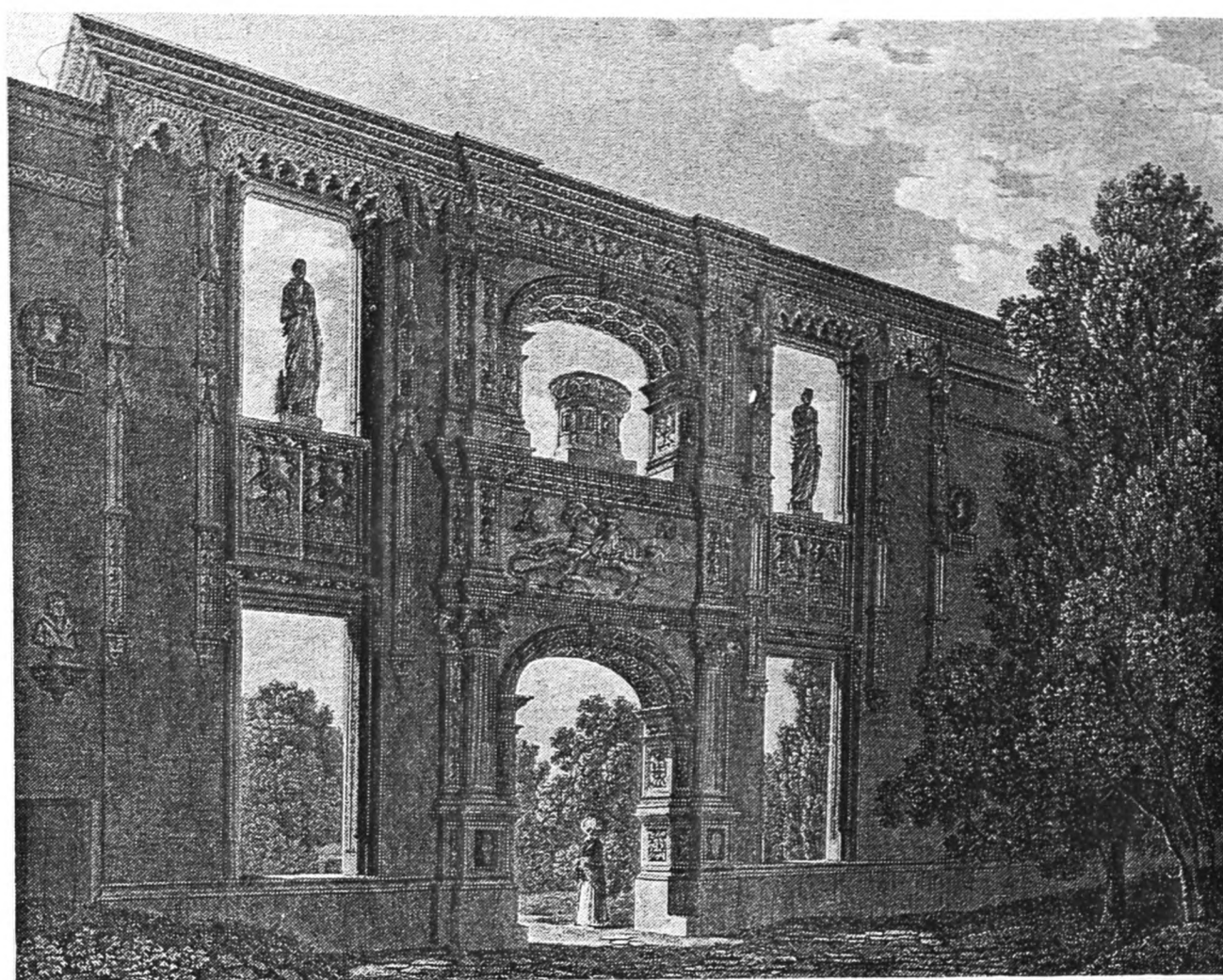


Fig. 39. Réville & Lavalée, *Vues pittoresques et perspectives des Salles du Musée des monuments français* (Paris 1816). The facade from the château de Gaillon reconstructed at the Museum of Monuments.



Fig. 40. The entrance to the Introductory hall of the Museum of Monuments, as it survives in the École des Beaux-Arts. The arched building on the left is part of Durand's extensive rebuilding of the site.



Fig. 41. Molière's tomb, as designed by Alexandre Lenoir, at the cemetery of Père Lachaise, Paris.



Fig. 42. La Fontaine's tomb, as designed by Alexandre Lenoir, at the cemetery of Père Lachaise, Paris.

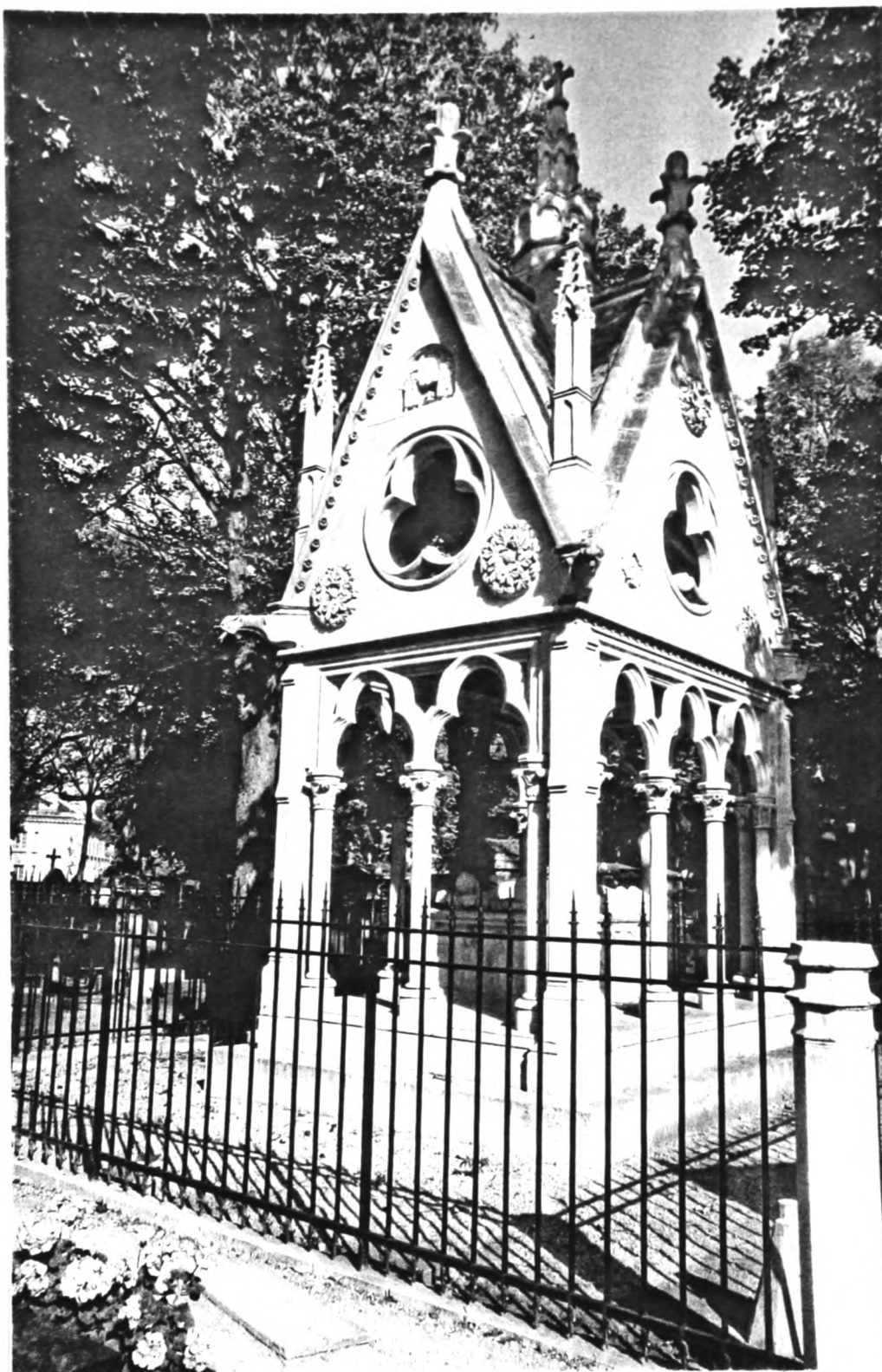


Fig. 43. The tomb of Héloïse and Abélard, as designed by Alexandre Lenoir, at the cemetery of Père Lachaise, Paris.

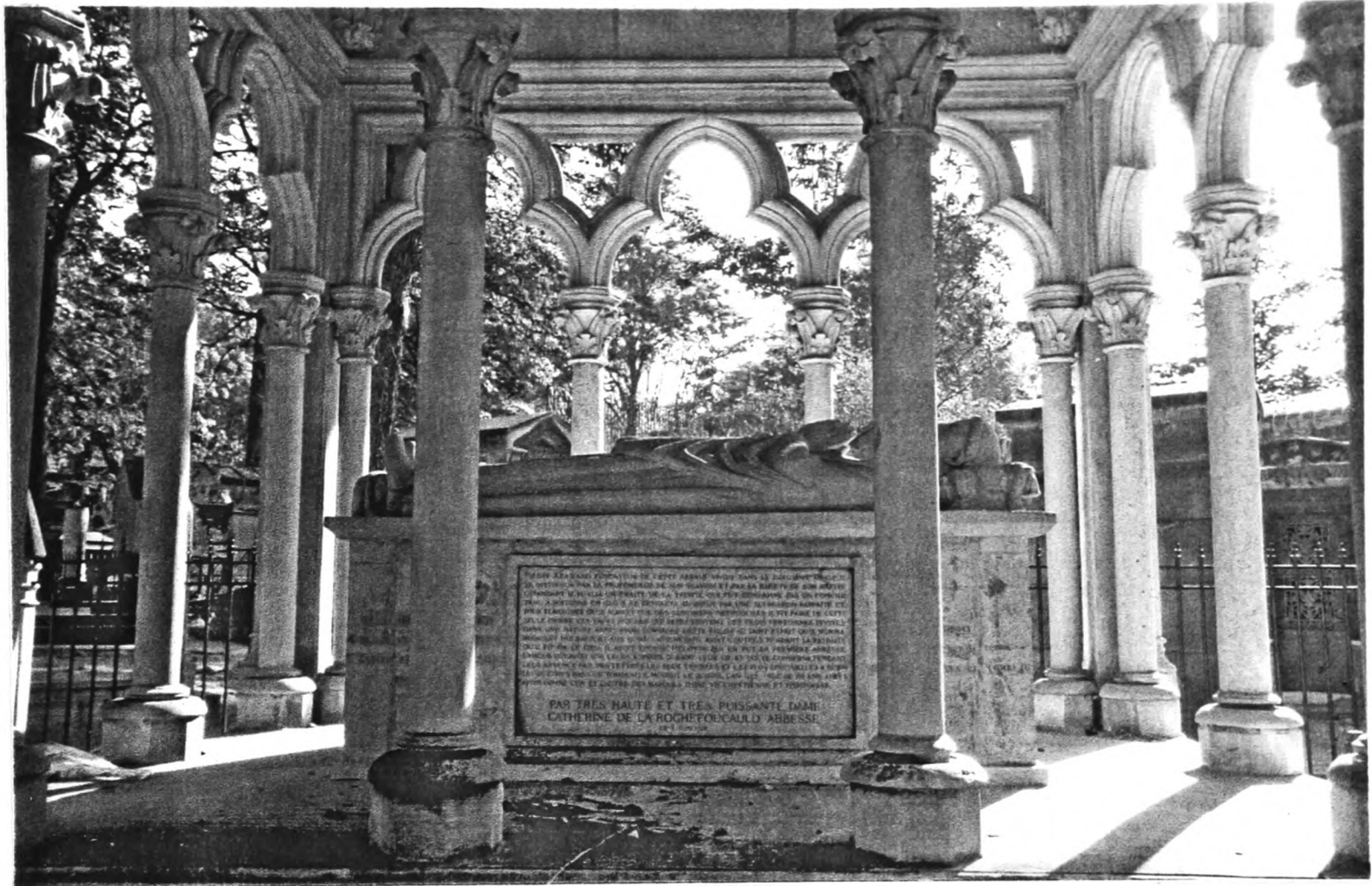


Fig. 44. Detail of the tomb of Héloïse and Abélard, as designed by Alexandre Lenoir, at the cemetery of Père Lachaise, Paris.

