

## Hugues Sambin and supporting figures in treatises and engravings of the Renaissance

Hubertus Günther

The starting point from which to approach our theme – as usual in the Renaissance – is Antiquity. Reflecting on ancient construction practice, Vitruvius deals with columns as supporting elements in great detail and only briefly mentions that sometimes figures were used as structural supports; their design did not depend upon fixed rules, as did that of the columns, but was left to the architect's imagination. Dealing with the ancient Roman house (6.7.6), Vitruvius mentions anthropomorphic supports as a possible means of decoration, explaining that the Romans called them "Telamones" and the Greeks "Atlantes" (from Atlas, the wise expert in astrology, as the bearer of the universe). In exceptional cases, supporting figures were also inserted in public buildings. Vitruvius (1.1.5) reports two examples in which they represented defeated adversaries, namely the Persians and the Caryatids, i.e. the women of Caryae. He sets out in detail the historical circumstances that were connected with these figures, because the matter is meant as an example of the broad knowledge architects should have, e.g. in the field of history. In the context of a discussion of what is appropriate in mural painting, Vitruvius (7.5.5) mentions supporting figures of various forms as examples of how fantasy can be acted out.

The Renaissance commentaries on Vitruvius add other ancient sources for supporting figures. Guillaume Philandrier<sup>1</sup> was the first to collect everything then known about the subject. Athenaeus of Naucratis in the "Deipnosophistai" (6.241d) mentions the design of anthropomorphic supports, adding that some of them carried the entablature with one hand. Sidonius Apollinaris (letters 2.2.10) calls Caryatids "agitated columns". Filarete and some Renaissance commentaries on Vitruvius portray men and women as supporting figures with their arms raised and sometimes even in dance-like poses<sup>2</sup> (fig. 1). Perhaps they relate to Sidonius or Athenaios, but they obviously also take anthropomorphic supports from the Middle Ages as their models.

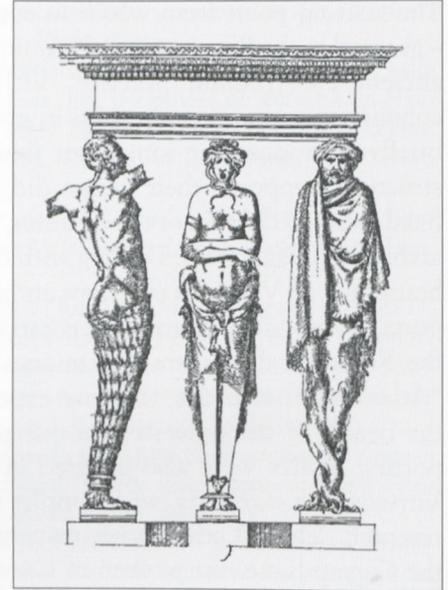
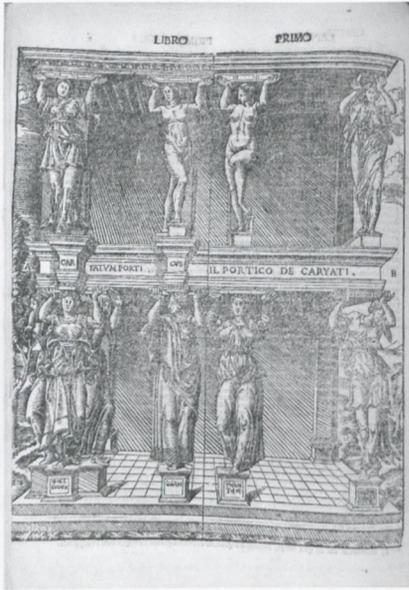
Given the figures of barbarians on Roman triumphal arches, it was easy to imagine that statues of defeated warriors were used as supports. But doubts arose about the harsh interpretation of Caryatids as images of the subj-

gated women of Caryae. More acceptable were the antique writings that instead explain Caryatids as a playful invention. Philandrier cites the passage in Pausanias (3.10.7), reporting that the name refers to Caryae as a place of nymphs, where every year Spartan girls danced around a statue of Artemis. In any case, the use of Caryatids in Roman architecture showed that they were not always meant as the enemy women vanquished by the Greeks. Moreover, Philandrier lists the ancient supporting figures known at his time. These spolia show multiple points: none of the supporting figures was animated, and animated anthropomorphic supports, as they existed in the Middle Ages, are indeed hard to imagine in classical architecture. The Egyptian figures in the villa of Hadrian in Tivoli, which had already been drawn by Giuliano da Sangallo, and the Satyrs bearing baskets with grapes on their heads which Maerten van Heemskerck saw in the Palazzo Della Valle (now in the Capitoline Museum, Rome), show how wide otherwise the freedom of imagination in designing this kind of supports was. Some of the figures demonstrate that they were intended as a parallel to columns by bearing capitals on their heads. The ancient Caryatids known in the Renaissance usually had Doric capitals.

In the Italian construction practice of the Renaissance, supporting figures were quite rare. However, another motif also taken from antiquity became popular, namely the Herms, statues with a head or torso above a plain section, that was often shaped like a pyramid tapered towards the ground (fig. 3, 7, 14). They were known from ancient painted and stuccoed decorations. Vitruvius does not mention them, and therefore they had little importance for the theory of architecture in the Italian Renaissance. They were, however, more suitable than Atlases and Caryatids for the construction practice, at least for the Italian one, because the plain pedestals, similar to those of columns, assimilate the figures to the wall.

In painting, supporting anthropomorphic figures and herms became popular motifs. There they could be animated in many diverse manners. Early examples of this are in the lower part of the Vatican Stanze and formerly on the facade of the Farnesina<sup>3</sup>, which had painted

1. *Caryatids and Persians as Supporting Figures*, illustration from *Vitruvio in volgar lingua...*, ed. Gianbattista Caporali, Perugia 1536
2. *Frontispiece*, from Guillaume Du Choul, *Discorso sopra la Castramentatione et disciplina militare de Romani*, Lyon, 1559
3. Jacques Androuet du Cerceau, *Terms and caryatids*, 1546/49, London, Victoria and Albert Museum (E. 1209-1923)



Satyrs, similar to those of the collection Della Valle, flanking the windows. In the Vatican Stanze, Raphael represented supporting figures in animated poses. In the late 16<sup>th</sup> century the Carracci in their frescoes transformed the simple supporting statues of antiquity into tangles of fiercely moving figures. A highlight of this development is the stucco decoration invented for Francis I<sup>st</sup> at Fontainebleau.

Supporting figures and herms spread also to furniture and even more to prints. They were especially popular as framing devices for vignettes and title pages of books (fig. 2, 14). They were used for various books, but often had little or no connection with the content of these publications. Italian examples of this, which are known from the theory of architecture, are the title page used by the Venetian publisher Francesco Marcolini for the book by Sebastiano Serlio on the orders of columns (1537), as well as for the book by Giuseppe Salviati on the Ionic Volute (1552) and also for the instructions for the *Gioco delle Sorti* written by Ludovico Dolce and published with the title of *Giardino dei pensieri* (1540). French examples include the title pages used by the Lyon publisher Guillaume Rouillé (about 1518-1589) for the various treatises of Guil-

laume du Choul on Antiquity in Italian translation (1559) (fig. 2), or for the *Discours historial de l'antique et illustre cité de Nisme* by Jean Poldo d'Albenas (1559) or for *Les quatre livres des navigations et peregrinations orientales* by Nicolas de Nicolay (1568). These and other Lyon title pages (such as that of the publisher Balthasar Arnoulet for the *Epitomes des roys de France*, 1546) show the tendency to animate the figures and to insert satyrs or other mythical creatures combined with nature.

Several series of herms were engraved north of the Alps; the most important ones were created in the middle of the 16<sup>th</sup> century by Jacques Androuet du Cerceau (1546/49) and Hans Vredeman de Vries (Antwerp 1565)<sup>4</sup> (fig. 3). Both represent the bodies of the figures in an upright position, as is appropriate for analogies of columns; sometimes they are depicted without arms, or, when they do have arms, these are not in wide-ranging positions, probably because they would not fit in well with building practice. The pyramidal pediments are sometimes replaced by intertwined legs. Most of the figures have a base and support an entablature; du Cerceau also gives capitals to some of them. However, there is no fixed association between types of figures and the different orders.

The ancient sources give no indication about how to associate anthropomorphic supports with the rules of the orders of columns. Therefore, such figures are rarely considered in the Renaissance doctrine of columns. In the Italian books on columns they occur only most marginally: Serlio shows them as decoration for a fireplace in his *Regole generali* (1537) and for one of the porches in his *Livre extraordinaire* (1551). Vignola omits them completely in his *Regola* (1562). Philibert De l'Orme instead gives them more importance. He includes them, together with a national order and tree trunk columns, into the free variants of the orders of columns, which he treats in two separate chapters of his *Premier tome de l'architecture*<sup>5</sup>. He gives an account of what Vitruvius says about the supports of subjugated Persians and Caryatids in public buildings, and adds that even quite unburdened supporting figures were used in antiquity. As an example, he depicts a Satyr in the manner of those in the Della Valle collection (fig. 4).

Although the Vitruvian doctrine of columns does not consider supporting figures, it contains some elements that may suggest a connection with them. Since the human body is the measure of all things, including columns, each order is associated with a human type: the Doric order is like a powerful man, the Ionic is like a matron, the Corinthian is like a virgin and accordingly, the orders of columns were assigned to gods: the Doric to Minerva, Mars and Hercules, the Ionic to Juno, Diana and Bacchus, the Corinthian to Venus, Flora, Proserpina and Nymphs<sup>6</sup> (fig. 5). Serlio paraphrases this in the preface of his book on the orders of columns: he associates the Doric order with Jupiter, Mars and Hercules, the Ionic with Diana, Apollo and Bacchus, the Corinthian with Vesta and the Virgins.

Sometimes the genders of the supporting figures were connected to the orders of columns in the way that the male ones were associated with the Doric order and the female ones with the Ionic. Examples of this are the famous engraving of supporting figures by Marcantonio Raimondi or Jean Goujon's illustrations of the discourse on the historical circumstances of the Persians and Caryatids in Jean Martin's translation of Vitruvius (1547).





tioned discussion of Vitruvius about what is appropriate in painting. Vasari links to it the entirely uncanonical “*lavori tedeschi*” that he considers to be so monstrous and barbaric that they would no longer be used by excellent artists.

North of the Alps, unrestricted imagination was appreciated more than in Italy. This is evident in the stucco decoration invented for Francis I<sup>st</sup> at Fontainebleau or in engravings. The theoretical literature also attests to this. Albrecht Dürer had already encouraged the readers of his treatise on geometry to create their own forms in architecture<sup>9</sup>. He argues that Vitruvius had only been a human being, and that therefore the modern masters were free to create new inventions just as he had done. De l’Orme took up Dürer’s suggestion : “*Qu’est permis à l’exemple des anciens, d’inventer & faire nouvelles colonnes...*”<sup>10</sup>. The appreciation of new and extraordinary inventions is evident in French theoretical literature, e.g. in Martin, Philandrier and De l’Orme, who do not limit the variants of the orders of columns to the private sphere as Alberti did.

In 1563 the English painter John Shute published a book on columns entitled *The first and chief groundes of architecture used in all the auncient and famous monymentes with a farther and more ample discourse upon the same, than hitherto hath been set out by any other*<sup>11</sup>. In the introduction, he initially paraphrases the discourse of Vitruvius on the knowledge that an architect should have, and complains about how much architectural expertise had been lost. He then reveals the origins of the invention of the Salomonic order in France<sup>12</sup>.

A complete novelty in Shute is that he represents each order of columns connected with a special supporting figure (fig. 6). These figures represent mostly gods who match the appearance of the columns, though they hardly ever resemble anthropomorphic supports of ancient architecture. The Tuscan order is linked with the wise Atlas, from whom, according to Vitruvius, the name of the Atlases is derived (here according to Diodor 3.60; 4.27 identified with the king of Mauritania), the Doric order is linked with Hercules or Mars, the Ionic order with Juno, the Corinthian with Vesta, the Composite

with Pandora as characterised by Hesiod (*Deeds and Days*, 81s.), furthermore there are other possible associations, namely Apollo and Ganymede with the Ionic, Bacchus with the Corinthian. Shute’s association of the orders with the gods relates back to Vitruvius and Serlio, though somewhat modified. For all three authors the assignment of the orders of columns is associated primarily with gender. There are, however, some exceptions: the Ionic and Corinthian can be associated both with female and with certain male gods who, according to ancient mythology, are imagined somewhat effeminate, such as Ganymede, Bacchus and Apollo.

Shute’s idea was influential north of the Alps: most directly in the architectural treatise that Wendel Dietterlin published 1598 in Nuremberg; however the first to follow Shute’s idea of creating special figures representing each order of columns, was the architect and furniture designer Hugues Sambin in the *Oeuvre de la diversité des Termes, dont on use en architecture, reduict en ordre*, that he published in 1572 in Lyon<sup>13</sup> (fig. 7). It is a picture book with 18 full-page plates and short captions similar to the *Livre extraordinaire* of Serlio or the book on columns by Jacopo Barozzi da Vignola (1556). In addition, it has in common with Vignola’s treatise that it claims to belong to the field of architecture. Similarly to the *Livre extraordinaire* it treats architectural elements which are “licentious”, as Serlio qualifies his portals, but that in building practice are nevertheless linked with the orders of columns. As Sambin’s booklet is a rather curious work, it is necessary to analyse it thoroughly to be able to assess it.

Sambin considers only supporting figures. The word “*Terme*”, which in the title indicates the content of Sambin’s booklet was then used throughout Europe to refer to supporting figures of any kind, Atlases and Caryatids as well as Herms. The extent of the “diversity” of the different Terms is demonstrated *inter alia* by the print series of Du Cerceau and Vredeman de Vries. That Sambin has the Terms “reduced in order” means that he has associated them with the orders of columns, namely with the orders as they were treated by De l’Orme: thus some unorthodox variants are added to the five *genera* first pub-



lished by Serlio. The trained observer may ask here, what Sambin may mean when he claims to show unorthodox variants of Serlio's Terms, which are unconventional variants by definition. The question remains unanswered. Sambin has added nothing more than a dedication to the plates. It is addressed to Léonor Chabot, count of Charny, *lieutenant-général* to the government of Burgundy, for whom Sambin modernized the château de Raon in Franche-Comté (from 1571) where he, as a Protestant sympathizer, took refuge after the Saint Bartholomew's day massacre. The dedication contains no introduction to the matter of the booklet in the man-

ner of the preface of Vignola's book on columns, but states only that the booklet belongs to the field of architecture. Moreover, it employs the usual phrases for dedications or prefaces in a most exaggerated tone: Sambin does not want to stand before posterity as a person who has spent his life in vain and who has done nothing that could bring benefit to society. In order to prevent "ce silence brutal & pour ne tomber au sepulchre d'inutilité", he offers mankind something of his personal knowledge about architecture.

Sambin assigns to each order of columns three pairs of supporting figures, almost each pair (with two exceptions) consisting of a male and a female figure. Each pair of figures has a short legend. The first order is called "Tuscan, autrement rustique" (as in Serlio); a man "fort et robuste" is said to belong to it. The Doric order should be like a "fort grand homme", the Ionic "assez cogneu par son nom" – which might mean that, as with Shute, it is associated to Juno. The Corinthian instead "ressemble a une jeune pucelle à cause de sa beauté & delicatesse". The Composite is supposed to be made up of all the preceding four orders. The three last pairs are completely of his own invention and allegedly composed of the five previous ones.

Sambin claims that supporting figures obey the same principles as the orders of columns do, which would mean that they get richer and more slender or more elegant from order to order. And indeed, they become increasingly cluttered with attributes from order to order, but also within each order of columns. Moreover, Sambin constantly asserts that the figures should have regular proportions. He does not explain what these proportions are supposed to be, but the connection with the orders of columns suggests that they become increasingly slender. Almost as consistently, Sambin maintains that he had designed his figures according to antique models. But he leaves open what his models were.

In reality, the illustrations reveal only in a few exceptional cases very vague references to ancient models. It is obvious that the vast majority of the figures are distinctly different from those of antiquity. They also differ from the typical Renaissance supporting figures. Some indi-

vidual motifs have parallels in Du Cerceau's engravings of Terms or in book title pages (such as those of the publisher Guillaume Rouillé mentioned above). All in all, the stucco decoration invented for Francis I<sup>st</sup> at Fontainebleau has the closest links with Sambin's figures. The highly original Terms of the Chambre du Roi<sup>14</sup> obviously inspired the disorderly figures at the end of Sambin's booklet. Sambin has pushed the surprise effect of novelty even further using in the title page very common and restrained – almost old fashioned – supporting figures, in contrast to those represented in his plates (fig. 7). Their style has been compared to supporting figures by Virgil Solis (1550) and even to the series of the "Neuf Preux and Neuves Preuses" by Hans Burgkmair (1516)<sup>15</sup>. Sambin's supporting figures have neither capitals nor bases. Only the entablatures produce a vague connection with the orders of columns. Rustication indicates that the first figures belong to the Tuscan or Rustic order and variants of triglyphs refer to the Doric order; more specific components of the orders do not occur in the entablatures (fig. 8-12). Furthermore the proportions of the figures do not reveal a connection with the orders of columns. They do not become increasingly delicate and slender as do the orders of columns. The only element they have in common with the orders is that they are, as Sambin says, increasingly richly decorated, i.e. provided with more and more decorative elements.

The figures increasingly combine elements from nature and, in the end, include mythical creatures, such as Satyrs. The first Terms are not, as usual, independent from the base, but grow out of stone somewhat analogously to the Herm of Du Cerceau growing out of a tree trunk or to Daphne transforming into a tree (fig. 8). In some respects the last composite woman resembles the allegory of nature which Tribolo had sculpted in 1528 for Francis I<sup>st</sup>, preserved in Fontainebleau<sup>16</sup>. The growing connection with nature has no parallel in the orders of columns whose sequence, as a matter of fact, is increasingly dissociated from nature and the primordial way of building or dwelling.

What the many other decorative elements of the figures might mean is often hard to guess – at least nowadays;

the French lawyer and man of letters Nicolas Catherinot gave the impression that they were obvious to him, but he specified only what the figures of the first three orders of columns represent<sup>17</sup>. Many of the decorative elements refer to eroticism or sensuality. The Terms of the Chambre du Roi at Fontainebleau stood between tableaux with scenes of love and can be identified with the gods of nature such as Priapus, Ceres, Cybele and Bacchus. Perhaps it is unnecessary to look for precise interpretations of Sambin's figures. In the 16<sup>th</sup> century, natural symbols and mythical natural creatures such as Satyrs were used in contexts which now seem quite surprising, e.g. Rouillé has Satyrs on the title pages of the various treatises published by him (fig. 2), satyrs appear also in the title page of Du Choul's *Discorso della religione antica de Romani*; Du Cerceau combines Satyrs with the Solomonic order of columns; mermaids and satyrs appear even in the framework of a domestic altarpiece made of alabaster in the Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam (Mechelen, circa 1550), representing the Last Supper.

As the Tuscan order of columns is earthy and coarse, Sambin represents the first Tuscan couple only roughly worked out and overgrown by grass with various insects crawling over them (fig. 8). Such supports could be painted, but hardly moulded in stone. Thus, right at the beginning, Sambin shows that he does not keep the promise given in the title of his booklet: to treat supporting figures that could be used in architecture.

According to Catherinot, the Tuscan figures are Atlas and Atlantide, Le Dolente and La Dolente, as well as La Nudité (fig. 8-9). The designation as Atlas is certainly inspired by Shute, but the coarse man is far from looking like the strong bearer of the universe, although Sambin characterises him as "fort et robust". The only figures of Sambin that might awake a vague association with antiquity are those of the second and third Tuscan couple (fig. 9). With regard to the principle of increasing decor, one can understand them as the simplest type of Term, in so far as they are (almost) naked and decorative elements are missing.

In the Doric order Hercules is depicted with a lion's skin signifying his strength (fig. 10). This is the usual Her-

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LA DIVERSITE

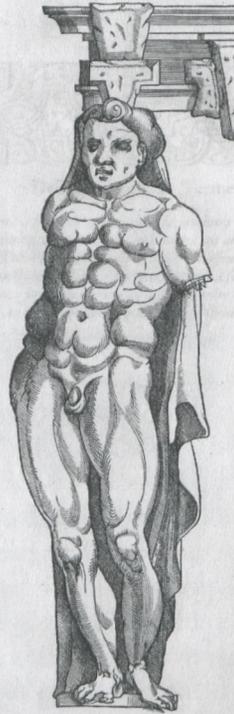
Portrait du 1. Terme.



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LA DIVERSITE

Portrait du 2. Terme.



- 8. Hugues Sambin, *Male Figure Grown out of a Rock from the first Tuscan Couple*, woodcut from *Oeuvre de la diversité des Termes*, Lyon, 1572
- 9. Hugues Sambin, *Naked Male Figure from the third Tuscan Couple*, woodcut from *Oeuvre de la diversité des Termes*, Lyon, 1572
- 10. Hugues Sambin, *Herculean Male Figure from the first Doric Couple*, woodcut from *Oeuvre de la diversité des Termes*, Lyon, 1572
- 11. Hugues Sambin, «Mellow and effeminate» *Male Figure from the first Corinthian Couple*, woodcut from *Oeuvre de la diversité des Termes*, Lyon, 1572

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Portrait du 4. Terme.



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Portrait du 10. Terme.



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culean connotation, and the powerful hero resembles the Doric figure of Shute. However, it is quite surprising that Sambin assigns the distinguishing attribute of the “fort grand homme”, the lion’s skin, to him as well as to his female counterpart. Catherinot identifies her with Deianira, though she was neither involved with lions nor lion-hearted. In contrast to this vigorous couple, the next pair, both the man and the woman, bear flower garlands as a sign of their “fort bonne grace”. Catherinot calls them “le Faineant & la Faineante”. Ironically, Sambin recommends these ridiculous figures to the “excellent architects” more than any others for imitation. The third pair, according to Catherinot, represents Adam and Eve, perhaps because of the presence of a serpent; but the parents of mankind have never been represented elsewhere in such a manner.

The first Ionic pair is bound at their legs; they let their heads hang down sadly. Catherinot describes them as “le captife & la captive”, as he would if he were referring to the Persians and the women of Caryae. The captions promise that the Ionic figures are going to become increasingly graceful, but the oath is not honoured. The male term of the second ionic couple is quite obviously sleepy or in a bad mood while a dove – perhaps an allusion to his female counterpart – pecks at his genitals, trying to awake his passion. The last Ionic couple consists of a woman carrying two children on her shoulders and a Y-shaped term combining a male and a female figure, the latter can perhaps be associated to Juno as the goddess of marriage.

The Corinthian figures have even more decorative elements. The women are young according to the doctrine of the Corinthian column, but the men all look old and grumpy. The female figure of the first pair wears a coat of arms on her chest designating her, perhaps, as an allegory of love raising a trophy as a sign of her victory. The male counterpart has a representation of *Fama* under his genitals, trumpeting out the fame of lust; he is said to resemble the effeminate deities that Shute associates with the Ionica and Corinthia (fig. 11). Sambin claims that: “il se represente mol & effeminé & son regard ne doit estre aussi hommasse & farouche de tout,

que les precedens”. This commentary is completely paradoxical: since in reality the figure is a gloomy looking old man with a long beard.

The female figure of the third couple is decorated with deer antlers and the breasts of the Ephesian Artemis, apparently attributes of Diana. Incidentally, the Corinthian couples are mostly adorned with Satyrs, Centaurs, sea monsters and other mythical creatures associated with nature, probably signifying that the love expressed by the figures gets wilder and wilder from order to order. Despite the obvious changes of their appearance, the accompanying caption states that the figures shown here would hardly differ from the preceding couples “sinon en l’embellissement, aussi mignonement recherché qu’il est possible”. This commentary is contradictory, too.

According to the doctrine of columns, the Composite order combines elements of the other orders, such as the scrolls of the Ionic capital with the *Calathos* of the Corinthian capital. Sambin explains that his Composite figures instead combine the proportions of the first four orders. How this might be possible is a mystery, and Sambin does not reveal the secret. His captions, on the contrary, only add rhetorical fog: “& n’a rien en luy, dont les portions de la symmetrie curieusement recherchee, ne se retrouvent es dicts quatre premiers ordres, l’antique en a usé comme d’une fort belle & luy a donné sa particuliere proportion”.

Sambin’s assertion that the final couples, which are not connected to the orders of columns, are composed of the five ancient orders, is by no means confirmed by the illustrations. Most of the figures are vigorously animated Satyrs playing with wild mythical creatures (fig. 12). Here, for the first time, bacchic attributes appear, mainly, as with the Della Valle Satyrs, the wine. Four figures seem to indicate that antiquity was taken as a model. Two of them include the Three Graces, one is connected to the Roman She-wolf, another bears a city in her arms and just underneath has many breasts with children sucking on them. Here, for once, the meaning is, at least indirectly, explained: “Le superbe enrichissement dont est ornee ceste troisieme sorte de Composite, est asses



pour faire admirer les curieux de l'antiquité & leur faire à croire que toute la perfection des ouvrages de notre temps, ne sont sinon les despoilles que nous prenons à la desrobee des vieilles & antiques architectures. Aussi à la verité, qui la considerera bien : la trouvera excellent". In general, Sambin's captions are quite trivial. They hardly contain any concise information and sometimes clearly contradict the illustrations. They are indulging in rhetoric and overflow with self-praise. Again and again, Sambin assures us how beautiful his supporting figures would be in architecture. To express the grace of the sec-

ond Ionic couple with the drowsy old man whose genitals are being pecked at by the pigeon, Sambin adopts a classical phrase otherwise used to describe overwhelming or unspeakably great effects (as for example by Serlio for the effect of the interior of the Pantheon): this sort of Ionica "denote bien, ie ne scay quoy de gracieux à la vue". Sambin's illustrations have very rarely inspired architectural design, and their influence on the fine arts including furniture carpentry was equally limited.

Rather than intending to discredit Sambin's booklet, my detailed description is intended as a warning against taking it too seriously. I think that Sambin has deliberately shaped his booklet in this form. There is evidence that he was well acquainted with the theoretical background of the orders of columns: this is indicated by the connection of special figures to the orders of columns which Shute had invented and by the addition of the free variants to the five orders of columns according to De l'Orme, in detail: the Doric Hercules and the Ionic figures bound like prisoners. Moreover, the engravings monogrammed H. S. correctly represent parts of antique columns and ancient gods as supporting figures with clear attributes. These details are obvious references to the doctrine of columns.

In his explanation of the first Tuscan couple, Sambin demonstrates that he had deep insight into architectural theory and its historical background. But he does so inconspicuously by giving a hint that is recognisable only for connoisseurs. He writes: "Ce premier Terme est appellé Tuscan, autrement rustique, il represente un homme fort & robuste, bien membru & aussi à cause qu'il y a peu d'enrichissement en iceluy : quand au surplus, il consiste des vrayes proportions dont usoyent le antiques, & principalement les Romains & Venetiens...". The connection of the Tuscan order with the Rustic was known to everyone acquainted with architectural theory. The reference to antiquity is constantly repeated in the booklet, as I have already mentioned. However, no written commentary has so far been able to elucidate why, in addition to the ancient Romans, the ancient "Venetians" are specifically said to have used the Tuscan or Rustic order with the true proportions. The

answer can be found in Andrea Palladio's *Quattro libri* (1570)<sup>18</sup>. The "Venetians" are, of course, not the citizens of Venice, as the lagoon city has no great ancient history, but the inhabitants of the territory of the Republic of Venice, where there are many antique monuments. Verona was famous for having the second largest number of antiquities after Rome. This does not in itself affect the theory of architecture – France also boasted about her many antiquities. However, Palladio shapes the Tuscan order not in the common way represented by Serlio, Vignola and others but, as he expressly says, after the model of the Arena of Verona and that of Pola which then appeared to be very similar in style to each other as they were both covered with a vigorous Rustication and had an unorthodox articulation akin to the Doric order. The reason for Palladio's exceptional approach was that on the basis of a fake document the Arena of Verona had recently been dated so early that it could be placed in the Etruscan tradition<sup>19</sup>. With his indirect reference to Palladio, Sambin points out that he had already attentively studied the *Quattro libri*, although they had appeared only two years before he published his own booklet (which, I suppose only a few of his French contemporaries had).

Sambin's booklet belongs to the art practice called "serio ludere" (to play seriously). What François Rabelais writes in the Prologue of *Gargantua et Pantagruel* may also apply to Sambin: Rabelais compares his novel with Socrates, "sans controverse prince des philosophes", who, however, externally appeared to be primitive and ridiculous like a Silenus. The same is said to be true of the little boxes of pharmacists, "pinctes au dessus de figures joyeuses et frivoles, comme de Harpies, Satyres, oysons bridez, lievres cornuz, canes bastées, boucqs volans, cerfz limonniers, et aultres telles pinctures contrefaites à plaisir pour exciter le monde à rire. Quel fut Silene maistre du bon Bacchus : mais au dedans l'on reservoit les fines drogues...".

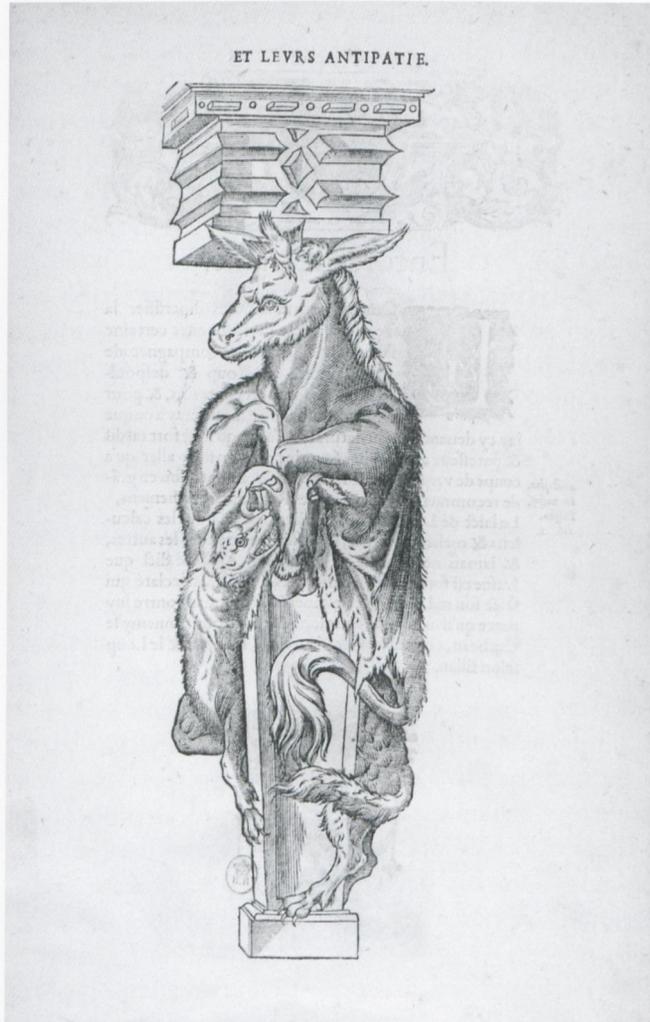
Sambin parodies the conventional theory of columns, especially the illustrations assigning concrete figures to the orders of columns in John Shute's book on columns, but also in general the permanent discussion of "correct" forms of columns. Some, such as Serlio, claimed apodictically

that the indications of Vitruvius were definitely binding, others, like Vignola, adhered to the ancient spolia, or, like Palladio, intended that the rules derived from a discretely chosen selection of Vitruvius' indications were to be combined with the forms of ancient spolia<sup>20</sup>. The different attitudes could be justified by the current ideas of the development of architecture in the course of history. But in the case of the selection of what should be exemplary, the theoretical problem remained that it was unclear on what generally valid reasons the adopted norm should be based. Ultimately, the discussion could not come to a serious conclusion.

Moreover, Sambin's booklet appears to be a satire on the endless number of treatises on the true proportions of man<sup>21</sup>. In the dedication, and on 12 of the 18 plates, it is asserted that the curious figures have the correct proportions, "les portions de la symetrie curieusement recherchée". The subject of true human proportions has over and over again been dealt with in architectural theory, but also in other writings (such as in Mario Equicola's *Libro di natura d'amore*, 1525<sup>22</sup>). Vitruvius as well as other ancient authors and fake sources (Pseudo-Varro) were at the basis of this. Also in this case, there were contradictory statements. Moreover, the ideal proportions of man were seen as the reduced image of the spherical harmony. God had defined these ideal proportions in the creation. Therefore, they should be exemplary for architecture.

This worldview was first presented in detail in France in the French edition of the architectural treatise of Diego de Sagredo, which saw five editions before Sambin published his booklet<sup>23</sup>. De l'Orme insisted on the subject more than any other early architectural theorist<sup>24</sup>. While Sagredo appealed to ancient architecture for this ideology, De l'Orme also relied on the Bible – Noah's Ark, the Tabernacle of Moses and Solomon's Temple. In the *Premier tome de l'architecture*, he announced that he was going to publish a second volume on architecture, which would be devoted to the proportions given by God as the ultimate ratio of architectural principles. He asserts that, given the divine nature of this guidance, all discussions about ideal proportions would be superfluous.

13. Joseph Boillot, *Donkey with a Wolf and a Raven as Adornment of a Stable page*, woodcut from *Nouveaux pourtraitz et figures de termes...*, Langres, 1592
14. Hans Holbein the Younger, «*Erasmus im Gehäuse*», 1540/41, München, Staatliche Graphische Sammlung



Albrecht Durer's treatise on the human proportions (1528), which spread rapidly throughout Europe, was, however, opposed to this view, as it does not propose a single binding ideal but describes different proportional variants as they occur in reality. If one wants to establish a political direction in Sambin's satirical affirmation of ideal proportions, then it might be said that it was directed against De l'Orme, who announced his book on divine proportion in a dedication to Catherine de' Medici, who initiated the Saint Bartholomew's day massacre.

At its time the wit of Sambin's publication was well understood: the booklet on supporting figures that Joseph Boillot published in 1592 proves this<sup>25</sup>. It claims to be intended for the use of architects as well, but is actually a satire on human characters. Following the discourse of Vitruvius about what is appropriate in mural painting, where centaurs are also mentioned as supporting figures, Boillot invents animal supports, and the animals represent the different types of human character (fig. 13). This excessive idea with its amusing explanations had more appeal than Sambin's. Boillot's booklet was reprinted

several times, translated into German (1604) and even adapted into a “real” architectural treatise, where the animals become symbols of sacrifice<sup>26</sup>. But this is a theme in itself. Instead of discussing it further, I would like to conclude with some general observations that place Sambin and Boillot in a wider context.

The sage-folie is well known to be an essential part of Renaissance culture. Humanism remains obscure, until we take into account paradoxical or ironic intentions<sup>27</sup>. The attitude vacillating between serious and non-serious is also found in the visual arts and in architecture. There were whole treatises on the subject, for example the *De Sermone*, which Giovanni Pontano published in 1499. Baldassare Castiglione’s *Cortegiano* and similar books treat the subject at length as an element of elegant behaviour which cultured men should master. Many writings of the Renaissance thrive on wit and irony, even when they are meant to be taken seriously. Famous examples of this are Alberti’s parodistic treatise *Momus*, on the Prince, Erasmus’ of Rotterdam’s *In praise of folly* and Thomas More’s *Utopia*, the apotheosis of all Renaissance literature. France was particularly prominent in this genre. Montaigne’s typical style is shaped by “seriously playing”. Rabelais pushes wit and burlesque to an unrivaled height in *Gargantua et Pantagruel* where he parodies the Arthurian romance<sup>28</sup>. Wit and irony have occasionally made their appearance even in scientific and didactic literature. In their time, most famous examples of this are Filippo Beroaldo’s commentary on Apuleius (1500)<sup>29</sup> and the *Linguae latinae exercitatio*, which Jean Louis Vives wrote in 1539 for the Habsburg hereditary-prince Philip II, later King of Spain. Here Vives invents *inter alia* a dialogue on the house conducted by Vitruvius, Alberti and Fra Giocondo where Fra Giocondo points to the peristyle: “What high columns, what a majestic portico! See how these Atlases and Caryatids demonstrate how they endeavor to support the building so that it does not collapse, while in reality they do nothing”. And Alberti replies: “There are many such people who seem to be doing great things while they live idle and lazy: drones that have the pleasure of the work of others...”<sup>30</sup>.

Examples can also be found in art history texts (i.e. the *Vite* of Vasari) and in the theory of architecture, at least, I think, in that of Alberti. For those who, on account of the measured seriousness of *De re aedificatoria*, might not believe my unfamiliar judgment, I give a brief example: “We are assured that the pediments convey so much dignity to buildings that even the ethereal domicile of Jupiter could not be imagined without gables – though it does not rain there”<sup>31</sup>. Antiquity was a model for the Renaissance also in this area: Plato, Apuleius, Lucian, and others had taught the art of “serio ludere”.

In order to fully assess Sambin’s booklet, one should also consider the sonnet following the dedication, which celebrates the work in an exaggerated ironic manner. It was composed by Étienne Tabourot, the author of the *Bigarrueries*, the first book on witty plays on words published during the Renaissance<sup>32</sup>. At the beginning the sonnet provides the only really concise information of the booklet, explaining for the first time in architectural literature where the expression “Term” is derived from: that is to say from the Latin term “Terminus” signifying boundary stone. The designation recalls the episode of the Roman king Tarquinius, who for the purpose of consecrating the Capitol to the triad of supreme gods, destroyed many holy shrines until he got to that of the god Terminus, who refused to retreat by saying “concedo nulli” – I yield to no one<sup>33</sup>. The phrase became famous. Erasmus of Rotterdam chose it as his motto<sup>34</sup> (fig. 14). Tabourot, however, provides this explanation, not to characterise Sambin’s mental attitude, nor to supplement the theory of architecture with the historical knowledge that John Shute had requested, but merely to present a puzzle on the word “terminus” posed by Aulus Gellius (*Noctes Atticae* 12.6.2) and to create a funny play on words in perfect *Bigarrueries* style in praise of Sambin’s booklet:

“Ainsi, mon cher Sambin, la perle de nostre aage,  
Il est facile à voir, que le divin ouvrage  
Des Termes que tu fais, en tel honneur sera :  
Qu’il ne cederà point aux ouvrages sa gloire,  
Lesquels anciennement & de nostre memoire,  
Ont iamais esté faits & iamais on fera”.

## NOTES

- <sup>1</sup> PHILANDRIER 1544, p. 3-5. LEMERLE 2000, p. 69-71.
- <sup>2</sup> FILARETE 1972, Pl. 79, 112, 113; the illustrations to the first book mainly in the editions of Vitruvius by Cesare Cesariano 1521, Giovanni Battista Caporali 1536, Walther Ryff 1548. See PAUWELS 2010.
- <sup>3</sup> FROMMEL 1973, Pl. 66d.
- <sup>4</sup> GUILLAUME 2010a, p. 307 : TC Termes et Caryatides. GUILLAUME 2010b. THOMAS 2013. FUHRING 1997, p. 203-214. BORGGREFE *et al.* 2002, p. 194-195. HEUER 2009.
- <sup>5</sup> DE L'ORME 1568, fol. 221v-222r.
- <sup>6</sup> VITRUVIUS 1.2.5.; 4.1.
- <sup>7</sup> ALBERTI 1966, p. 784-787.
- <sup>8</sup> VASARI 1906, vol. 1, p. 137.
- <sup>9</sup> DÜRER 1525, fol. G 4r.
- <sup>10</sup> DE L'ORME 1568, 218v.
- <sup>11</sup> SUMMERSON 1983, p. 48, 51, 56-58.
- <sup>12</sup> GÜNTHER 2011.
- <sup>13</sup> PAUWELS 2004a. BARRAL 1989. GIROUX 1980-1981. LAURECIN 1978. THIRION 1987. THIRION 1998, p. 177-198, 235-245. ERLANDE-BRANDEBURG 2001. GULCZYNSKI 2004. PASCAL 2013. GARTENMEISTER 2011. GARTENMEISTER 2016.
- <sup>14</sup> BÉGUIN 1975. CORDELLIER 2004.
- <sup>15</sup> BARRAL 1989, p. 12.
- <sup>16</sup> BARRAL 1989, p. 17.
- <sup>17</sup> CATHERINOT 1688, p. 4. Sambin is not mentioned by name there, only indirectly do the data indicate that his booklet is meant.
- <sup>18</sup> PALLADIO 1570, lib. 1, p. 16.
- <sup>19</sup> GÜNTHER 2015.
- <sup>20</sup> GÜNTHER 2015.
- <sup>21</sup> SPEICH 1957. ZÖLLNER 1987.
- <sup>22</sup> EQUICOLA 1536, fol. 77r-83r.
- <sup>23</sup> SAGREDO 1536, fol. 6r, 7 v, 8r.
- <sup>24</sup> DE L'ORME 1568, Dedication, fol. 3v-5r, 150 v, 166v. GÜNTHER 2011.
- <sup>25</sup> BOILLOT 1592. PAUWELS 2004. GULCZYNSKI 2004.
- <sup>26</sup> CARAMUEL 1678, p. 56.
- <sup>27</sup> There is a wide range of literature on the argument; cf. UEDING 1992-2015, vol. 4, col. 599-624 (Ironie); vol. 9, col. 1396-1405 (Witz). COLIE 1966. GRASSI/LORCH 1986. HEMPFER/PFEIFFER 2002. HUIZINGA 1956.
- <sup>28</sup> BOWEN 1998.
- <sup>29</sup> KRAUTTER 1971. GÜNTHER 2001.
- <sup>30</sup> VIVES 1541, p. 73.
- <sup>31</sup> ALBERTI 1966, p. 617.
- <sup>32</sup> TABOUROT 1582 (many editions). GUIRAUD 1979.
- <sup>33</sup> *Paulys Realencyclopädie der classischen Altertumswissenschaft* 5 A 5, 1 (1934), col. 781-784.
- <sup>34</sup> WIND 1937. ECHINGER-MAURACH 1991, p. 206-212.

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