

FRANCE IN RUINS: PAINTINGS BY HUBERT ROBERT
C.1786 – 1788

by

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ABSTRACT

This thesis considers French artist Hubert Robert's (1733-1808) paintings from 1786-1788, including his contributions to the 1787 Salon exhibition. This study examines the artist's major commission for King Louis XVI, the *Monuments de France* series (1787), which depicts antique ruins in the south of France. The series is compared to Robert's images of urban demolition projects in eighteenth-century Paris, which are discussed in relation to contemporary discourses relating to architecture, politics, history, hygiene, morality and social changes. The focus paintings of contemporary Paris include *L'intérieur de l'Eglise des SS. Innocents, dans le commencement de sa destruction* (c.1786-87), *La démolition des maisons du Pont Notre-Dame* (c.1786) and *La démolition des maisons du Pont-au-Change* (c.1788). Current scholarship attributes the artist's interest in painting ruins to his training in Italy and the emergence of the 'cult of ruins'. However, this thesis argues that Robert represented the French landscape using the ruin motif to connote to viewers the historical and political symbolism linked to the depicted sites. This thesis offers new interpretations of Robert's work by considering Enlightenment discourses in relation to the represented landscapes and their sites of display.

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INTRODUCTION

Hubert Robert (1733-1808) was a French artist known as *Robert des Ruines* and this thesis focuses on his key works from 1786-1788.¹ I will consider his contributions to the 1787 Salon exhibition, including the *Monuments de France* series (1787) which was commissioned by the director of the Bâtiments du Roi, the Comte d'Angiviller, for King Louis XVI's Fontainebleau residence, and a non-commissioned painting, *L'intérieur de l'Eglise des SS. Innocents, dans le commencement de sa destruction* (c.1786-1787).² I will also discuss two works that were not shown in the Salon, *La démolition des maisons du Pont Notre-Dame* (c.1786) and *La démolition des maisons du Pont-au-Change* (c.1788), which were bought by government minister, Louis-Auguste Le Tonnelier, the Baron de Breteuil.³ The patronage and display of the *Monuments* series and the bridge paintings will be considered in detail due to the respective buyers' importance and their relationship to the depicted architecture's political and historical significance. I will consider the potential reasons for the *Pont Notre-Dame* painting's absence from the 1787 Salon, referring to contemporary political tensions in the area of the city depicted in the image. Also, I will examine the later *Pont-au-Change* in relation to increasing political tensions between the Crown and the municipal government of Paris and the impact of the changing topography. By researching contemporary discourses related to the sites represented in Robert's images I will attempt to discern potential interpretations amongst contemporary viewers and show that the paintings discussed in this thesis were interconnected not only by their depictions of architecture, but also by their relationships with discourses on politics, history, hygiene, morality and social change, as connoted by each depicted ruin.

Robert was a prolific and successful artist who regularly exhibited at the Salon and his images were popular amongst the aristocracy in France and Russia.⁴ Despite Robert's

¹ Jean de Cayeux, 'Robert, Hubert', *Grove Art Online*, accessed 20 June 2011.

² From 1737 recent works by the members of the Académie Royale de Peinture et de Sculpture were shown in the *Salon Carré* of the Louvre. From 1774 to 1792 the Salon was held biennially. See 'Introduction' in Thomas Crow, *Painters and Public Life in Eighteenth-Century Paris*, New Haven and London, 1985 and Richard Wrigley, 'Censorship in Eighteenth-Century French Art Criticism', *Oxford Art Journal*, 6:2, 1983, 17-28. *Monuments de France* commission: see Marianne Roland Michel, 'A Taste for Classical Antiquity in Town-Planning Projects: Two Aspects of the Art of Hubert Robert', *The Burlington Magazine*, 114:836, 1972. *Innocents* painting: the Bowes Museum's curatorial records state that in 1961 the painting was identified by Bernard de Montgolfier (Musée Carnavalet) as representing the Holy Innocents church.

³ See Nina L. Dubin, *Futures and Ruins: Eighteenth-Century Paris and the Art of Hubert Robert*, Los Angeles, 2010, 149.

⁴ Cayeux, 'Robert, Hubert'.

prominence in Salon exhibitions, as well as his integral role in the opening of the Louvre as a public museum, and, the fact that he painted scenes of Paris during the French Revolution, academic scholarship does not reflect the full extent of the artist's innovative approach to landscape painting, notably through his use of the ruin motif. Paula Rea Radisich's *Hubert Robert: Painted Spaces of the Enlightenment* explored a selection of high-profile commissions, including those for Madame Geoffrin's salon, Rouen's archiepiscopal palace state rooms, the Comte d'Artois's bathroom at Bagatelle, and finally, the *Monuments de France* series at Fontainebleau.⁵ She considers the iconographical significance of these works, but does not examine the impact of Enlightenment discourses on the reception of the images, instead focusing on the modes of elite sociability. Her analysis of Robert's *Monuments* series raises some interesting questions about debates in pamphlets concerning the origins of the nation which used historical accounts to support either the monarchy's absolute power or the *parlements'* legislative authority. Notably, she suggests that the *Monuments* series was commissioned to support contemporary claims regarding the monarchy's historical origins.⁶ However, Radisich restricts her interpretation of the series by focusing on its display at Fontainebleau, with little consideration of its potential impact on viewers in the Salon.

Nina Dubin has discussed the ruin motif in relation to an emerging capitalist society in her recent book about Robert and offers a detailed study of his paintings of Paris, many of which had not been previously discussed. She suggests that Robert's work is 'fixated on the future' and that her text aims 'to recover the needs his art satisfied in an era of increasing estrangement from the past'.⁷ However, because Dubin focuses on the future, she overlooks Robert's skill in using the ruin motif to simultaneously refer to the past, present and future in his images of both Roman ruins and modern Paris. As a result, she argues that the demolition projects showed that 'well before 1789, Paris took leave of its past'.⁸ As demonstrated by François Furet, history books were increasingly popular in the eighteenth century and writers, including the authors of pre-revolutionary pamphlets that criticised contemporary government policies and invoked historical evidence to support

⁵ Paula Rea Radisich, *Hubert Robert: Painted Spaces of the Enlightenment*, Cambridge, 1997.

⁶ *Ibid.*, 111.

⁷ Dubin, *Futures and Ruins*, 2.

⁸ *Ibid.*, 4.

their arguments.⁹ Jutta Held suggests that Robert's representation of eighteenth-century Paris on the eve of Revolution, particularly his depiction of the ruined houses on the Pont Notre-Dame, showed a disassociation with traditional structures of authority in the final years of the Ancien Régime.¹⁰ While in retrospect, Robert's image could be interpreted in relation to the changes of the French Revolution, in 1786, arguably, the spectacle of ruined houses indicated the site's Enlightenment as the main focus of the image, but, interpretations might have been affected by political tensions associated with the demolition.

Robert's *Innocents* painting is absent from most art historical scholarship about the artist, perhaps because it was not commissioned or bought by an important patron.¹¹ While Dubin refers to the demolition she makes no reference to Robert's painting that was shown in the 1787 Salon. The image was included in an exhibition in the 1990s about representations of work during the French Revolution and is discussed by Valérie Mainz in the accompanying catalogue.¹² She criticises Robert's image for being an inaccurate recording of the demolition that seemingly failed to represent the reality of hard labour and lacked the didactic function that could be recognised in other images of work from the period.¹³ Given that Mainz's main focus is images from the Revolution, she neglects to consider the *Innocents* image in its appropriate historical and social contexts. Instead, she comments that Robert's *Plundering the Royal Vaults at St. Denis in October 1793* (1793) demonstrates the artist's regret for the death of King Louis XVI, in contrast to the *Innocents* image which, she argues, lacked political significance.¹⁴ Rather than attempting to determine Robert's personal political sympathies, I will consider the political and social connotations that Robert's *Innocents* painting might have had for Salon viewers. By comparing this non-commissioned work with the artist's images from the same period and in view of discourses relating to the demolition of the church, I aim to show that this image would have been an important contribution to the Salon which epitomised

⁹ François Furet (trans. by Jonathan Mandelbaum), *In the Workshop of History*, Chicago and London, 1984.

¹⁰ Jutta Held, *Monument und Volk: Vorrevolutionäre Wahrnehmung in Bildern des ausgehenden Ancien Régime*, Cologne, 1990.

¹¹ The *Innocents* painting was bought in 1873 by the founders of the Bowes Museum when it was believed that the painting represented a Venetian church. Its early provenance is unknown but it would seem that Robert exhibited the painting without it being commissioned.

¹² Valérie Mainz, *L'Image du Travail et la Révolution Française*, Vizille, 1999.

¹³ *Ibid.*, 148.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*

Enlightenment change and would have been interpreted in relation to wider social and cultural concerns.

Robert's bridge paintings are reasonably well known due to the fact that he painted several versions, two of which are on display in the Louvre and the Musée Carnavalet in Paris.¹⁵ Also, the bridge paintings have been shown in a handful of exhibitions, and as a result, rather than being considered within Robert's wider oeuvre they have been discussed in relation to other artists; in particular, the figures in Robert's images are sometimes associated with eighteenth-century genre painting.¹⁶ Generally, scholars have focused on the depicted architecture in the artist's images; Dubin refers to the laundresses in Robert's *Pont Notre-Dame* as representing 'picturesque routine', and similarly, Mainz described the figures in the *Innocents* image as decorative additions.¹⁷ Radisich recognised the importance of the figures in the *Maison Carrée* image from the *Monuments* series, but did not continue to examine the figures represented in the other paintings in the series. Thus, I will explore the significance of the figures in each painting discussed in this thesis and argue that they were included to help the viewer understand the impact of the depicted ruination.

In Robert's paintings the behaviour of the figures is representative of quotidian routine while the ruined architecture represents historic time, contrasting typical eighteenth and nineteenth-century images of ruins in which foliage grows over the architecture to show the power of nature over man. Michael Fried has noted that philosophe and art critic Denis Diderot disapproved of the figures in Robert's work because their seeming mundane activities detracted from the act of contemplating the depicted ruins.¹⁸ Thus, he urged Robert to learn from his contemporary, Joseph Vernet (1714 - 1789), whose figures allowed Diderot to imagine himself within the painted landscape.¹⁹ Interestingly, Fried

¹⁵ The Carnavalet version was seized during the French Revolution from the Baron de Breteuil's collection, see Bernard de Montgolfier, 'Hubert Robert, peintre de Paris au Musée Carnavalet', *Bulletin du Musée Carnavalet*, 17, 1964, 18-19.

¹⁶ Interestingly, publications about genre painting discuss the figures in Robert's work. For example, Colin Bailey, Philip Conisbee and Thomas Gaetgens (eds.), *The Age of Watteau, Chardin, and Fragonard: masterpieces of French genre painting*, New Haven and London, 2003 and Colin Bailey's *Jean-Baptiste Greuze, The Laundress*, Los Angeles, 2000.

¹⁷ Dubin, *Futures and Ruins*, 118.

¹⁸ Michael Fried, *Absorption and Theatricality: painting and beholder in the age of Diderot*, Berkeley and London, 1980, 128. Notably, Diderot only viewed Robert's paintings of ruins in Italy which he considered as the remnants of a fallen civilisation, but did not live to see his representations of contemporary France.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 122.

comments that Diderot's description of Vernet's paintings exemplifies the influence that the Whig politician and philosopher Edmund Burke's theory on the sublime had on Diderot.²⁰ His experience of Vernet's work also resonates with Joseph Addison's Whig-inspired argument from 1712 that the divine could be sensed by the overwhelming of the imagination in response to the landscape.²¹ In 1763, Diderot made acquaintance with Edward Gibbon (1737 – 1796), author of the Whig-informed *History of the Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*, which was published in Paris in 1777.²² In his response to Jean-Jérôme Servandoni's (1695 – 1766) paintings of ruins exhibited in 1765, Diderot invoked Gibbon's historical model by suggesting that seeing ruins at sunrise and sunset reflected the decline and fall of empires; that silence and solitude, which he describes as the 'poetic of ruins', could be experienced at the end of the day, or after the fall of an empire.²³ As will be shown throughout this thesis, Robert represented ruins as an associative symbol rooted in historical time. Dubin suggests that 'remembering Rome became the hall-mark of a debt-ridden state obsessed with the prospect of its own decline'.²⁴ However, as noted earlier, Robert's depictions of ruins referred to several timeframes, and arguably, his allusions to the future were about creating a new Rome, or inheriting its civility, as the British Whigs imagined, rather than seeing contemporary parallels with its decline.²⁵

Robert spent many years in Italy, accompanying the Abbé de Saint-Non and providing illustrations for his *voyage pittoresque* (picturesque journey).²⁶ Also, he studied with the French architect Charles-Louis Clérisseau (1721 - 1820) and Italian artist and engraver Giovanni Battista Piranesi (1720 - 1778).²⁷ Through his acquaintance with Clérisseau, Robert would have been familiar with both his and Robert Adam's experience of ruins as

²⁰ *Ibid.*, 123.

²¹ Robert Mayhew, 'William Gilpin and the Latitudinarian Picturesque', *Eighteenth-Century Studies*, 33:3, 2000, 354, in reference to Joseph Addison's *Pleasures of the Imagination* published in *The Spectator* (1712).

²² Denis Diderot (ed. Laurent Versini), *Oeuvres: tome iv esthétique – théâtre*, Paris, 1996, 1558, see entry on Gibbon.

²³ *Ibid.*, 352, Salon de 1765. Diderot's 'poetic of ruins' has been subsequently interpreted as a feeling of melancholy or imaginative association, e.g. Barton Thurber, 'From "Learned Architecture to the "Poetics of Ruins"' in *The splendor of ruins in French Landscape painting, 1630-1800*, Ohio, 2005.

²⁴ Dubin, *Futures and Ruins*, 5.

²⁵ See Philip Ayres, *Classical Culture and the idea of Rome in Eighteenth Century England*, Cambridge, 1997 and Frank Salmon, *Building on Ruins, the rediscovery of Rome and English Architecture*, Aldershot, 2000.

²⁶ Dubin, *Futures and Ruins*, 18; Jean de Cayeux, *Hubert Robert et les jardins*, Paris, 1987, 35-38.

²⁷ Thomas J. McCormick, *Charles-Louis Clérisseau and the Genesis of Neo-Classicism*, New York and London, 1990, Dubin, *Futures and Ruins*, 39; Salmon, *Building on Ruins, the rediscovery of Rome and English Architecture*, 43.

inspiration for architectural projects in France and Britain.²⁸ In chapter 1 I will discuss the relationship between Robert's and Clérisseau's work and demonstrate that classical ruins influenced contemporary architectural projects such as the demolition of houses on the bridges examined in chapter 3. John Bandiera has emphasised that Robert's *Monuments* series was influenced by Italian imagery, and, similarly, Dubin has noted the formal similarities between Piranesi's work and Robert's images of Paris.²⁹ Arguably, the circulation of Whig ideas about history amongst British and French visitors to Rome would have informed Robert's work. Indeed, some viewers of Robert's paintings would have been exposed to Whig theories, including British interpretations of the ruin motif, through reading translations of Addison, Burke or Gibbon.³⁰ Certainly, British Whig theorists, notably Burke, influenced Diderot, Rousseau and Henri Bernardin de Saint-Pierre, whose works were widely read in Paris around the time that Robert was exhibiting in the Salon. Rousseau and Saint-Pierre's references to the antique ruins depicted in Robert's *Monuments* series will be discussed in chapter 1 and Saint-Pierre's comments about tombs will be considered in chapter 2.

This thesis explores Robert's paintings in consideration of the influences that the above sources might have had on contemporary viewers' interpretations of the ruin motif. In chapter 1, I will discuss the impact that the artist's study of classical ruins in Italy had on his *Monuments* series. It will be shown that, around the time of the commission the edifices were perceived as documenting the political origins of the nation. By referring to an account by Rousseau and texts by antiquarians, I will argue that Robert juxtaposed the ruined edifices with classical figures to imaginatively represent the history of the monuments. Also, it will be suggested that the preservation of the edifices represented in the series could have been understood in relation to the depicted demolition in the *Innocents* painting. Chapter 2 focuses on Robert's *Innocents* painting as a representation of a man-made ruin, demonstrating that the demolition of an unsightly gothic church connoted emerging Enlightened attitudes toward hygiene and burial of the dead. The

²⁸ McCormick, *Charles-Louis Clérisseau*, 24 and 112.

²⁹ John. D Bandiera, 'Form and Meaning in Hubert Robert's *Ruin Caprices: Four Paintings of Fictive Ruins for the Château of Méréville*', *Art Institute of Chicago Museum Studies*, 15:1, 1989; Dubin, *Futures and Ruins*, 18.

³⁰ Several essays by Addison were published in French during the eighteenth century, particularly his essays on John Milton's *Paradise Lost* (1667) which was part of the Whig cultural imagination; Burke's *Recherches philosophiques sur l'origine des idées que nous avons du beau & du sublime* was published in London and sold in Paris (Hochereau), 1765; Edward Gibbon, *Histoire de la decadence et de la chute de l'Empire Romain*, Paris, 1777.

demolition of the Innocents church and, indeed, the houses on the Pont Notre-Dame and Pont-au-Change resulted from hygiene concerns relating to the reform of parish cemeteries and hospitals, notably the Hôtel-Dieu. In chapter 3 I will discuss the ruined houses depicted in Robert's bridge paintings in relation to the symbolic history of the sites. Subsequently, I will argue that the preservation of classical architecture and the removal of unhygienic, disorderly and unsightly structures, as represented by the ruin motif in each painting discussed, mapped on to Enlightened discourses.

CHAPTER ONE

Monuments de France: ancient ruins and the French monarchy

Introduction

This chapter discusses Robert's *Monuments de France* series (1787) which includes four paintings: *Intérieur du Temple de Diane à Nîmes* (fig. 1), *La Maison Carrée, les arènes et la Tour Magne à Nîmes* (fig. 2), *Le Pont du Gard* (fig. 3), and *L'Arc de Triomphe et le Théâtre d'Orange* (fig. 4). As noted in the introduction to this thesis, the series was commissioned by the Comte d'Angiviller, director of royal buildings, to decorate the dining room at King Louis XVI's Fontainebleau residence and it was also shown in the 1787 Salon. I will consider d'Angiviller's role as patron and argue that he selected the monuments as the subject of the series because of their connection to modern architectural theory, as well as their historical connotations. I will compare the series to Robert's depictions of the edifices in earlier commissions, noting the formal differences relating to the representation of the monuments and their surroundings, including perspective and figures. In order to establish the reasons for Robert's change in representation from the earlier imagery, as well as potential interpretations of the series at Fontainebleau and the Salon, I will refer to the literary *voyage pittoresque*, Rousseau's account of the monuments, an architectural text by Clérisseau, guidebook references and Saint-Pierre's response to the ruins. It will be demonstrated that, while the paintings in Robert's series were not traditional history paintings, the ruin motif was an effective tool for conveying the relationship between antiquity and the present, and, in particular, supporting the monarchy during a period of political tension in Paris.

Patronage and literary responses to the Monuments

It would seem that Robert was the first artist to paint the Roman edifices in Provence on such a grand scale. While he had painted the edifices in 1783, the later commission for d'Angiviller showed a particular viewing experience that resonated with impressions of Roman ruins painted for tourists in Italy. Also, Robert's representation of the edifices can be compared with literary accounts that allowed the reader to contemplate imaginatively the history and beauty of the sites. In particular, Robert's images relate to Rousseau's account of visiting the monuments. Arguably, d'Angiviller commissioned the series with

the intention of emulating the tourist's experience of Roman ruins as well as showing a Rousseau-inspired response to ruins that would have been familiar with many viewers.

Bandiera describes Robert's Fontainebleau commission as the artist's 'supreme achievement as a *ruiniste*, as well as his most aggressive assertion of his grand manner of Neoclassical ruin painting'.³¹ He compliments Robert on a 'new and indigenous iconography', describing the *Monuments de France* series as a 'point of departure from the customary dependence of French painters on Italian architectural imagery'.³² Nevertheless, Bandiera notes that the architectural fantasy or capriccio imagery adopted by Robert paid homage to Italian techniques, particularly the Roman tradition.³³ Robert presented two of the paintings in the *Monuments* series as capriccio views, *La Maison Carrée, les arènes et la Tour Magne à Nîmes* (fig. 2) and *L'Arc de Triomphe et le Théâtre d'Orange* (fig. 4).³⁴ Having spent time in Italy working with Piranesi and collecting works by Giovanni Paolo Panini (1691 - 1765), Robert was influenced by these artists who had realised the potential commercial success of producing idealised views of Venice and Rome for visitors on their Grand Tour.³⁵ In 1783, Robert visited Provence to sketch the monuments, perhaps under the direction of the Academy.³⁶ Concurrently, the Marquis de Laborde was also visiting the antique remains in the area and had begun writing his *Voyage pittoresque de la France*, which aimed to portray France's antique past in a similar way to the *Voyages pittoresques* for Italy and Greece published by the Abbé de Saint-Non and Choiseul-Gouffier.³⁷ Given that the *voyage pittoresque* was often associated with the Italian landscape, and as noted in the introduction, Robert illustrated Saint-Non's *voyage pittoresque*, it is not surprising that he presented two of the paintings in the *Monuments* series as capriccio views - a form of visual representation also associated with Italy.

Robert had depicted the monuments in his earlier painting, *Réunion des plus célèbres monuments antiques de la France* (c.1783, fig. 5), displayed in the 1785 Salon.³⁸ The ruined edifices are shown together in a capriccio and are surrounded by figures wearing Roman dress. This painting was bought by the Grand Duke of Russia, Paul Petrovitch, the

³¹ Bandiera, 'Form and Meaning in Hubert Robert's Ruin Caprices', 33.

³² *Ibid.*

³³ *Ibid.*, 26.

³⁴ In these images the monuments represented are not actually situated in close proximity to one another.

³⁵ Cayeux, *Hubert Robert et les jardins*, 21-22.

³⁶ Michel, 'A Taste for Classical Antiquity', 3.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, 2.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, 3.

son of Catherine II.³⁹ Robert had also painted several versions of the *Maison Carrée* and the *Temple de Diane* as individual paintings.⁴⁰ The *Temple de Diane* (1783, fig. 6) was also shown in the 1785 Salon and belonged to the Archbishop of Narbonne.⁴¹ Unlike the capriccio for the Grand Duke, this image of the Temple de Diane included modern figures and seemed to represent the edifice's actual appearance, but perhaps with some idealisation. Similarly, a version of the *Maison Carrée* (1783, fig. 7) showed the monument in its actual setting, surrounded by housing and modern French figures. The difference in representation for the Grand Duke and the Archbishop can be explained in terms of their respective viewing relationship with the sites. For example, Richard Wittman's discussion of eighteenth-century amateur historian Jean Pagès refers to 'different horizons for architectural experience'.⁴² Pagès's unpublished text contrasted in Wittman's words, the 'local and literary ways of knowing a building' and suggested that, in response to seeing Amiens Cathedral the 'outsider's more aestheticizing experience was far less intense than the insider's sense of the building as the glorious record of a community's devotion'.⁴³ As described by Pagès, for the Parisian tourist visiting Amiens the Cathedral was a curiosity, and similarly, for the Grand Duke, the painting depicting the monuments in Languedoc served as a souvenir of his travels. He had also commissioned Robert's *Réunion des monuments antiques de Rome* which was shown with *Réunion des plus célèbres monuments antiques de la France* (fig. 5) in the Salon.⁴⁴ Perhaps, in this case, Robert represented the French antiquities in a similar way to the more familiar views of Roman ruins because the Grand Duke would not have identified with the edifices in Provence in the same way as the Archbishop who lived in that region and probably had a sense of familiarity with them. Like the local man described by Pagès, whose encounter with the cathedral invoked feelings associated with God and a sense of belonging in the community, the Archbishop would have regarded these monuments as a symbol of local identity.

³⁹ *Ibid.*

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*

⁴¹ *Ibid.*

⁴² Richard Wittmann, 'Space and Abstraction in the eighteenth-century French public sphere', *Representations*, 102:1, 2008, 6.

⁴³ *Ibid.*, 7.

⁴⁴ Salon de 1787, *Explication des ouvrages de peinture et dessins, sculpture, architecture et gravure des artistes vivans*, Paris, 1787, 10.

When d'Angiviller commissioned the *Monuments* series in 1786 he had seen Robert's capriccio paintings of the antique monuments in Provence and the ruins in Rome, as well as the individual painting of the *Temple de Diane*, which were all displayed in the 1785 Salon. D'Angiviller's commission for Fontainebleau included four individual paintings; two of which were capriccio views and the figures in each painting were classical. Therefore, like the commission for the Grand Duke, the Fontainebleau series adhered to the outsider's aestheticising viewpoint or tourist-like gaze, despite the fact that the series was painted for the French monarchy. When the series was displayed in 1787 it would seem that at least one of the Salon critics shared the Grand Duke and d'Angiviller's perception. For example, in *Reflexions sur l'origine & le progrès des Arts & sur leur état actuel en France* the artist and writer Jean-Baptiste-Claude Robin noted that 'those who had visited the monuments portrayed them truthfully and accurately' and that 'Robert had not failed to present a perceptive impression of them'.⁴⁵ Although Robert's paintings showed the monuments within imaginative scenes, Robin described his work as a truthful portrayal, suggesting that like the Grand Duke and d'Angiviller, this representation complied with Robin's experience as an outsider, and perhaps fitted his imagined perception of the monuments in the past.

In comparison with Robert's earlier depictions of the monuments, the perspective in the Fontainebleau series was foreshortened, emphasising the edifices' grandeur. As a result, the figures are disproportionately small, creating a sense of belittlement. Many people had read an account of the monuments in Provence written by Rousseau in his popular book *Confessions* (1782) and it seems plausible that some viewers would have drawn a comparison between Robert's paintings and Rousseau's account. When the writer was travelling through Languedoc he was completely awe-struck by the Pont du Gard, the first monument he had visited in the area,

⁴⁵ Jean-Baptiste-Claude Robin, 'Tous les voyageurs ont rendu justice à l'exactitude & à la vérité de ces monumens; l'Artiste ne paroît avoir rien négligé pour rendre leurs effets plus sensibles' in *Ami des artistes au Sallon. Réflexions sur l'origine & les progrès des Arts & sur leur état actuel en France avec quelques observations sur l'état des arts en Angleterre*, Paris, 1787, 380, Collection Deloynes.

I lost myself like an insect in this immensity. I could feel, everything diminishing me, not knowing what took hold of my soul; and I said to myself longingly: If only I were a Roman! I stayed there for several hours in a beautiful reverie.⁴⁶

Rousseau's imagination projected him back to the past and he was overwhelmed by the fact that, although the bridge was built as a functional structure, it had been beautifully made and he was in complete admiration of the people who had constructed it. In Robert's *Le Pont du Gard* (fig. 3) a group of female figures in classical dress is shown collecting water, signifying the fact that the aqueduct was built by the Romans to provide water for the inhabitants of Nîmes.⁴⁷ The aqueduct is shown in its ruined state and no longer functional, therefore, the classical figures depicted in the painting historicise the act of observing the ruined edifice, perhaps so that viewers of Robert's image could re-enact the act of contemplation in a similar manner to Rousseau's reverie.

Rousseau had also visited the amphitheatre in Nîmes (shown in the *Maison Carrée* image, fig. 2) which he described as being more impressive than the Pont du Gard.⁴⁸ However, while Rousseau believed that the amphitheatre was more beautiful than the famous Roman arena in Verona, he was dismayed to see small ugly houses surrounding the monument as well as inside of it, which confused his experience and stifled his pleasure.⁴⁹ Furthermore, Rousseau contrasted the respect and care shown by local people to the arena in Verona with the French people of Nîmes, stating that the latter had no respect for the amphitheatre.⁵⁰ Rousseau's comments about local inhabitants' treatment of the monuments resonate with Robert's earlier representations of the edifices, where modern housing is shown surrounding the Maison Carrée and figures can be seen going about their daily routine. Also, the figures in Robert's earlier *Temple de Diane* (fig. 6) are shown with little regard for the edifice. Thus, it could be said that d'Angiviller encouraged Robert to include classical figures in the *Monuments* series to emulate the respect shown by the

⁴⁶ 'Je me perdais comme un insecte dans cette immensité. Je sentais, tout en me faisant petit, je ne sais quoi m'élevait l'ame; et je me disais en soupirant: Que ne suis-je Romain! Je restai là plusieurs heures dans une contemplation ravissante', Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *Les Confessions de J.-J. Rousseau*, Paris, 1928, 240.

⁴⁷ Léon Ménard, *Histoire des antiquités de la ville de Nîmes et de ses environs*, Nîmes, 1814, 54.

⁴⁸ Rousseau, *Les Confessions*, 240.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, 241.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*

people of Verona, and, by removing signs of modern living Robert invited viewers to re-enact Rousseau's experience.⁵¹

While Radisich comments that the commission for Fontainebleau, 'falling outside historical narrative, represents a rather surprising departure from the principles governing d'Angiviller's program of public art' (which promoted subjects from French national history or from classical antiquity), it would seem that Robert's series effectively reflected contemporary ideas through historical references.⁵² Arguably, the *Monuments* series aimed to convey France's antique past through an innovative approach to landscape painting, rather than traditional history painting. For the most part, Salon criticism in the Deloynes Collection commented on Robert's *Monuments* series in formal terms. For instance, the observations in the *Mercure de France* were particularly complimentary, stating that Robert demonstrated 'a bold brushstroke [...] great harmony, perfect understanding of perspective, well-judged light effects and a very skilful use of shadow, always new and sharp angles'.⁵³ While most critics might not have considered the series in the same way as history paintings, notably, Robin admired the paintings' didactic function because of their representation of Ancient wisdom, therefore, complying with d'Angiviller's aim to commission public art with an educational purpose.⁵⁴ He also reflected on Robert's representation of ruins in a manner comparable to Diderot, noting that 'the sight of so many ruins always leads to such melancholic thoughts'.⁵⁵ Robin's comments about Robert's work show that some viewers, including those who had read his pamphlet, would have interpreted the series in relation to both its historical significance, as well as the poetic sensation associated with contemplating ancient civilisations.

Robert's representation of the monuments in Provence could be compared to representations of ruins in Rome, namely through the capriccio technique, the *voyage pittoresque* and, as shown by Rousseau's account, this extended to local inhabitants'

⁵¹ Radisich, *Hubert Robert: painted spaces of the Enlightenment*, 107 – Radisich refers to a letter addressed to d'Angiviller from Jean-Baptiste-Marie Pierre, director of the Academy, reporting on the figures in Robert's series, assuring him that they had 'une intension historique'.

⁵² *Ibid.*, 105-106.

⁵³ Anon., Observations tirée du *Mercure de France*, 1787, manuscript, 396, Collection Deloynes, 'Une touche hardie [...] une grande harmonie, une connaissance parfaite de la perspective, des effets de lumière bien entendu et très habilement exposés aux masses d'ombres, toujours des aspects neufs et piquants'.

⁵⁴ Robin, *Ami des Artistes*, 28, 'ces ouvrages qui servent à nous faire connoître le génie des Anciens, & à nous apprendre à les imiter'.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, 29, 'L'aspect de tant de ruines ramène toujours à des réflexions attristantes. O tems! O mœurs!'

treatment of the ruins. As a result, the Fontainebleau series seemed to adhere to an outside view of the monuments that differed from Robert's earlier paintings of the *Maison Carrée* and the *Temple de Diane*. While d'Angiviller's public art commissions normally included history paintings, Robert used the ruin motif and the classical figures to appeal to a wider group of viewers that included readers of Rousseau's *Confessions*. Although the figures represented in the series are classical, they did not connote the original Roman settlers in Languedoc because the monuments are depicted in a state of ruin. Some scholars have referred to this incongruence as an anomaly, however, as will be shown in the rest of the chapter, Robert's figures related to the *longue durée* existence of the edifices.

Imagining the past and construction and demolition in the present

The significant difference between Robert's earlier representations of the edifices and the series for Fontainebleau was the inclusion of classical figures instead of modern French figures and housing. Michel has observed that, in contrast to the Fontainebleau series, the earlier *Temple de Diane* (fig. 6) and *Maison Carrée* (fig. 7) were painted 'with precision and faithful attention to detail' and the earlier *Maison Carrée* is 'shown in its real setting, among streets and houses'.⁵⁶ The earlier versions of both images depict an artist within the composition sketching the daily life around the edifices, whereas in the *Monuments* series, the artist figure is absent. Furthermore, in contrast to the earlier representation that showed modern French figures who disregarded the antique remains around them, the classical, perhaps Gallo-Roman figures depicted in the *Temple de Diane* (fig. 1) from the *Monuments* series examine the remnants with seeming scholarly interest, perhaps signifying that they were the first antiquarians. In the eighteenth century, antiquarians were debating whether the temple was in fact originally dedicated to Diane,⁵⁷ others suggested it had been a Pantheon,⁵⁸ and Clérisséau believed it was a bathing house rather than a temple.⁵⁹ Therefore, Robert's representation of figures inspecting fragments might have referred to contemporary debates amongst scholars, while also indicating that his series was an imaginative reconstruction of Gallo-Roman France.

⁵⁶ Michel, 'A Taste for Classical Antiquity', 3.

⁵⁷ Ménard, *Histoire des Antiquités*, 28.

⁵⁸ Jacques-Antoine Dulaure, *Description des principaux lieux de France (1755)*, Paris, 1789, 141.

⁵⁹ Charles-Louis Clérisséau, *Antiquités de la France*, Paris, 1778.

While Rousseau's reverie inspired by the edifices allowed him to imagine the Romans that had built the Pont du Gard, architect Clérisséau also made a link between the ruins and the Roman past in Provence, as well as emphasising their potential use in the present, as shown by his architectural drawings. Around the time that Robert was sketching the monuments and Laborde was writing the *voyage pittoresque* Clérisséau had recently recorded the monuments for Catherine II and published topographical drawings of them in *Antiquités de la France*.⁶⁰ Radisich notes that 'Clérisséau's renderings in [his] volume are archaeological. His aim was to measure the monuments, to draw up accurate ground plans, and to describe them as completely as possible' while 'Robert's representations violate standards of topographical exactitude and accuracy on several counts'.⁶¹ Indeed, their representations differed in medium and function; while Clérisséau's drawings showed the 'perfection of [the Maison Carrée's] inception' Robert's paintings depicted its ruin.⁶² Significantly though, Clérisséau remarked in his introduction that upon seeing the ruins in Provence he recalled the magnificence of 'the temples, the theatres, the baths, and the palaces of the Roman Empire', perhaps suggesting to readers and architects that building in the style of these antique structures would forge a sense of continuity with the Roman past, just as Robert adapted the ruin motif and capriccio technique associated with Italy to represent the French landscape.⁶³

Clérisséau's volume was addressed to d'Angiviller - an updated record of the antique monuments for an educated readership, particularly architects.⁶⁴ His text can be considered within the trend for architectural discourse that promoted the 'crown's effort to surpass the architectural glories of antiquity, thereby ensuring that local buildings across the realm were built in the sanctioned classical manner'.⁶⁵ The publication was likely to have been an attempt by the Academy to promote 'good architectural taste among the mid- to upper-level book-reading elites'.⁶⁶ In opposition to the 'barbarism of the hybrid Gothic-classical manner' the monuments in Provence stood for 'rational, systematic classicism'.⁶⁷ The

⁶⁰ Michel, 'A Taste for Classical Antiquity', 3.

⁶¹ Radisich, *Hubert Robert: painted spaces of the Enlightenment*, 101.

⁶² Christopher Woodward, *In Ruins*, London, 2002, 196.

⁶³ 'Qu'on représente, en voyant ces ruines, qu'elle devoit être la magnificence des Temples, des Théâtres, des Thermes, des Palais qui embellissoient la Capitale de l'Empire Romain', Clérisséau, *Antiquités*, 9.

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, 1.

⁶⁵ Richard Wittmann, 'Space and Abstraction in the Eighteenth-Century Public Sphere', 5.

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*

Maison Carrée represented the classical aesthetic upon which urban projects in Paris were being modelled, including the reconstruction of the Eglise de la Madeleine and the Eglise Sainte Geneviève. As will be discussed in chapter 3, in the 1780s, plans for the re-design of the Hôtel-Dieu hospital were influenced by the Maison Carrée. While in formal terms Clérisseau's volume has seemingly little comparison with Robert's work, his text and drawings show that the monuments were re-interpreted in the eighteenth century for architectural purposes. Therefore, it seems likely that Robert's *Monuments* series also would have been interpreted in relation to contemporary architectural discourses. Clérisseau's drawings were associated with modern construction, whereas Robert's images of ruins might have been interpreted in terms of preservation and destruction.

Dulaure notes that for centuries the monuments in Languedoc had endured a succession of conflicts from Vandals, Goths, Sarrasins, and Normans, up to the more recent wars of religion.⁶⁸ He remarked that it was a wonder that the antique edifices were so well preserved. In the mid-eighteenth century, to prevent the original Pont du Gard from deteriorating further, another bridge was constructed for transport and it provided a view over the ancient bridge, described as one of the greatest pieces of antiquity.⁶⁹ The government also invested in the restoration and repair of the Maison Carrée, and the antiquarian Millin proposed that the building be protected with railings.⁷⁰ Notably, in 1786, the state ordered that the amphitheatre (shown in the *Maison Carrée* image in the *Monuments* series, fig. 2), which had survived the 'ravages of war and the weathering of time', be restored to its original state by demolishing the houses within it, and, 'in the interest of the Arts and public instruction, it would be protected'.⁷¹ The legislation that ordered the demolition of the houses within the amphitheatre was signed by the Baron de Breteuil, who played an important role in the demolition of houses on the Pont Notre-Dame and the Pont-au-Change in Paris, which were painted by Robert and will be discussed in chapter 3.⁷² The process of separating the ruins from the daily routine of local people parallels the kind of urban improvements that were changing the Parisian topography. It could be said that, in honour of its Roman ancestors, the monarchy was

⁶⁸ Dulaure, *Description des principaux lieux de France*, 133.

⁶⁹ Ménard, *Histoire des Antiquités*, 59.

⁷⁰ Aubin Louis Millin, *Voyage dans les départemens du Midi de la France*, Vol. 1, Paris, 1807, 218.

⁷¹ 'Sa Majesté a jugé digne de l'accueil le plus favorable, une entreprise qui doit rendre Aux Arts & à l'administration publique un édifice célèbre, échappé aux ravages des guerres & du temps &c', Dulaure, *Description des principaux lieux de France*, 148.

⁷² Abbé Lavaissière, *Projet du nobilaire de la Haute Guienne*, *Journal de Languedoc*, 1787, 47-48.

protecting the antique edifices as supported by their plans to remove the modern housing, which would have been emphasised by its patronage of the *Monuments* series. Similarly, by depicting the edifices in their ruined state and without their contemporary surroundings, the Salon visitor, who probably could not see the classical figures because of the height at which the paintings were hung, might have mistaken the series for a projection of the future appearance of the monuments once the modern housing had been removed.⁷³

Robert's reference to the antiquarian's interpretation of the monuments, as shown in his *Temple de Diane*, suggests that his representation of the rest of the series was an imaginative construction. While Clérissseau's *Antiquités* demonstrated the link between the Roman Empire and modern France through architectural drawings, Robert's series showed the historic edifices in relation to the present by referring to both the literary and antiquarian interpretations. The ruins signified the progress of time, from their original construction up to the eighteenth century, and potentially viewers would have considered the monuments' future as a result of the state's efforts to preserve them. Arguably, educated viewers would have contemplated Robert's *Monuments* series in view of government policy concerning the planned demolition of the houses surrounding the edifices as well as in comparison to the demolition of the church represented in Robert's *Innocents* painting which will be discussed in the next chapter.⁷⁴

Historical association and modern politics

Classically educated viewers would have understood the significance of the monuments' construction and known about their subsequent history. Also, those who were able to see the figures closely, namely the audience at Fontainebleau, could have deciphered the complex narrative presented by Robert's figures. As will be shown below, Saint-Pierre's response to the Arc de Triomphe can be read in relation to the way that the depicted figures are shown engaging with the edifices in the *Monuments* series and his text might have informed some viewers' interpretations of the images, particularly in terms of the history of destruction and preservation on the sites. While the Salon audience would not

⁷³ See fig. 8, Martini engraving of the 1787 Salon shows that the paintings in the series were separated and shown much higher than eye-level, making the details of the figures difficult to discern.

⁷⁴ While Daniel Roche and Robert Darnton have shown that literary discourses and Enlightened discourses filtered through the Parisian social hierarchy, given the references to classical history and the potential links with urban planning it seems likely that only an élite, wealthy group would have recognised them.

have seen the figures, the well-known political tensions between the monarchy and the *parlements* might have influenced the way that some Salon viewers considered the series.

Saint-Pierre, author of the widely read *Paul et Virginie* (1787), published several volumes entitled *Etudes de la Nature*, beginning in 1784. The third volume refers to the ruin, both artificial and real, as well as other spectacles of destruction in the section *Plaisir de la Ruine* (Pleasure of the ruin).⁷⁵ Saint-Pierre advocated Rousseau's philosophy on nature, which is evident in the section on ruins, where he refers to the Arc de Triomphe in Orange. He describes the sensation of seeing a monument that had been built by the Romans and his imagination took him back to the time of Marius, who had erected the arch.⁷⁶ Saint-Pierre reflected upon the antique ruin as being a mark of good architecture, able to withstand the passage of time and noting that 'beautiful architecture always produces beautiful ruins'.⁷⁷ He also observed the well preserved features of the arch, but noted that part of the base had been demolished by a priest from the neighbourhood in order to repair his presbytery.⁷⁸ The author reconciled this destructive act by imagining that the priest had been a descendant of the ancient Cimbri (Germanic tribe) whose defeat was celebrated by the arch raised by Marius.⁷⁹ Interestingly, two figures, seemingly holding tools, are shown in Robert's image looking up to the tower behind the arch, which is actually the Mausoleum from Saint-Rémy-de-Provence; perhaps they are going to deface the monumental tomb in an act of *damnatio memoriae*, or, like the priest in Saint-Pierre's account, to re-use some of the stone. Given that Robert's series showed the monuments as ruins, the depicted figures in the *Arc de Triomphe* (fig. 4) also could have been interpreted as being the descendants of the Cimbri, particularly by viewers that were familiar with Saint-Pierre's writings.

Robert's *Arc de Triomphe* shows mountains in the background, which were probably representative of the Alps – in accordance with the capriccio technique, it is plausible that they were included in the composition even if they are not actually visible from the arch. The Cimbri and Teutones (another Germanic tribe) had descended into southern France

⁷⁵ Henri Bernardin de Saint-Pierre, *Etudes de la Nature*, Tome III, Paris, 1804, 188.

⁷⁶ *Ibid.*

⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, 192.

⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, 190.

⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, 191.

from the Alps, which might explain why Robert included the mountains in this image.⁸⁰ The Cimbri tribe ravaged and plundered the area.⁸¹ Both the Cimbri and Teutones were almost completely annihilated by Marius's army and those who survived, including women, killed themselves to escape becoming slaves.⁸² Notably, Robert's image shows a mother and her children in front of the arch celebrating Marius's victory. Also, his representation shows the side of the arch that is decorated with trophy reliefs depicting barbarian prisoners with their hands tied.⁸³

Keith Michael Baker discusses the use of the term monument in the eighteenth century as signifying 'the enduring elements of collective memory, documentary as well as nondocumentary'.⁸⁴ For example, he refers to Louis Adrien Le Paige's historical and documentary work from the 1750s which identified the Parlement of Paris with the 'earliest judicial and deliberative assemblies of the Franks, thereby proving the unbroken continuity of its existence throughout French history'.⁸⁵ The Franks were a Germanic tribe that conquered Gaul in the sixth century. Therefore, the figures in Robert's *Arc de Triomphe* might have referred to the Franks. Also, some viewers would have associated the Franks with the earlier Cimbri tribe given that both were Germanic in origin.⁸⁶ Radisich notes that monarchical apologists promoted the Romanist interpretation of history, such as that presented by historian Jacob-Nicolas Moreau whose writings alluded to the continuity between the French monarchy and the imperial rule of the Caesars, thus denying the tradition of Frankish tribal councils.⁸⁷ Subsequently, Radisich posits that the monuments in Robert's commission were represented as evidence of the monarchy's inheritance of imperial Roman rule, which is emphasised by the inscription on the *Maison Carrée* ('C.CAESARI AUGUSTI...').⁸⁸ However, this inscription is also visible on Robert's earlier *Maison Carrée* that did not belong to the King. Also, it would seem that

⁸⁰ William Smith, *A Smaller History of Rome from the Earliest Times to the Death of Trajan*, London, 1902, 201.

⁸¹ *Ibid.*

⁸² *Ibid.*

⁸³ James Bromwich, *The Roman Remains of Southern France: a guidebook*, London and New York, 1996, 185.

⁸⁴ Keith Michael Baker, 'Memory and Practice: Politics and the Representation of the Past in Eighteenth-Century France', *Representations*, 11, 1985, 144.

⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, 139.

⁸⁶ The *Encyclopédie* entry on *Cimbres* makes an implicit link between the Franks and Cimbri by noting the similarity in their dress, see Fortunato Bartolomeo de Felice, *Encyclopédie ou Dictionnaire universel raisonné des connoissances humaines*, vol. 2, Yverdon, 1775, 624; also, Voltaire noted that the Franks could be the descendants of the Cimbri, quoting Leibniz in *Questions sur l'Encyclopédie, par des amateurs*, vol. 6, Geneva, 1770-1772, 151.

⁸⁷ Radisich, *Hubert Robert: painted spaces of the Enlightenment*, 111.

⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, 112.

the notion of continuity associated with the sites depicted in the series was not necessarily as clear as purporting that Louis XVI had inherited Augustan rule, particularly given the fact that Robert represented the monuments as ruins. As shown by Saint-Pierre's account, the historical origins of the monument seemed to shape the way that successive generations interacted with it. Arguably, those who protected the monuments were associated with the Romans, while those who damaged them, either through political malice or ignorance, were considered barbaric. Therefore, if the monarchy associated itself with the protectors of the monuments, by implication, the Franks and the *parlements* could be seen as the barbarians.

Radisich argues that, in keeping with the historical subject matter of the series, in the *Maison Carrée* painting (fig. 2) the bearded elderly man depicted in the foreground resembled the well-known figure Belisarius.⁸⁹ He was a Roman general who was unfairly sent into exile but remained loyal to the Emperor Justinian, despite his mistreatment.⁹⁰ He had successfully defeated the Vandals, which might explain why Robert included the figure in the composition. Radisich notes the figure's 'dejected' appearance and considers the recoiling figures around him as evidence of its resemblance to Belisarius.⁹¹ It is only in reference to Belisarius that Radisich mentions the 1787 Salon, comparing the representation of Belisarius to Socrates, who was depicted by David and Peyron and shown in the same Salon. She suggests that the figure signified the characteristics of virtue associated with David and Peyron's paintings of Socrates. Also, both David and Peyron had contributed paintings of Belisarius to an earlier Salon, which focused on the theme of charity and gentleness as popularised by Marmontel's novel *Bélisaire*.⁹² I would argue that, if the figure is indeed Belisarius then, it seems more likely that it was included in reference to a recent political event. Marmontel's *Bélisaire* had been banned by Louis XV because of its chapter on religious tolerance, while, in 1787, Louis XVI reinstated the Edict of Nantes, restoring civil status to Protestants.⁹³ Therefore, the Belisarius figure in Robert's painting could have referred to the forgiving and tolerant nature of Louis XVI.

⁸⁹ Crow, *Painters and Public Life in Eighteenth-Century Paris*, 198.

⁹⁰ *Ibid.*

⁹¹ Radisich, *Hubert Robert: painted spaces of the Enlightenment*, 107.

⁹² *Ibid.*

⁹³ Jeffrey W. Merrick, *The Desacralization of the French Monarchy in the Eighteenth Century*, Louisiana and London, 1990, 135.

Interestingly, Robin, the author of the Salon pamphlet mentioned earlier, contributed a contentious painting to the 1787 Salon that showed the Comte de Lally-Tollendal unveiling a bust of his late father, who had been unjustly executed during Louis XV's reign. Robin exhibited the painting to 'defend a man who was the victim of the Parlement's judicial error'.⁹⁴ Lally-Tollendal had persuaded Louis XVI to clear his father's name, invoking comparison to be made with Belisarius and Justinian.⁹⁵ Indeed, further comparison can be made between the King's exoneration of Lally-Tollendal and David and Peyron's representations of Socrates in terms of the ancient philosopher's belief in the sanctity of the law and the pursuit of justice. Like the Belisarius figure in Robert's painting, Robin's portrait promoted the King's supposed persona of forgiveness and tolerance. While in the Salon viewers might not have been able to see the Belisarius figure in Robert's image, the King's forgiving and tolerant nature still might have been conveyed due to the area of France depicted in the *Monuments* series. As noted by guidebook authors such as Dulaure, this region of France, Nîmes in particular, was highly populated by Huguenots.⁹⁶ Given that the series depicted celebrated monuments in a Protestant area and was commissioned by the King, viewers might have associated him with religious tolerance. Robin's painting showed support for Louis XVI's decision and opposed the Parlement's judicial authority, which is important to consider given that at the time of the Salon exhibition, the Parlement of Paris had been recently exiled and riots had ensued outside the Palais de Justice, which, as noted by Thomas Crow, was in sight and earshot of the Louvre, where the Salon exhibition was being held.⁹⁷ As an important commission for the King relating to French history, I would argue that Robert's *Monuments* series would have been viewed in relation to the debates concerning the judicial authority of the *parlements*.

Saint-Pierre viewed the Arc de Triomphe in reference to its original construction, interpreting subsequent behaviour on the site in terms of the *longue durée* life of the monument. His account, like Robin's comments, shows that some viewers would have seen Robert's series and interpreted it in reference to Rousseau's experience and in association with the antiquarian's understanding of the monuments. The inclusion of the

⁹⁴ Françoise Bayle, *Le Portrait de Lally-Tollendal: un chef-d'oeuvre du musée (musée de la Révolution française, Vizille) Versailles*, 2005, 20.

⁹⁵ *Ibid.*

⁹⁶ Dulaure, *Description des principaux lieux de France*, 156.

⁹⁷ Crow, *Painters and Public Life*, 222.

Belisarius-like figure anchored the link between the classical past and contemporary politics. Also, given the fact that the edifices were in Provence, a Protestant area of France, the series might have been interpreted by the Salon audience as a reminder of the tolerant and forgiving nature of the King. In view of the political tensions between the monarchy and the *parlements* relating to Robin's painting, arguably, the connotations of religious tolerance represented in Robert's *Monuments* series also would have supported the King's judgement.

Conclusion

Like his many other works, Robert's *Monuments* series emphasised the historical associations of the depicted edifices, as signified by the ruin motif. The *Temple de Diane* characterised the piecing together of the fragmented past by depicting scholarly figures inspecting architectural remains. As shown by Clérisseau's text, the antiquarian and, indeed, the architect, interpreted the antique remains and reconstructed them in the present, either in the form of topographical drawings or modern architectural construction. Robert's imaginative paintings showed a similar reconstruction that reflected a history of destruction and preservation. Antiquarians such as Dulaure and Enlightened thinkers such as Rousseau encouraged the removal of modern housing around some of the monuments in order to preserve them and improve the aesthetic experience of the visitor. In contrast to Robert's initial paintings of the edifices, his *Monuments* series and the capriccio painting for the Grand Duke of Russia emulated the aestheticising regards of Rousseau and the antiquarians through the removal of modern surroundings and the replacement of French figures with classical ones, which also allowed Robert to allude to the history of destruction on the sites.

The figures in the *Arc de Triomphe* image connoted the tumultuous history of the area, particularly those which are shown with tools approaching the Mausoleum. Antiquarians considered the damage inflicted on the edifices during periods of war, the re-use of the stone to build new structures, as well as the modern housing around them as equally deplorable. Arguably, given that Robert's series was commissioned for the king, the images emphasised that it was during his reign that another victory against 'barbarity' was achieved thanks to the ruling that was passed to demolish the modern housing. The monuments were still political tools in the eighteenth century because they were a physical

reminder of France's Roman past. Robert's series, alongside Clérisseau's drawings and Laborde's *voyage pittoresque*, highlighted France's antique past and authenticated the present neoclassical taste.

While the audience at Fontainebleau would have had the privilege of seeing each painting in the *Monuments* series in close proximity to one another in the dining room, in the Salon the paintings were separated. Also, Fontainebleau guests would have been able to see the finer details relating to the figures such as the Belisarius-like man, the scholars inspecting the antique remains, the water-carriers and the figures about to damage the monument, whereas the paintings were hung too high in the Salon for the audience to discern such intricacies. However, the Salon viewer could have interpreted the series in relation to other paintings in the exhibition, such as Robin's portrait of Lally-Tollendal as well as a portrait of the Baron de Breteuil, which will be discussed in chapter 3. Given that the exhibition was held in the Louvre, it is likely that visitors would have seen and heard the riots outside the Palais de Justice, which will be considered again in chapter 3. Importantly, the Salon viewer would have seen Robert's painting of the Holy Innocents church being demolished, which will be the focus of the next chapter. Arguably, the *Innocents* painting would have been interpreted by some viewers in direct relation to the *Monuments* series, particularly with regards to preserving the classical model and government plans to demolish other structures in Paris.

CHAPTER TWO

Demolition of the Holy Innocents Church as modern ruination

Introduction

As a non-commissioned painting, Robert chose to exhibit in the 1787 Salon, along with his *Monuments* series, an image of the recent demolition of a church in the area of *Les Halles* in Paris. In contrast to the *Monuments* series, this image was hung at eye-level in the Salon and, therefore, the figures would have been seen clearly. In Robert's *L'intérieur de l'Eglise des SS. Innocents, dans le commencement de sa destruction* (c.1786-1787, fig. 9) a single figure in the foreground is shown looking at a group removing a tomb from the ground and a couple of figures are depicted observing from one of the windows of the church, creating a sense of spectacle. Also, two groups of families are depicted watching the spectacle, whose significance will be discussed in relation to varied reactions toward death. A small male figure is depicted on crutches moving away from the unearthing of the tomb and a boy in the foreground of the image is shown with a bandage on his head, both of whom were probably included to signify the fact that the parish cemetery was the burial site for the poor who died at the Hôtel-Dieu hospital. Next to the church entrance a man is depicted tending a fire, while a male figure in black which appears in many of Robert's paintings and might represent the artist himself is shown stood over the fire. The open church door shows a building and more figures outside, where the Innocents cemetery was formerly situated and, which was closed as a result of concerns over hygiene. A female aristocrat is represented being accompanied out of the church and her black dress is being held up by another female figure, seemingly to stop it touching the floor. Also, the figure in black is shown gesturing with her arm, as though angered, suggesting perhaps that the spectacle was too vulgar for such a lady.

In the background of the image two groups of figures are shown digging. One male figure is represented bringing a wheelbarrow into the church, maybe to collect the piles of wood shown next to one of the ditches in the corner of the church, in the background of the painting. While another man prepares to lift a wheelbarrow that contains stone, implying that the materials from the church would be re-used. Robert depicts the ribbed vaults and pointed arches characteristic of gothic architecture, which contrasts with the classical architecture in the *Monuments* series that, as shown in the previous chapter, was

considered by the educated élites to be the model for modern architectural taste. Cracks are shown in some of the stonework of the depicted church, some of the windows are no longer glazed and the ground is uneven. The way in which Robert painted the church resembles his ruin imagery in that the columns are shown with softened edges, seemingly crumbling. Some of the tombstones inscribed with text or figures are scattered around the church and many are broken. A bas-relief tomb stands intact, emulating the contrast between preservation and destruction also represented in the *Monuments* series, referring to both classical architecture and Roman burial practice.

In the Salon, viewers could have compared Robert's image with Pierre-Antoine Demachy's (1723 - 1807) representation of the same church in the process of its demolition. Some of the differences in their representations, particularly in terms of the depicted figures, will be discussed in relation to Salon reception in this chapter. By considering some of the Salon critics' responses to Robert's *Innocents* painting it will be shown that, in contrast to Demachy's images, Robert's was an imaginative depiction of the demolition. Also, the Salon criticism highlights the fact that the exhibition at the Louvre was a mixed-class space, which is important to consider in view of the fact that Robert chose to exhibit the *Innocents* painting as a non-commissioned work in the same Salon as his *Monuments* series for the King.

The Salon viewer and the spectacle of demolition

In Saint-Pierre's discussion of the ruin, he suggested that sometimes the sublime spectacle of destruction appeals to the cruel side of human nature, which he associated with the crowds that turned up to see public executions at the Place de Grève in Paris.⁹⁸ He noted that, while such spectacles were not picturesque, viewers enjoyed the scene of destruction because of their position of safety, evoking Burke's theory on the sublime. Dubin suggests that Robert's paintings represent the city, and particularly his views of church demolitions, as a 'theater of suspense'.⁹⁹ Like Saint-Pierre, but in reference to Burke, Dubin remarks that the beholder was able to 'spectate upon the drama of destruction' from 'a safe and stable viewing position'.¹⁰⁰ In Robert's image the aristocratic lady depicted exiting the church, seemingly in a state of distress, might have reflected the fact that the spectacle of

⁹⁸ Saint-Pierre, *Etudes de la Nature*, 185.

⁹⁹ Dubin, *Futures and Ruins*, 85.

¹⁰⁰ *Ibid.*

the tomb removals would have repulsed certain viewers. The skulls shown underneath a tombstone in the foreground of the image might have indicated the fact that the presence of the dead served as a macabre *memento mori*, and as will be shown later in this chapter, the stench and sight of this particular reminder of mortality would have been intolerable to Enlightened members of society in the 1780s.

Demachy contributed three images depicting the demolition to the 1787 Salon, showing varying viewpoints as well as his skill in perspective drawing.¹⁰¹ In one of his paintings well-dressed female figures are represented being shown round the church to observe the architectural spectacle. There is also a group of figures shown sketching the demolition, one of whom perhaps represents Demachy himself (fig. 10). Unlike Robert's representation, in Demachy's images there is no visual reference to tombs and the emphasis is primarily on the architectural structure from which the workers salvage stone and wood. The depicted figures in Demachy's paintings include workers labouring under the supervision of armed men (figs. 10 & 11). Some of the labourers are shown standing around joking, or as can be seen in other works by Demachy, such as *La démolition de l'Eglise Saint-Jean-en-Grève*, 1800, (fig. 12), they are represented relaxing or sleeping amongst the ruins of the church. Arguably, Salon viewers would have identified with the figures depicted observing in the Demachy and Robert images, rather than with those who are shown working. Seeing that the figures depicted observing included artists, aristocratic women and armed guards, the implied viewer (and potential buyer) of Demachy's image was inscribed within his images as a spectator. Whereas, the figures depicted observing the removal of tombs in Robert's image are clearly from the Third Estate, indicating that the presumed potential buyer is not inscribed in his composition.

In the introduction to this thesis it was mentioned that one of the few references to the *Innocents* painting is in Valérie Mainz's exhibition catalogue. She criticises Robert's image for being an inaccurate recording of the demolition that seemingly fails to represent the reality of hard labour and lacks the didactic function that could be recognised in other images of work from the period.¹⁰² Indeed, Robert's image does not emphasise worker productivity. However, I would argue that his aim was not to portray the moralising impact on the workers, but to show an imaginative representation that invited viewers to

¹⁰¹ Salon de 1787, *Explication*, 10.

¹⁰² Mainz, *L'image du travail et la révolution française*, 149-150.

interpret the demolition as more than simply a record of the event. Arguably, Robert's representation is more complex in that there is less emphasis on labour and those depicted observing are not artists, guards or aristocratic women, like those represented in Demachy's images. In Demachy's representations there is a distinction between the educated and labouring classes. In this way, it would seem that Robert encouraged the viewer to consider their position as a spectator, not involved in the demolition, but looking at both the depicted demolition as well as the figures shown observing.

Demachy's representation of the church demolition might have seemed an accurate recording of the process, whereas Robert's painting showed the building's decay through light effects and paid relatively little attention to linear perspective. Using colours to illuminate the church, Salon critics' responses to Robert's painting emphasised his inventiveness. A letter to the *Mercure de France* admired the use of colour but criticised the lack of linear perspective and proportion.¹⁰³ An anonymous critic noted that Robert 'distinguished himself [that] year with [his] view of the Holy Innocents church' stating that 'He pierced the canvas'.¹⁰⁴ Another critic, Lanlaire, commented similarly that 'only the interior of the Holy Innocents Church is of a marvellous style, the figures are hardly neglected, the interior of the building is magically pierced, and the point of perspective makes a complete illusion; but we reproach Robert relentlessly for too much invention and too little truth in his works'.¹⁰⁵ Terms such as 'marvellous', 'magically' and 'illusion' in the Salon criticism create a sense of quasi-theatrical spectacle. Fort argues that Salon critics' appropriation of subgenres of popular theatre, which were generally farcical or satirical, exhibited an 'ideological fraternity' between 'art-critics and the theatrical counter-culture'.¹⁰⁶ However, the fact that all sections of society enjoyed the popular theatre suggests that it was not a 'counter-culture' in the sense described by Fort, but that it had in fact become a dominant form of entertainment.¹⁰⁷ Arguably, Robert's imaginative representation of the demolition, rather than a seemingly more accurate topographical

¹⁰³ Anonymous, *Lettre à messieurs les rédacteurs du Mercure de France sur l'exposition des tableaux des élèves de la peinture à la place Dauphine, 1787*, manuscript, 10 pages, Collection Deloynes.

¹⁰⁴ Louis-François-Henri Lefébure, *Encore un coup de patte, pour le dernier, ou Dialogue sur le salon de peinture de 1787*, 1787, vol ii, 33, 378, Collection Deloynes.

¹⁰⁵ Louis Bonnefoy de Bouyon, *Lanlaire au Salon Académique de Peinture par M. L. B... de B... de plusieurs Académies, Auteur de la Gazette Infernale*, 1787, 19, 375, Collection Deloynes.

¹⁰⁶ Bernadette Fort, 'Voice of the Public: The Carnivalization of Salon Art in Prerevolutionary Pamphlets', *Eighteenth-Century Studies*, 22:3, 1989, 381.

¹⁰⁷ See Robert Isherwood, *Farce and Fantasy: Popular Entertainment in Eighteenth-Century Paris*, New York and Oxford, 1986.

painting such as Demachy's, gave viewers the freedom to exchange opinions amongst a cross-section of society and in response to a genre painting that could be compared to the popular theatre, rather than elevated history paintings that were painted for an élite audience. The Salon space was like the theatre's *parterre*, where standing spectators ignored the etiquette of the aristocratic *loges* and responded to shows in a manner similar to Salon critics.¹⁰⁸

Critics such as Lanlaire, who had written about Robert's *Innocents* painting, were known for writing comic responses, often in the style of the *genre poissard* (i.e. vulgar language associated with fishwives and market sellers adapted to popular theatre).¹⁰⁹ Bernadette Fort situates criticism such as 'Lanlaire au Salon' within a genre of subversive responses to the Salon between 1769 and 1789, documented in the Collection Deloynes.¹¹⁰ Fort notes that 'heroes of theatrical blockbusters like Figaro, Tarare and Lanlaire became protagonists of Salon brochures'.¹¹¹ Like Crow, Fort notes the similarity between the audiences of the Salon and entertainment of the fair and the boulevards, and suggests that association between the two spaces could be extended to include 'the carnival square'.¹¹² However, in terms of Mikhail Bakhtin's understanding of the carnival, rather than 'resurrecting the old carnival square', the Salon was more like the marketplace in its exchange of vulgar language in the criticism and the maintenance of public order to facilitate commercial exchange.¹¹³ Arguably, the 'creation of special forms of marketplace speech and gesture' liberated people from 'norms of etiquette and decency imposed at other times', suggesting that art criticism written in the *poissard* dialect did not so much mock the Salon as affirm its status as a mixed-class space, like the boulevards of Paris and the *parterre*.¹¹⁴ Perhaps Robert represented lower-class observers instead of educated viewers because this image was not commissioned by, but painted for, the diverse Salon

¹⁰⁸ See Crow, *Painters and Public Life*, 14; also Jeremy Ravel, *The Contested Parterre: Public Theater and French Political Culture 1680-1791*, London, 1999.

¹⁰⁹ Daniel Roche, *The People of Paris: An essay in popular culture in the eighteenth century*, Leamington Spa, 1987, 43.

¹¹⁰ Bernadette Fort, 'Voice of the Public: The Carnivalization of Salon Art in Prerevolutionary Pamphlets', *Eighteenth-Century Studies*, 22:3, 1989, 373.

¹¹¹ *Ibid.*, 377.

¹¹² *Ibid.*, 373.

¹¹³ Mikhail Bakhtin (trans. by Helene Iswolsky), *Rabelais and his world*, Cambridge, 1984, 7.

¹¹⁴ Isherwood, *Farce and Fantasy*, 162.

audience that was, to an extent, liberated from the restrictions of class, like the *parterre* crowd.¹¹⁵

Demachy's and Robert's respective representations of the Innocents church show that the demolition was a significant event in Paris, while the differences between their images might have stimulated discussion amongst Salon visitors. I would suggest that Demachy's representation was considered an accurate recording because of the architectural precision. Robert's image, on the other hand, was considered inventive and inaccurate, but, importantly, the figures depicted observing are not upper-class, suggesting that he included these figures to allow the Salon viewer to take the position of the anonymous spectator. Arguably, Robert painted the demolition specifically for the Salon audience because the removal of the church would create an urban space similar to that of the Salon in that it would become a marketplace.

The model of the Ancients – architecture and burial practice

It was shown in the last chapter that the classical architecture of the edifices in the *Monuments* series was re-interpreted during the eighteenth century by architects. Those edifices were associated with construction, whereas the gothic church represented in the *Innocents* painting is being demolished, presenting an interesting relationship between the antique edifices in the series and the image of modern demolition within the Salon exhibition. In terms of burial practice, the *Maison Carrée* image shows a tomb-like monument in the foreground of the image and, significantly, the *Arc de Triomphe* capriccio includes the Mausoleum from Saint-Rémy-de-Provence. The Mausoleum depicted in Robert's painting exemplified Roman burial customs and might have been considered in relation to modern practice in France, as connoted by the removal of tombs in the *Innocents* painting.

The Holy Innocents church was established in the twelfth century, during the reign of Philippe-Auguste, and was reconstructed in 1445.¹¹⁶ Mark Deming comments that the church was considered 'an unstable edifice, of very bad taste, and in a cumbersome

¹¹⁵ While class consciousness did not exist during this period, I am using the term 'class' to differentiate between members of the Third Estate and the aristocracy as well as the different sections of the Third Estate represented by the families depicted in the *Innocents* painting.

¹¹⁶ Jean Lebeuf, *Histoire de la ville de Paris et de tout le diocèse de Paris*, vol I, Paris, 1883, 47-48.

location'.¹¹⁷ In contrast, the edifices in the *Monuments* series, although ruined, had endured for centuries and were perhaps even more beautiful as ruins (as suggested by Saint-Pierre). Architect, Pierre Patte argued that the 'longevity of public edifices destined to persist for posterity primarily depended on their foundations'.¹¹⁸ Patte contrasted the Greeks and Romans whose masonry was built to a certain height and on suitable ground, with the Goths who did not secure the foundations of their buildings.¹¹⁹ Piganiol de la Force remarked in his guidebook published in 1785 that the church 'had always been neglected, but had fallen into an indecent state of filth, which was worsened by the darkness of the church. For some years nothing had been done to improve the light or its structure, as difficult as that would be for this gothic edifice of the most vulgar taste'.¹²⁰ The vulgar connotations of gothic architecture were confirmed by Marc Antoine Laugier's architectural pamphlet, which reflected on the difficulty of improving the appearance of such churches, suggesting ways in which architectural features such as the pillars might be adapted to appear more like classical columns.¹²¹ In Robert's image, the pillars show the stone's softness, recalling classical ruins, suggesting that only in its decay, or indeed through the artist's impression, did the church show any passing resemblance to classical architecture.

For those who shared Patte and Laugier's disdain for gothic architecture the demolition of the Innocents church might have marked a victory of classicism over the gothic style, as epitomised by the classical fountain that was to become the site's new focal point.¹²² The monumental fountain (Fontaine des Innocents) on the corner of the cemetery wall had been scheduled for destruction with the church, but it was saved thanks to an appeal from Quatremère de Quincy in the *Journal de Paris* in February 1787.¹²³ De Quincy claimed that it ought to be saved for the posterity of each century's genius, particularly given that

¹¹⁷ Mark K. Deming, 'L'embellissement des Halles', 110 in Michel le Moel, Sophie Descat and Béatrice de Andia (eds.), *L'urbanisme parisien au siècle des Lumières*, Paris, 1997.

¹¹⁸ Pierre Patte, *Mémoires sur les objets les plus importants de l'architecture*, Paris, 1770, 65, 'La durée des édifices publics destinés à passer à la postérité, dépend principalement de la façon dont ils sont fondés'.

¹¹⁹ *Ibid.*

¹²⁰ Jean Aimar Piganiol de la Force, *Description historique de la ville de Paris et ses environs*, Paris, 1765, 300, 'Cette Eglise ayant toujours été très négligée, étoit tombée dans une mal-propreté indécente, qui étoit encore augmentée par son obscurité. Depuis quelques années on n'a rien épargné pour l'éclairer & l'embellir, autant que l'a pû permettre cet édifice gothique & du goût le plus grossier'.

¹²¹ Marc Antoine Laugier, *Observations sur l'architecture*, Paris, 1765, 137.

¹²² *Ibid.*

¹²³ Deming, *L'Urbanisme*, 110.

the fountain had been sculpted by Jean Goujon who had also worked on the Louvre.¹²⁴ Richard Etlin remarked that, both the Louvre and the fountain were considered ‘masterpieces that signalled the rebirth of fine architecture in France under the Renaissance’.¹²⁵ Also, as will be discussed in the next chapter, the Louvre and the Fontaine des Innocents signified royal power, relating back to Henri IV. Just as the edifices depicted in the *Monuments* series were preserved and admired, while the modern housing around them was considered vulgar and condemned by antiquarians, in Paris the gothic Innocents church would be removed and the classical fountain would remain.

In terms of the relationship between the ancients and modern burial practice in France, Margaret Denton’s discussion of Pierre-Augustin Guys’s *Voyage littéraire de la Grèce* (1771) shows that the classical model was not exclusively applicable to architecture. The book was republished in the 1780s and perhaps would have contributed to the circulation of ideas concerning cemetery reforms, informing the Salon visitor and perhaps influencing their interpretation of Robert’s image. Guys referred to Poussin’s *Et in Arcadia Ego* (c.1638-40) in a discussion of the burial and mourning customs of the ancient Greeks who placed their tombs in the countryside - a tradition that was also practiced by modern Greeks.¹²⁶ He also noted the ‘coexistence of death and life in Poussin’s painting’ and compared this to the modern Greeks who ‘often held feasts and danced after having wept at the tombs of loved ones’.¹²⁷ Denton notes that for Guys, the Greek practice offered ‘a salubrious way of burying the dead that contrasts starkly with the French practice of burial within churches [...] where the incense that is burned there is more necessary to dissipate the foul odors of the continuous putrefaction taking place under our feet than for the Holy service to which it is consecrated’.¹²⁸ Guys ‘admired the stoicism of the ancients in the face of death, as opposed to the fear of death promulgated by the Church’.¹²⁹ Notably, Philippe Ariès has argued that evidence of piety shown towards the dead by the ancients was found ‘by the remnants of their tombs at Pompeii and by the eloquence of their

¹²⁴ *Ibid.*

¹²⁵ Richard Etlin, *The Architecture of Death: the transformation of the cemetery in eighteenth-century Paris*, Cambridge, 1984, 37.

¹²⁶ Margaret Denton, ‘Death in Arcady: Nicolas Poussin’s “The Arcadian Shepherds” and Burial Reform in France c.1800’, *Eighteenth-Century Studies*, 36:2, 2003, 203.

¹²⁷ *Ibid.*

¹²⁸ *Ibid.*

¹²⁹ *Ibid.*

funeral inscriptions'.¹³⁰ He remarks that for the Romans, the funeral structure itself was more important than the space it occupied. By contrast, in the Middle Ages greater importance was attributed to the enclosed space around the sepulchres than to the tomb.¹³¹ In the Age of Enlightenment, it would seem that, as during the Roman period, the tomb itself was given greater importance. In Robert's *Innocents* image, among one of the families watching the removal of the tomb, a male figure is depicted recoiling, perhaps in horror at the sight and smell, suggesting that the church burial was associated with the macabre. The transition from residual attitudes dating back to the Middle Ages to the emergence of new dominant views during the Age of Enlightenment is characterised by Robert's painting in that the space of the church is being demolished, while the bas-relief tomb stands intact.

Salon visitors could have interpreted the figures salvaging stone and wood from the church in Robert's *Innocents* painting in a similar way to the priest in Saint-Pierre's account that re-used stone from the Arc de Triomphe to repair his presbytery. In the same way that Saint-Pierre imagined that the priest was a descendant of the Cimbri tribe, perhaps some viewers would have interpreted the figures removing the materials to be re-used as descendants of Romans who would use the stone to build in the classical style. The Ancients provided the model example for burial practice, which also might have informed interpretations of the removal of the tombs from the church. As will be shown below, the classical model also impacted upon debates about hygiene and morality.

Changing sensibilities and transforming the Innocents site

The Holy Innocents was the biggest cemetery in Paris, serving eighteen parishes as well as two hospitals and the morgue.¹³² Prior to its closure, the cemetery was overflowing and changing sensibilities that emerged as a result of Enlightenment discourses on hygiene meant that it was considered dangerously unsanitary and was, therefore, closed. Given that the church's primary function was for remembering the dead, without its cemetery it would no longer serve a purpose and so it was demolished.¹³³ By the time of the 1787 Salon exhibition, the Innocents church had already been completely demolished and the

¹³⁰ Philippe Ariès (trans. by Patricia Ranum), *Western attitudes toward death: from the Middle Ages to the present*, Baltimore and London, 1974, 70.

¹³¹ *Ibid.*, 19-20.

¹³² Etlin, *The Architecture of Death*, 10.

¹³³ Lebeuf, *Histoire de la ville de Paris et de tout le diocèse de Paris*, 48.

bodies from the adjacent cemetery had almost all been transferred to underground quarries, ready to make way for a new vegetable and herb market.¹³⁴ Also, as noted earlier, seeing that it was a neglected gothic structure that could not be improved, no attempt was made to preserve the church.

Ariès notes that ‘for more than a thousand years people had been perfectly adaptable’ not only to the ‘spectacle of the dead’ but to living amongst the dead, which in the case of the Cemetery of the Innocents had been a lively public place.¹³⁵ Poor women were authorised to sell sea-fish in the cemetery and it was also frequented by ‘linen-maids, public scribes, clothes merchants, sellers of books and pictures, and various kinds of charlatans’.¹³⁶ Mercier remarked that, ‘our delicate ladies there walk over the mouldering bones of millions of their forefathers to purchase pompons and other bawbles’.¹³⁷ Guys, the author discussed earlier, contrasted the way in which the ‘Greeks live[d] among their dead’ with the ‘indifference of the French’.¹³⁸ Guys’s comparison brings to mind Rousseau’s comments that were discussed in the previous chapter concerning the treatment of historical monuments in Verona and Nîmes; in the case of the former, he observed that the local inhabitants had the utmost respect for the historical amphitheatre, unlike the French people living around the latter. Prior to the demolition the daily routine of the marketplace was juxtaposed with the generations of Parisians that had been laid to rest, which can be compared with Robert’s typical ruin paintings that depict scenes of frivolous or mundane behaviour in contrast with the historical ruins that surround the images’ figures.

Ariès notes that, during the eighteenth century, attitudes toward death changed dramatically. Complaints about the dead were expressed in terms of two distinct categories; the ‘violation of the dignity of the dead’ and the threat to public health. The former complaint was seemingly due to increased knowledge of the Ancients’ burial practices and as will be shown below, the latter was the result of emerging scientific discourses.¹³⁹ To the Enlightened minds of the 1760s, ‘the accumulation of the dead within churches or in the small churchyards suddenly became intolerable’, despite the fact that

¹³⁴ Etlin, *The Architecture of Death*, 34.

¹³⁵ *Ibid.*, 24.

¹³⁶ Eric Hazan (trans. by David Fernbach), *The Invention of Paris: a history in footsteps*, London, 2010, 44.

¹³⁷ Louis-Sébastien Mercier (trans. by W. Hopper), *Memoirs of the Year Two Thousand Five Hundred* (trans. of *L’an deux mille quatre cent quarante*, 1772), Dublin, 1772, 9.

¹³⁸ Denton, ‘Death in Arcady’, 203.

¹³⁹ Ariès, *Western attitudes toward death*, 70.

this had been commonplace for centuries.¹⁴⁰ Jeffrey Kaplow remarks that, according to contemporary doctors, the odour of decomposing corpses emanating from overcrowded cemeteries caused maladies of the brain and central nervous system.¹⁴¹ However, Kaplow suggests that the effect was perhaps psychological rather than physical.¹⁴² Alain Corbin highlights the fact that odours did not change, but were ‘more keenly smelled. It was as if thresholds of tolerance had been abruptly lowered’.¹⁴³ Corbin suggests that disinfection and deodorization of the city ‘formed part of a utopian plan to conceal the evidence of organic time, to repress all the irrefutable prophetic markers of death: excrement, the product of menstruation, the corruption of carcasses, and the stench of corpses. Absence of odor not only stripped miasma of its terrors; it denied the passing of life and the succession of generations; it was an aid to the endlessly repeated agony of death’.¹⁴⁴ Indeed, some of the people that bought goods from the marketplace in the cemetery or lived nearby would have been reminded of their own mortality and the potential threat to their health from the burial pits and the smell that they created. In 1781, the Inspecteur Général de Salubrité (General Inspector of Sanitation), Cadet de Vaux, no longer anticipated a ‘rendezvous’ of death on the Innocents site ‘but rather of young girls. The gaiety of youth distracts us from our lugubrious thoughts’.¹⁴⁵

Following the sudden appearance of a large sinkhole in the Rue d’Enfer in 1774, the Inspector of the Quarries, Charles-Axel Guillaumot, was made responsible for the consolidation of the city’s underground cavities.¹⁴⁶ When the Rue de la Lingerie’s inhabitants ‘found their cellars overrun with decomposing corpses’ from the Innocents cemetery, Guillaumot quickly recommended that ‘all nine centuries’ worth of putrefaction be transported to an ossuary that he proposed to install in the consolidated quarries’.¹⁴⁷ In an allusion to Rome, Guillaumot named the ossuary, ‘the Catacombs’.¹⁴⁸ Etlin suggests that the naming of the quarries as catacombs might have been an attempt to capitalise on the recent publication of two ‘highly favourable views of the catacombs of Naples drawn

¹⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, 69.

¹⁴¹ Jeffrey Kaplow, *The names of kings: the Parisian labouring poor in the eighteenth century*, New York, 1972, 86.

¹⁴² *Ibid.*

¹⁴³ Alain Corbin, *The Foul and the Fragrant: odor and the French social imagination*, Cambridge, 1986, 56.

¹⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, 90.

¹⁴⁵ Etlin, *The Architecture of Death*, 36.

¹⁴⁶ Gilles Thomas (trans. by Diane Langlumé), *The Catacombs of Paris*, Paris, 2011, 14.

¹⁴⁷ Graham Robb, *Parisians: an adventure history of Paris*, London, 2010, 39.

¹⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, 40.

by Desprez for Saint-Non's luxurious edition of *Voyage pittoresque ou Description des royaumes de Naples et de Sicile* (1781).¹⁴⁹ Indeed, Guillaumot might have convinced the government that the transferral of the dead to the underground cavities would be dignified because it would emulate the burial practices of the Ancients and early Christians. However, it was not until the following century that the underground burial space was arranged to look like Rome's catacombs and opened to the public.¹⁵⁰ In the 1780s, relocating the dead underground was rather a case of removing the smell of the dead, therefore, reducing the threat to public hygiene.

As noted earlier, the Fontaine des Innocents that became the new focal point of the square represented the triumph of classical architecture over the gothic, but it also symbolised the cleansing of the site as represented by flowing water. In Robert's painting, the church's open door looks onto the space where the cemetery had existed, providing light and contrasting the darkness inside, which might have connoted the transformation of the site into a sanitary, Enlightened place. Inside the church, Robert connotes some potential references to odour or contaminated air; most notably, the fire by the entrance which perhaps served as a means of combatting the infectious smell.¹⁵¹ As noted earlier, the male figure with one of the depicted families recoils from the tomb being unearthed. He and the rest of the family are gathered round a pillar behind the grave which the children cautiously peer round as though they are hesitant to move closer. Perhaps, he is shown recoiling in fear because he was aware of the hygiene debates concerning contaminated air around dead corpses. Also, he is depicted holding the mother figure back to prevent her moving nearer, perhaps in fear of jeopardising her propriety (be it sanitary or moral). The mother figure is dressed in all white, which noticeably stands out in contrast to the inside of the church, as a sign of her cleanliness and purity.¹⁵² Etlin suggests that hygienic reasons for the removal of parish cemeteries from the city and the end to church burials were accompanied by a new religious outlook, 'which saw death as sullyng the purity of the church'.¹⁵³ He comments that 'coffins, decomposing corpses, and skeletons inside the

¹⁴⁹ Etlin, *The Architecture of Death*, 87-90.

¹⁵⁰ Thomas, *The Catacombs of Paris*, 14.

¹⁵¹ Alfred Bonnardot, 'Iconographie du vieux Paris' in *Revue Universelle des Arts*, Brussels, 1860, vol. XI, 233-234, 'à droite de la porte ouverte, flambe un feu destiné à combattre le froid et les miasmes infects qu'exhalaiient ces caves sépulcrales'.

¹⁵² As will be explored further in the next chapter in relation to laundresses, white, clean linen was a sign of propriety.

¹⁵³ Etlin, *The Architecture of Death*, 17.

parish church now offered a “horrid spectacle” to be removed from sight’.¹⁵⁴ Guys commented that the Church promulgated fear of death but, arguably, the Church was not necessarily responsible solely for parishioners associating death with fear, rather debates such as those concerning hygiene led to what one might call a ‘Catholic enlightenment’.¹⁵⁵

It would seem that complaints about the dignity of the dead and the threat to public hygiene came from outside the market community. The impact of Enlightenment scientific enquiry meant that certain people considered the dead to be infectious and for them the stench had become unbearable. Removing the dead meant that Enlightened society would be able to react to death and their own mortality in a sanitary and dignified manner. However, relocating the dead underground might not have been considered particularly dignified given that ‘for more than a year, the inhabitants of several *quartiers* were kept awake by blazing torches, chanting priests, and carts that sometimes dropped portions of human body along the route [from the cemetery to the catacombs]’.¹⁵⁶ While Robert’s image does not refer to the transferral of the bones, at the time of the Salon exhibition the relocation process would have only recently finished and many Salon visitors would have been aware of the processions that had taken place. Perhaps, some viewers considered Robert’s *Innocents* image and questioned whether moving the bodies underground was the most dignified way of solving the hygiene problem in parish cemeteries. The spectators depicted in the image convey an array of reactions dependent on their class, reflecting the cross-section of society in the Salon. Arguably, Robert’s image would have caused Salon viewers to consider their own response to the dead. As mentioned earlier, the Salon viewer could enjoy the spectacle of destruction from the safety of the Louvre and this distance would have allowed them to appreciate the greater impact of the demolition, as a victory of classicism over the gothic and Enlightened values superseding medieval ones.

Monumentalising death, melancholy and salvation

Given that parish cemeteries were considered both unhygienic and undignified, proposals for new cemetery designs combined sanitary and moral concerns. As noted by John McManners, ‘the pleasure of brooding among the tombs [was] being discovered just as

¹⁵⁴ *Ibid.*

¹⁵⁵ See Darrin McMahon, *Enemies of the Enlightenment: The French Counter-Enlightenment and the Making of Modernity*, New York, 2002, 51 and 193.

¹⁵⁶ Robb, *Parisians*, 40.

practical men, for hygienic reasons, were proposing to clean up the graveyards'.¹⁵⁷ Some viewers might have compared the intact tomb in Robert's *Innocents* image to the Mausoleum depicted in his *Monuments* series in relation to changing attitudes toward death. Etlin argues that the shift towards the melancholic perception of death emerged around the same time that the sublime became current in aesthetic discourse. Indeed, following Saint-Pierre's account relating to the pleasure of ruins in his *Etudes de la Nature*, which was discussed in the previous chapter, is a section entitled 'Plaisir des Tombeaux' (Pleasure of tombs).¹⁵⁸ He questioned the reason for which tombs evoked pleasure in consideration of the fact that they contain a corpse, which normally would have evoked fear and disgust in the imagination of the living.¹⁵⁹ Saint-Pierre concluded that the physical sensation must be joined with the moral sentiment, creating a melancholic harmony that reconciled the brevity of existence with eternal time through the tomb, a monument situated between two worlds as the last resting place of men on earth.¹⁶⁰ Thus, the intact tomb in Robert's *Innocents* image represented the monumentalising of death; tombs would be preserved as individual remnants of the past, just like classical ruins, rather than decomposing corpses that reminded the living of their own mortality while going about their daily routine.

Patte combined sanitary and moral concerns in his architectural theories, suggesting that cemeteries should be relocated outside of the city and incorporate organised promenades lined with trees as well as public baths.¹⁶¹ Ariès comments that the 'eighteenth century authors of cemetery plans wanted cemeteries to serve both as parks organized for family visits and as museums for illustrious persons, like St. Paul's Cathedral in London'.¹⁶² McManners argues that greater importance attributed to familial life in the eighteenth century had a significant influence on reactions to death.¹⁶³ He suggests that the 'old community and neighbourhood life was beginning to disintegrate; [...] the nexus of

¹⁵⁷ John McManners, *Death and the Enlightenment: changing attitudes to death among Christians and unbelievers in eighteenth-century France*, Oxford, 1981, 343.

¹⁵⁸ Saint-Pierre, *Etudes de la Nature*, 193.

¹⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, 194.

¹⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, 195 – 'l'harmonie de deux principes opposés, du sentiment de notre existence rapide et de celui de notre immortalité, qui se réunissent à la vue de la dernière habitation des hommes. Un tombeau est un monument placé sur les limites des deux mondes'.

¹⁶¹ Sophie Descat, 'Pierre Patte: théoricien de l'urbanisme' in *L'Urbanisme*, 64.

¹⁶² *Ibid.*, 73. Also, see Richard Wrigley and Matthew Craske (eds.), *Pantheons: Transformations of a Monumental Idea*, Aldershot, 2004, which demonstrates that in the eighteenth century the cult of the saints was superseded by the commemoration of great men to show civic example, which was inspired by Roman history.

¹⁶³ McManners, *Death and the Enlightenment*, 462.

conformity around the parish church would exercise less power over young people's minds'.¹⁶⁴ He notes that '[subsequently,] death was seen, not as a public event with the whole community taking part, not as a religious crisis in which all the faithful share, but as an intense, introverted family affair'.¹⁶⁵ The upper-Third Estate family shown in fear of the tomb removal depicted in Robert's *Innocents* painting probably would have supported the prospect of new sanitary and morally instructive cemeteries. In contrast, the lower-Third Estate family are represented closer to the grave, suggesting that they do not fear death or, indeed, understand the potential threat to their health in the same way as the other family. The contrast between the two families would have shown to viewers that only Enlightened members of society understood the reasons for the closure of the church and cemetery, implying that this might include many Salon visitors.

Kaplow remarks that the poor generally believed in the cult of the saints and on All Saints day work would stop and a great gathering of people would congregate in the Innocents cemetery, where many of their friends and relatives were buried.¹⁶⁶ Ozouf notes that feast days structured the flow of time and were distinct from quotidian routine.¹⁶⁷ Therefore, perhaps the lack of a physical *memento mori* for the labouring classes and the poor would have changed their daily lives. Kaplow notes that the poor were rarely buried properly because if relatives could not afford to pay for a burial their bodies were thrown into the common pits of the Holy Innocents Cemetery.¹⁶⁸ While death amongst the poor was already undignified, the loss of the cemetery and church might have been a worrying prospect for people such as the figure on crutches depicted in Robert's image; he represents those who died at the hospital of Hôtel-Dieu and were buried in the Innocents cemetery.¹⁶⁹ The injured man is depicted as a small figure, dwarfed by the individual tomb. He looks somewhat downcast, perhaps reflecting on the prospect of not being able to be buried on sacred ground; albeit an undignified burial, at least it would have been in close proximity to the church. However, educated viewers who understood the hygienic implications of continuing to bury the dead in parish cemeteries recognised that the removal of the Innocents church and cemetery would improve the lives of the poor, or at

¹⁶⁴ *Ibid.*

¹⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, 463.

¹⁶⁶ Kaplow, *The Names of Kings*, 113.

¹⁶⁷ Mona Ozouf, *Festivals and the French Revolution*, Cambridge, 1988, 5.

¹⁶⁸ Kaplow, *The Names of Kings*, 104.

¹⁶⁹ Jacques Hillairet, *Connaissance du Vieux Paris*, Paris, 1956, 109.

least they could justify the demolition in this way, even if it was not known where the poor from the Hôtel-Dieu would be buried.

Many Salon viewers would have welcomed the removal of the dead from the city so that the new cemeteries could offer new ways of grieving, without the physical reminder of death. Perhaps the poor family depicted in the shadowed area of Robert's image showed that the uneducated classes' perception of death was rooted in medieval beliefs, in line with the cult of the saints; whereas Enlightened members of society were diverting their devotion to a melancholic understanding of death, typified by the individual tomb depicted on the opposite side of the church. While his *Innocents* image alluded to the present and future Enlightenment of the site, Salon viewers would have seen Robert's depiction of the Mausoleum at Saint-Rémy-de-Provence with his representations of classical architecture and perhaps recognised that the transformation also marked a return to the classical past.

Conclusion

It was argued in the first chapter that the *Monuments* series presented a relationship between preservation and demolition, or civility and barbarity, which could be linked to the historical origins of the monarchy and the *parlements* respectively. While in those images the damage had been inflicted by 'barbarians', in the *Innocents* image, the edifice being demolished was considered vulgar, like the houses around the monuments in Provence whose removal the state had sanctioned. In a similar way, viewers might have interpreted the demolition of the Innocents church as a triumph of classicism over the gothic. The *Innocents* image was one of Robert's earliest oil paintings to be shown in a Salon exhibition that represented intentional demolition by humans operating under state direction in modern-day Paris.¹⁷⁰ Therefore, I would suggest that Robert chose to exhibit this non-commissioned work with the *Monuments* series specifically to emphasise the relationship between the preservation of the edifices in Provence and the demolition in Paris.

Medical discourses suggested that the presence of the dead in the parish church and cemetery posed a risk to public health. The more that people knew about the potentially infected air surrounding dead corpses, the more they feared death and seemed to associate

¹⁷⁰ Robert had painted destruction caused by fire at the Hôtel-Dieu in 1772 and the Opéra in 1781.

this horror with the Church. Antiquarians and writers of the *voyage pittoresque*, such as Guys, wrote about the burial practices of the ancients, which offered a new model for modern France, especially in view of the neoclassical vogue exemplified by architecture, history paintings and historical literature. Perhaps by contributing the *Innocents* painting, which indicated the increasingly outmoded, unsanitary form of burial practice, to the same Salon as his *Monuments* series Robert conveyed the notion that the demolition of the church signified an emerging Enlightened attitude to death and burial practices. Also, the Mausoleum depicted in the *Monuments* series might have encouraged viewers to make the association between the two images in terms of an emerging attitude that was essentially founded in the customs of Ancient Rome.

The figures depicted in Robert's *Innocents* image show different reactions to the removal of the tomb, including two families, one of which recoils in horror, in contrast to the other which is shown observing without fear. While Demachy's representation of educated figures is characterised by their observation of the architecture, in Robert's image, the figure shown leaving the church, the reaction of the family recoiling from the tomb, the fire by the entrance and the bas-relief tomb were included for the benefit of the educated Salon viewer. Rather than inscribing the educated viewer within the composition, Robert invited viewers to observe the spectacle of the tomb removal and to consider their own reaction to the event. Viewers with a taste for the antique as well as those who were familiar with hygiene debates concerning contaminated air would have considered the demolition of the Innocents church as a positive change and in relation to the reform of the unsanitary and highly criticised Hôtel-Dieu hospital, signified by a portrait of the Baron de Breteuil which was also shown in the 1787 Salon and will be discussed in the next chapter. In Robert's *Innocents* image the lone figure on crutches, a casualty from Hôtel-Dieu would have been understood in view of debates about hygiene, morality and worker productivity. Arguably, the transformed Innocents site, like that of the bridges discussed in the next chapter, would become an ordered, clean, mixed-class space of quotidian routine, with a classical monument symbolising good governance and royal continuity as its focal point.

CHAPTER 3

Demolition on the bridges and re-designing Hôtel-Dieu

Introduction

This chapter focuses primarily on Robert's *La démolition des maisons du Pont Notre-Dame* (c.1786, fig. 13) and also refers to his slightly later painting, *La démolition des maisons du Pont-au-Change* (c.1788, fig. 14).¹⁷¹ As a key edifice in the centre of Paris, some viewers of Robert's painting would have known the history of the Pont Notre-Dame, particularly those who had read the guidebooks for the city. In the painting, the view is from the riverbank of the Seine and shows the partly demolished houses along the bridge. Some of the figures depicted on the riverbank are shown pointing towards the emerging view that reveals the topography of the Île de la Cité. The depicted workers in Robert's *Pont Notre-Dame* include laundresses and men transporting building materials. The Tour de l'Horloge, the Conciergerie and Sainte-Chapelle are shown in both the *Pont Notre-Dame* and *Pont-au-Change* paintings, they are particularly prominent in the latter image. Robert's view of the Pont-au-Change from one end of the bridge shows most of the houses reduced to rubble and the river cannot be seen. The workers are shown labouring under the supervision of armed guards, salvaging wood and stone. Like the depicted ruins in the *Monuments* series, which had historical and political relevance for the King, the topography shown in the bridge paintings represented power relations in the city. Also, the royal significance of the Fontaine des Innocents that became the focal point of the Innocents site relates to the transformation of the Pont Notre-Dame and will be discussed in this chapter.

Neither of the paintings featured in the Salon exhibition of 1787 or 1789. However, both images were bought by the Baron de Breteuil. He displayed the paintings in his Parisian residence on the rue du Dauphin, near the Louvre, 'where [he] gave audiences relating to official business two days each week'.¹⁷² Breteuil was Minister of the King's household and secretary of state between 1783 and 1788, during which time, as Radisich highlights,

¹⁷¹ Robert's *Pont Notre-Dame* and *Pont-au-Change* paintings, which were bought by Breteuil and seized during the French Revolution, are now in the Musée Carnavalet, Paris. Other versions of each painting were sold, including a version of the *Pont Notre-Dame* now in the Louvre.

¹⁷² Radisich, 'Hubert Robert's Paris: truth, artifice, and spectacle', *Studies on Voltaire and the Eighteenth Century*, 245, 1986, 511.

he ‘maintained jurisdiction over the health and well-being of the people of Paris’.¹⁷³ It seems that the minister’s lasting impact on urban planning and public welfare is most notable in his role reforming hospitals. Between 1785 and 1787 Breteuil commissioned the *Académie des Sciences* to investigate the Hôtel-Dieu hospital.¹⁷⁴ As a result, scientists advocated a new kind of hospital design, and, in 1787, Louis XVI ordered the building of four new hospitals with ‘superior ventilation, economy, efficiency, cleanliness, privacy and safety’.¹⁷⁵ In 1787, Salon visitors would have seen Jean Laurent Mosnier’s portrait of Breteuil where the minister is represented looking over plans for the re-design of Hôtel-Dieu and through the window behind him the Palais de Justice and the Conciergerie can be seen (fig. 15).¹⁷⁶ The view in the background is that which eventually would have been seen as a result of the clearing of houses on the Pont Notre-Dame and the Pont-au-Change. Seemingly, the removal of the bridges’ houses also related to Breteuil’s political role and it can be assumed that he bought Robert’s paintings to support his civic lectures relating to urban planning. It will be shown that hygiene debates were intertwined with moral concerns that were voiced by lobbyists. The houses and shops on the Pont Notre-Dame represented the social problems that Breteuil hoped to resolve and, arguably, Robert’s depiction of the bridge reflected the minister’s role in the transformation of the site.

Improving sanitation and removing moral vice – the classical ideal

Dulaure’s guidebook to Paris remarked that efforts to improve air circulation through the demolition of houses on the Pont Notre-Dame and Pont-au-Change were being undermined by the ‘obstacle’ of the Hôtel-Dieu, which he compared to a ‘plague that constantly ravaged the city’.¹⁷⁷ Perhaps some Salon viewers considered Breteuil’s plans for the Hôtel-Dieu, as signified by Mosnier’s portrait, in direct relation to the removal of the bridges’ houses, in a similar manner to Dulaure. Indeed, some viewers might have seen the man on crutches and the child with the bandaged head depicted in Robert’s *Innocents*

¹⁷³ *Ibid.*, 512.

¹⁷⁴ Louis S. Greenbaum, ‘Thomas Jefferson, the Paris Hospitals, and the University of Virginia’, *Eighteenth-Century Studies*, 26:4, 1993, 608.

¹⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, 611.

¹⁷⁶ Salon de 1787, *Explication*, 43.

¹⁷⁷ Dulaure, *Nouvelle Description des Curiosités de Paris : contenant l’histoire, la description de tous les établissements nouveaux*, Paris, 1787, vol. ii, 36, ‘La conservation de cet Hôpital [...] produit donc le même effet qu’une sorte de peste qui désoleroit constamment la capitale. [...] les magnifiques projets d’abattre les maisons des ponts, de former des quais et d’établir la circulation d’un air plus pur, trouveront-ils un obstacle dans la situation vicieuse de cet Hôpital ?’

painting as representative of casualties from Hôtel-Dieu and, therefore, have understood that the closure of the cemetery and the reform of the hospital were related. While Robert's representation of the demolition on the Pont Notre-Dame was not shown in the Salon, those who attended Breteuil's talks at his townhouse, where the painting was displayed, would have been aware of the hygiene debates and discourses concerning urban planning. Jones notes that in the mid-eighteenth century 'a medical lobby urging greater urban hygiene' demanded that 'air should circulate, streets should be paved, aligned and cleared of obstructions, water supplies should be improved and that the war should be declared against pollution'.¹⁷⁸ Given the nature of Breteuil's political role such debates would have informed his plans for the city, and, importantly, they would have determined how such changes were perceived.

Harvey Mitchell has demonstrated that medical discourse was an authoritative contribution to public opinion, which incorporated moral concerns and welfare.¹⁷⁹ As shown in the previous chapter, hygiene reforms relating to burial practice were intertwined with moral debates. Rodolphe el-Khoury notes that white linen and white shirts signified not only cleanliness but propriety, as a surface effect.¹⁸⁰ Notably, the inclusion of laundresses in Robert's *Pont Notre-Dame* would have connoted the cleansing of the bridge through the demolition of the houses. As shown by Roche, hygiene practices were a costly luxury reserved for the wealthy and personal cleanliness was a sign of decency or spiritual purity.¹⁸¹ Similarly, Roche notes that medical topographers contrasted the badly ventilated and crowded housing of the poor, which not only bred illness but also moral corruption, with the 'wide, healthy, spacious streets, elegant, salubrious houses, mansions with gardens, airy, clean, dry dwellings' of upper-class *quartiers*.¹⁸² Therefore, the educated guests that attended Breteuil's lectures probably would have understood the reference to cleanliness in Robert's painting in terms of reforming morality. Given that Breteuil presented civic talks from his townhouse, arguably Robert's painting was bought to support his political aims to improve sanitation and by implication, the city's moral welfare.

¹⁷⁸ Colin Jones, *Paris: biography of a city*, London: 2004, 238.

¹⁷⁹ Harvey Mitchell, 'Politics in the Service of Knowledge: The Debate over the Administration of Medicine and Welfare in Late Eighteenth-Century France', *Social History*, 6:2, 1981, 186.

¹⁸⁰ Rodolphe El-Khoury, 'Polish and Deodorize: Paving the City in Late-Eighteenth-Century France', *Assemblage*, 31, 1996, 9.

¹⁸¹ Roche, *The People of Paris*, 156.

¹⁸² *Ibid.*, 101.

While the living conditions on the Pont Notre-Dame might have been cramped and unsanitary, Allan Potofsky describes the houses as luxurious, suggesting that the concerns about air circulation stemmed from another kind of moral vice.¹⁸³ The bridge was a commercial hub for the sale of luxury goods such as fine art, books, embroidery and lingerie.¹⁸⁴ Among the *marchands-merciers* working along the bridge, included the well-known dealer Edme-François Gersaint, who, although no longer a resident in 1787, was famous for having his shop sign painted by Watteau and his business typified the kind of luxury trade on the bridge that was criticised by Diderot.¹⁸⁵ Furthermore, in Salon reviews, responding to paintings unworthy of attention, Diderot suggested that such works be sent to the Pont Notre-Dame.¹⁸⁶ Andrew McClellan notes that ‘the dealer’s shop became a common metaphor for the cabinet of an unenlightened collector or for a disorderly exhibition’.¹⁸⁷ The fact that Robert painted the structures along the bridge in a state of ruin might have referred to the enlightening of this so-called ‘disorderly’ space. As a result, viewers might have been inclined to consider Breteuil as an Enlightened art collector, unlike those who bought paintings from the dealers, and, importantly, as a rational government minister because of his role in removing the luxury trade on the bridge.

While the Pont Notre-Dame was condemned for its association with immorality, it was not criticised for its uncleanness to the same extent as sites such as the Holy Innocents cemetery and the Hôtel-Dieu hospital. As noted by Louis Greenbaum, Voltaire and Diderot described the Hôtel-Dieu as a ‘retrograde institution, unknown to Antiquity and an obstacle to the attainment of a rational, Enlightened society’, therefore, the government plans to re-build the hospital would show that it was both rational and Enlightened.¹⁸⁸ The hospital was not rebuilt until Napoleon came to power, but plans for its re-design began in 1787 that were based on the Maison Carrée, Nîmes, which was depicted in Robert’s *Monuments* series.¹⁸⁹ While it was coincidental that the painting was displayed in the 1787 Salon at the same time that Le Roy was drawing up plans for the re-design of the Hôtel-

¹⁸³ Allan Potofsky, *Constructing Paris in the Age of Revolution*, Basingstoke, 2009, 31.

¹⁸⁴ Philip Conisbee, *The Age of Watteau, Chardin, and Fragonard: masterpieces of French genre painting*, New Haven and London, 2003, 310.

¹⁸⁵ Andrew McClellan, ‘Watteau’s Dealer: Gersaint and the Marketing of Art in Eighteenth-Century Paris’, *The Art Bulletin*, 78:3, 1996, 443.

¹⁸⁶ *Ibid.*

¹⁸⁷ *Ibid.*

¹⁸⁸ Greenbaum, ‘Thomas Jefferson, the Paris Hospitals, and the University of Virginia’, 612.

¹⁸⁹ *Ibid.*, 616.

Dieu, given that the portrait by Mosnier represented Breteuil holding the plans for the new hospital, perhaps Robert's representation of the Maison Carrée would have informed discussions about the new design. The fact that plans for the Hôtel-Dieu were modelled on the Maison Carrée, the epitome of classical architecture, has little relation to the improvement of sanitation, but as has been discussed in the previous chapters, the model of the Ancients represented order and good architecture.

Although Mosnier's portrait of the minister included the view of the Île de la Cité that would have been created as a result of the demolition of the Pont Notre-Dame's houses, it was an implicit reference to Breteuil's role in the transformation of the bridges. While Robert's *Pont Notre-Dame* might have complemented Mosnier's portrait, the audience that had access to Robert's image was much smaller than that which would have viewed the portrait in the Salon. Nevertheless, some Salon viewers would have known that Breteuil had sanctioned the removal of houses in Nîmes and those with a Salon *livret* would have noted that he owned a painting in the exhibition by César Van Loo that depicted an aqueduct in ruins.¹⁹⁰ Perhaps those viewers would have concluded that his plans for urban projects in Paris were inspired by antiquity, as shown above in relation to the re-design of the Hôtel-Dieu. Therefore, the demolition of the bridges' houses might have been considered by some as being in emulation of the Romans and in terms of preserving classical architecture and demolishing vulgar structures, as has been discussed in the previous chapters. Robert's image alludes to the antique through the prominence of the arches, and indeed the ruin motif was associated with classical edifices. While the bridge that stood in the eighteenth century was not the original structure, there had been a bridge on this site since antiquity. The Île de la Cité, whose topography can be seen in the image, had been inhabited since Roman times and represented the religious and political heart of Paris.

Breteuil's decision to sanction the removal of houses on the bridges can be considered in relation to an essay that was addressed to the minister, written by the historian, geographer and member of the Académie, Abbé Jean-Louis Soulavie. His essay was published in 1784 and referred to luxury and its associated vices as a significant contributory cause of the fall

¹⁹⁰ Salon de 1787, *Explication*, 25.

of ancient empires.¹⁹¹ Indeed, the removal of luxury trades from the Pont Notre-Dame could have been justified in terms of securing France's enduring glory. Importantly, Soulavie was an Abbé in Languedoc and his essay describes his appreciation for the antique edifices in that region. He exclaimed 'O Languedoc! Precious successor of the Bourbons, one day will you be the prey of the Barbarians, like all the fallen Empires?'¹⁹² He suggests that monuments consecrated to religion or civic virtue and works of art would escape the fate of the ruined antique edifices as long as the principles of good morality were upheld, explaining that Religion and the Law would ensure the Empire's endurance.¹⁹³ His comments also implied that although the edifices in Provence had been damaged, they could still serve a moral purpose as monuments, while also suggesting that if they were completely destroyed that would mark the end of the Bourbon dynasty. In this way, his essay adheres to the notion discussed in chapter 1 that by protecting the monuments, the monarchy could demonstrate the strength of its government.

As discussed in chapter 1, in the eighteenth century the term 'monument' signified the documentary history of a site and in the case of the *Monuments* series the antique edifices could be interpreted in relation to the history of preservation and demolition between descendants of Romans and barbarians. Perhaps the ruined houses depicted in the *Pont Notre-Dame* caused some viewers to consider the bridge's history in a similar way. In the 1787 Salon, Mosnier's portrait of Breteuil holding the plans for the re-design of Hôtel-Dieu represented a link with the edifices in Languedoc. Indeed, Robert's *Monuments* series and Soulavie's essay suggest that the government was somewhat influenced by the edifices that documented France's antique past. Arguably, the planned protection of the edifices in Provence can be compared to the removal of the bridges' houses, in that both sites would become monumentalised. Subsequently, the view created by the clearing of houses emphasised the endurance of royal government and municipal justice as historic institutions on the Île de la Cité.

¹⁹¹ Jean-Louis Soulavie, *Des Moeurs et de leur influence sur la prospérité ou la décadence des empires, discours pour la cérémonie de l'ouverture des Etats généraux de Languedoc*, Paris 1784, 12.

¹⁹² *Ibid.*, 29-30, 'O Languedoc ! précieux héritage des Bourbons, serez-vous un jour la proie des Barbares, comme tous ces Peuples anéantis ?'

¹⁹³ *Ibid.*, 31 and 57, 'Les Grands doivent donc s'efforcer, de rétablir la Religion qui maintient le Peuple dans les anciens principes & dans la morale établie ; [...] protéger la Justice, parce qu'ils sont les pères des Peuples [...] L'irréligion ou l'athéisme accompagnent toujours la dissolution des Empires.'

The topography of Crown and city

The Pont Notre-Dame was re-built between 1504 and 1512 and in 1531 it was incorporated into the royal ceremonial route.¹⁹⁴ Around the time that it was re-built, François I ordered the re-construction of the Louvre palace in the Renaissance classical style as well as the construction of the Hôtel-de-Ville to mark a ‘renewed pact between crown and city’.¹⁹⁵ Piganol de la Force’s guidebook to Paris notes that commerce on the river had existed since the Roman times, explaining the reason that the coat of arms for Paris included a ship.¹⁹⁶ Likewise, Luc-Vincent Thiéry’s guidebook discussed Paris’s nautical heritage and situated the river’s commercial history as intertwined with the *jurisdiction municipale*, which he described as being older than the monarchy, institutionalised by the Gauls, preserved by the Romans, and maintained up to the present.¹⁹⁷ The river commerce was protected by the *marchands de l’eau*, which merged with the *Prévôt des Marchands* in the Middle Ages.¹⁹⁸ In fact, the *Prévôt des Marchands* commented in 1785 that, ‘It is clear that the greatest outcomes from this project [removing the houses from the Pont Notre-Dame and Pont-au-Change] will on one hand be the magnificent view, freed from obstacles, in the centre of Paris and extending across the river, and the other being the free circulation of the air’.¹⁹⁹

As noted by guidebook authors, Dulaure and Thiéry, during the Wars of Religion the Catholic League made their procession along the Pont Notre-Dame and it was the site where one of the armed men accidentally killed an almoner.²⁰⁰ The League was formed to protect the Catholic faith from Protestants that were becoming increasingly powerful in France and ultimately to prevent the accession of a Huguenot king to the throne. Many Parisians supported the League and some became fanatical, which meant that the royal Swiss troops sent by Henri III were massacred, he was forced to flee the Louvre and was

¹⁹⁴ Jones, *Paris*, 120.

¹⁹⁵ *Ibid.*, 118. The re-construction of the Louvre palace was planned so that the King could reside there and assert his authority in the centre of Paris.

¹⁹⁶ Piganol de la Force, *Description historique*, 49 ‘Il seroit bien le temps de rendre à la ville, & son coup d’oeil & son courant d’air’.

¹⁹⁷ Luc-Vincent Thiéry, *Guide des amateurs et des étrangers voyageurs à Paris, ou Description raisonnée de cette ville, de sa banlieue et de tout ce qu’elles contiennent de remarquable*, Tome I, 1787, 17.

¹⁹⁸ *Ibid.*

¹⁹⁹ Radisich, ‘Hubert Robert’s Paris’, 513.

²⁰⁰ Dulaure, *Nouvelle Description des Curiosités de Paris*, 317; Thiéry *Guide des amateurs et des étrangers voyageurs à Paris*, 554.

ultimately assassinated.²⁰¹ His successor, Henri IV, recognised the importance of regaining the seat of royal authority in Paris. Benefitting from the weakening of the League, he converted to Catholicism and when Henri entered Paris the people welcomed him. In order to restore the peace, ending the war between Catholics and Protestants, he established the Edict of Nantes, which formally reinstated religious tolerance.²⁰² While Louis XIV had revoked the Edict in 1685, Louis XVI repeated Henri's gesture by reinstating it, as noted in chapter 1. Perhaps the royal government hoped that in the same way that Parisians had welcomed Henri IV, the current populace would also welcome Louis's benevolence. It was noted in chapter 1 that Robert's representation of the Belisarius figure in the *Maison Carrée* image connoted the King's forgiving nature in relation to religious tolerance. Indeed, those that visited Breteuil's townhouse could have compared Louis XVI's gesture of tolerance to that made by Henri IV, especially in view of the fact that Henri crossed the Pont Notre-Dame when he entered Paris.

In Robert's image, depicted on the riverbank are some architectural debris and statues which at first glance resemble antique ruins and might have reminded viewers of Robert's typical ruin paintings. However, the statues have been identified by Jutta Held as the White Virgin and Saint Denis that were formerly fixed to the houses on the bridge.²⁰³ David Garrioch notes that 'overlooking the neighbourhood sociability, such statues belonged to the community and were in fact maintained by the locals, perhaps women'.²⁰⁴ He argues that 'this was the people's religion, unconnected with the parish and not consecrated by any clerical presence' with 'the corner statues [...] providing a spiritual focus of a purely local nature'.²⁰⁵ Dubin describes them as objects connoting 'displaced relics', symbolic of the 'looming estrangement of the landscape'.²⁰⁶ While it is difficult to imagine the remains were ever understood to connote relics (which are, by definition holy and greatly valued by Catholics), nevertheless Dubin's notion of the fragments symbolising "estrangement" chimes with Garrioch's suggestion that they represented community devotion. Therefore, the female figures shown gathered round the statues could have been included in reference to the women that maintained them and perhaps the

²⁰¹ Jones, *Paris*, 149.

²⁰² *Ibid.*, 151.

²⁰³ Dubin, *Futures and Ruins*, 115 – see Held, *Monument und Volk*, 293.

²⁰⁴ David Garrioch, *Neighbourhood and Community in Paris 1740-1790*, Cambridge, 1986, 167.

²⁰⁵ *Ibid.*

²⁰⁶ Dubin, *Futures and Ruins*, 115.

washerwomen depicted in the image related to that sense of local devotion and community. The washerwomen were bound by a strong sense of community and were particularly resistant to changes that affected their livelihood, fighting to protect it.²⁰⁷ Therefore, viewers might have been reminded of the potential threat posed by Catholic women, particularly in relation to the League that had attracted support from the masses. Perhaps the statues signified that removing the Catholic community on the bridge would prevent a resurgence of religious fanaticism, while the emerging view of Sainte-Chapelle symbolised appropriate religious worship. It was shown in the last chapter that the removal of the Innocents church and cemetery would bring an end to the congregation of the poor on Feast Days, similarly the removal of the houses would have affected the local community around the Pont Notre-Dame. Also, the notion of the outsider's aestheticising experience was discussed in chapter 1 and it would seem that in this image, the removal of houses adhered to the outsider's viewpoint rather than the local inhabitants' sense of community and devotion.

In Robert's *Pont Notre-Dame* one side of the bridge has been cleared of houses (nearer the viewer) while the other side is partly intact, offering a glimpse of the projected view from the cleared bridge. Beyond the houses the spire of Sainte-Chapelle can be seen, which, although a gothic building, symbolised the historic seat of royal governance and housed important relics. Notably, the Tour de l'Horloge, the first public clock in Paris, and the turrets of the Conciergerie prison are prominent features of the Palais de Justice which was the seat of power for the Parlement of Paris and can be seen emerging behind the demolished houses in Robert's painting; they were also depicted in Mosnier's portrait of Breteuil.²⁰⁸ The clock tower was inscribed with royal symbolism and its bell would toll on occasions of royal significance such as a birth or death in the family.²⁰⁹ Also, in Robert's *Pont-au-Change* (fig. 14), at the end of the bridge amidst the demolition, the Tour de l'Horloge prominently stands intact and extends to the Conciergerie with Sainte-Chapelle in the background, offering a different perspective to the *Pont Notre-Dame* painting. As a result of the demolition, the buildings that symbolised royal, religious and judicial power would be seen clearly from both bridges, perhaps in accordance with Saulavie's assurance that Religion and the Law would ensure the Bourbon dynasty's longevity. As a result of

²⁰⁷ Colin Bailey, *Jean-Baptiste Greuze, The Laundress*, Los Angeles, 2000, 51.

²⁰⁸ Hillairet, *Connaissance du vieux Paris*, 77.

²⁰⁹ *Ibid.*

the demolition of the Pont Notre-Dame's buildings, the sightline between the *Municipalité* housed at the Hôtel-de-Ville and the Palais de Justice would be much clearer.²¹⁰ As inferred by guidebook authors, the Île de la Cité and the area around the Seine represented the long-established municipal authority and the Tour de l'Horloge depicted in Robert's images connoted the moment of royal intervention in the history of the site.

Order and control –the topography of power and worker productivity

Both the Pont Neuf and the Pont-au-Change are represented in the *Pont Notre-Dame*, alluding to the bridge's emulation of the former and the future transformation of the latter. The activity of the figures shown below the bridge and on the riverbank would not have been depicted in a topographical panoramic view, suggesting that this aspect was a key feature for Breteuil. The scene on the riverbank in Robert's image could have been interpreted in terms of Breteuil's aim to achieve order and control and, arguably, as a result, his guests would have been assured of the monarchy's authority. In Robert's *Pont-au-Change* the topography becomes overbearing and there is a clear emphasis on power. As shown above, the topography of the Île de la Cité was politicised and the absence of the *Pont Notre-Dame* from the Salon exhibition might be an indication of the mounting tensions between the city government and the Crown.

In John Brewer's discussion of panoramic views of eighteenth-century London, he suggests that the exactitude of such views adhered to Ann Bermingham's argument that, like estate portraiture, they evoked 'command and control'.²¹¹ Brewer argues that 'the power of the panorama lay in the way in which it offered a point of view that was normally outside [of,] or separate from[,] the object viewed, while simultaneously enclosing viewers by surrounding them with the panorama'.²¹² In the 1787 Salon, topographic views of Paris by Nicolas de l'Espinasse represented a similar elevated position and probably would have appealed to upper-class Parisians.²¹³ Indeed, the clearing of houses from the Pont Notre-Dame would have allowed pedestrians walking across it to look over the river and cityscape in a similar way to the viewer of panoramic images, thus creating a sense of command. However, Robert's *Pont Notre-Dame* is

²¹⁰ Although the Hôtel-de-Ville is not represented in Robert's painting, viewers would have known that it was situated behind the depicted figures on the riverbank.

²¹¹ John Brewer, 'Sensibility and the Urban Panorama', *Huntington Library Quarterly*, 70:2, 2007, 237.

²¹² *Ibid.*

²¹³ Salon de 1787, *Explication*, 29.

painted from a low viewpoint so that the viewer shares the sight lines of the workers. Nevertheless, Radisich suggests that Breteuil bought the work for its representation of 'civic ideals' which were achieved through this project, namely the 'order and control' desired by the Parisian educated classes.²¹⁴ Robert's depiction of the bridge being cleared of its houses alluded to the order and control normally associated with topographic panoramic views, reflected Breteuil's role in the transformation and in the process situated the viewer in unusual ways.

In the *Pont Notre-Dame* painting the Pont-au-Change can be seen with its houses before they were removed.²¹⁵ Shown through the arches of the Pont Notre-Dame, and behind the Pont-au-Change is the Pont Neuf and in the almost indiscernible distance is the Pont Royal. The Pont Neuf featured regularly in prints, guidebooks, pamphlets, ballads and poetry.²¹⁶ The bridge was admired by Parisians and foreign visitors alike - its lack of houses and shops distinguished it from the Pont Notre-Dame and the Pont-au-Change.²¹⁷ According to Robert Isherwood the Pont Neuf was the 'center of popular life in Paris' and 'embodied many of the defining characteristics of marketplace culture'.²¹⁸ Notably, the statue of Henri IV was situated on the Pont Neuf, which was constructed in emulation of Renaissance leaders, and, it was during his reign that the bridge was completed. The lack of houses along the Pont Neuf meant that the Louvre palace could be seen clearly from the bridge. In the 1780s, the *Prévôts des Marchands* were responsible for making the boulevards cleaner and more attractive and like the Pont Neuf and the Salon they became a site of popular entertainment and mixture of classes.²¹⁹ Therefore, the demolition of the Pont Notre-Dame's houses probably would have been associated with the transformation of the boulevards in that it also would become a place for spectating and promenading. For Breteuil, Robert's painting might have alluded to the future of the bridges in that they would eventually emulate the Pont Neuf, providing a viewpoint over the royal topography, while also offering a promenade and space for leisure that could be enjoyed by all of society.

²¹⁴ Radisich, 'Hubert Robert's Paris', 512.

²¹⁵ The ruling for the demolition of houses on the Pont-au-Change and Pont Notre-Dame was ordered at the same time; see Dubin, *Futures and Ruins*, 113 - *Édit du Roi, donné à Versailles*, 1786.

²¹⁶ Karen Newman, *Cultural Capitals: early modern London and Paris*, Princeton and Oxford, 2007, 39.

²¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 37.

²¹⁸ Isherwood, *Farce and Fantasy*, 3.

²¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 162.

In Robert's *Pont Notre-Dame* the centre of the bridge is illuminated by the light reflecting off the rubble of limestone, perhaps to signify the "enlightening" of the site, as suggested earlier in relation to the luxury trades on the bridge and the circulation of air.²²⁰ The classical portico which marked the public entrance to the water pump is highlighted by the light and, interestingly, one side of the portico was decorated by Jean Goujon, the Renaissance sculptor who had also sculpted part of the Fontaine des Innocents.²²¹ As in the eighteenth century, water supply was a particular concern in the 1500s and interestingly, of the seventeen public fountains in Paris that were embellished during that period, according to Jones, 'the most striking addition was to the Fountain of the Innocents'.²²² Seemingly, the reason for the embellishment of the fountain was that it was on the route of the royal procession, showing a link between royalty (and perhaps the monarch's divinity) and the city's water supply. In Robert's image, under the second left arch of the bridge a floating watermill and the wooden substructures for the pumping equipment can be seen. The water pump was installed in 1676 during Louis XIV's reign in imitation of the Samaritaine pump that had been erected on the Pont Neuf.²²³ Therefore, viewers would have been reminded of both the ordering of the site and the importance of the Seine as a water supply. As noted by Colin Bailey, the many laundresses who worked along the Seine, as shown in Robert's image, were of course heavily dependent on the availability of water. Subsequently, in addition to connoting moral reform, the washing of linen also might have alluded to the good water supply, even if that was not a reflection of the actual situation in the 1780s.²²⁴ In this way, Breteuil was able to demonstrate the correlation between the emerging topography of power above the bridge and the worker productivity taking place below.

The decision to demolish the workshops and homes of goldsmiths and money-changers along the Pont-au-Change was met with fierce resistance from the residents due to their long tradition of trade there and investment in the bridge. Residents were also offered poor recompense. Nevertheless, the demolition went ahead on the grounds of better air

²²⁰ By "enlightening" I mean, the clear visual signification of the image's links to Enlightened discourses.

²²¹ Nodier Jules de Gaulle, *Nouvelle Histoire de Paris et de ses environs*, Paris, 1839, 293.

²²² *Ibid.*, 122.

²²³ Jones, *Paris*, 185.

²²⁴ See Dubin's discussion of the controversy surrounding the Compagnie des eaux de Paris in *Futures and Ruins*, 132-135.

circulation and safety.²²⁵ Just as the figures shown in the *Pont Notre-Dame* image might have dispelled concerns about reprisals, perhaps the depicted masons and carpenters shown working under the supervision of armed men in the *Pont-au-Change* had a similar function. Radisich notes that a city-wide strike in 1786 ‘in protest against a new regulation which would decrease [the wages of carpenters] for each piece of wood transported from the construction site’ meant that the workers depicted in Robert’s painting appear as ‘docile’.²²⁶ Arguably, Breteuil would have hoped that his guests would interpret the depicted workers as ‘docile’ in order to quell fears of potential strikes that might lead to violence. However, unlike the workers in Demachy’s paintings of church demolitions discussed in the previous chapter, the masons and carpenters in Robert’s *Pont-au-Change* do not stand out as being docile in the way described by Radisich. Like Demachy’s representation of the Innocents church, the figures of authority (the guards) depicted in Robert’s *Pont-au-Change* were included to portray an image of ordering and reconstruction of the city that was achieved through their supervision. Similarly, Richard Clay has shown that prints depicting the fall of the Bastille emphasised the solidarity between workers and royal guards so that the authorities could maintain order.²²⁷ While the broken statues in Robert’s image referred to the past violence on the Pont Notre-Dame and their removal might have subtly shown that future reprisals would be prevented, the image of control over the workers is more obvious in the *Pont-au-Change* image, perhaps indicating that political tensions on the Île de la Cité had increased significantly by 1788.

Robert had painted several images of the Pont Notre-Dame in 1786, perhaps as a bystander rather than under the direction of a patron (as the depicted figure of him on the riverbank might suggest). When Breteuil bought the image neither he nor Robert could have known that the subject matter of the painting would become increasingly controversial as a result of the government’s financial troubles. Dubin argues that urban projects such as the clearing of the bridges were particularly contentious due to the financial implications on the state.²²⁸ She suggests that the Crown only agreed to the demolitions to pay off its debt, regardless of functional or aesthetic concerns.²²⁹ The demolition was financed by the banker, Girardot de Marigny, who alongside Breteuil was

²²⁵ *Ibid.*, 115.

²²⁶ Radisich, ‘Hubert Robert’s Paris’, 509.

²²⁷ Richard Clay, *Iconoclasm in Revolutionary Paris: The Transformation of Signs*, Oxford, 2012, 28-29.

²²⁸ Dubin, *Futures and Ruins*, 134.

²²⁹ *Ibid.*

‘accused of capitalizing on enterprises deemed detrimental to the public’.²³⁰ As noted earlier, the image shows the emerging view of the Palais de Justice, which, as highlighted in the first chapter, was the site of riots during the Salon exhibition. The implication that violence would be avoided as signified by the figures shown working in Robert’s bridge paintings would have been negated by the riots. The unrest was provoked by finance minister Charles Alexandre de Calonne’s tax proposals and the Parlement had been exiled following disputes with the monarchy over the matter.²³¹ Calonne was also involved in ‘a cut-throat political battle over the city’s water supply’.²³² Therefore, the classical portico and water pump depicted in Robert’s image were perhaps intended to denote good governance and would have been undermined by contemporary events. If the image had been shown in the Salon, the imagery would have added fuel to the fire. Perhaps in his townhouse Breteuil could have defended the decision to remove the houses, however, Robert’s paintings would not have detracted from the reality of the government’s financial problems. Indeed, the Île de la Cité would remain a site of political upheaval in the revolutionary years.

Arguably, by emulating the Pont Neuf in the transformation of the Pont Notre-Dame and Pont-au-Change, the royal government’s presence in the political and religious heart of the city could be re-enforced. Although Robert painted the demolition on the Pont Notre-Dame before the Parlement’s exile, the bridge images referred to the superiority of the Crown, just like the *Monuments* series which depicted the historical edifices to prove the monarchy’s authority over that of the *parlements*. However, the rioting that had ensued outside the Palais de Justice showed that royalty was not in control and might explain why the *Pont Notre-Dame* was not exhibited in the 1787 Salon.

Conclusion

While the *Pont Notre-Dame* was not displayed in the Salon, other paintings directly related to Breteuil were on show. Mosnier’s portrait of the minister highlighted his plans for the Hôtel-Dieu, which were seemingly much less controversial than the demolition of houses on the bridges, particularly those on the Pont-au-Change. To the educated, upper-class Parisian that attended Breteuil’s talks Robert’s *Pont Notre-Dame* would have

²³⁰ *Ibid.*

²³¹ Crow, *Painters and Public Life*, 222.

²³² Jones, *Paris*, 243.

connoted good governance in terms of hygiene, morality, water supply and worker productivity, which supported the minister's political role. Arguably, the unusual viewpoint created by the artist would have allowed visitors to Breteuil's townhouse to see the demolition in relation to the scene above and below the bridge as well as the bridge's impact on greater urban plans, including the reform of the Hôtel-Dieu. In the same way that the *Innocents* painting did not inscribe the educated viewer within the composition, the *Pont Notre-Dame* image shows the artist and a few workers or passers-by as spectators of the demolition, suggesting that the viewer had the advantage of understanding the wider significance of the demolition.

As in Robert's other paintings, there is a contrast between the intact and ruins; in the bridge paintings the topography of the Île de la Cité stands out against the ruined houses. Both the *Pont Notre-Dame* and *Pont-au-Change* images depict civic order by emphasising the permanence of municipal, religious and monarchical authority. The area of the city depicted in the *Pont Notre-Dame* was recognised as the historical heart of central government. Notably, the Tour de l'Horloge, a symbol of royal time, denoted monarchical intervention on the site. Subsequently, the other key landmarks could be interpreted in relation to monarchical time - Sainte-Chapelle, the Palais de Justice, the bridges and the water pump. In this way, as in the *Monuments* series, Robert refers to the *longue durée* of the bridge's architecture and the imagery affirms the preservation of monarchical power.

It was suggested that the classical ideal connoted civic and moral reform as well as aesthetic improvement, and that, in the case of the architecture around the bridges, it also related to urban improvements initiated by previous monarchs, including the popular Henri IV. In fact, the historical association with the Pont Notre-Dame, particularly in terms of water supply, sheds further light on Robert's *Innocents* painting in that the Fontaine des Innocents would have signified royal power, as well as the cleansing of the site. Similarly, the laundresses depicted in the bridge painting had a polyvalent function in that they refer to the cleansing of the site, its moral improvement, as well as water supply and worker solidarity. Thus, although the laundresses seem to represent quotidian routine, they actually symbolise the continual cycle of social concerns, suggesting that the figures engaged in daily activity that appear in most of Robert's images actually represent permanence, in contrast with monuments which can be destroyed.

CONCLUSION

This thesis has examined Robert's depictions of ruins within the framework of preservation and destruction, Enlightenment discourses and patronage and display. I have considered the potential reception of Robert's *Monuments* series in both Fontainebleau and the Salon, suggesting that it would have been interpreted in relation to architectural, antiquarian and literary sources on ruins. Having examined the previously overlooked *Innocents* painting in relation to its display in the Salon, I have demonstrated that Robert innovatively adapted the classical ruin motif to depict demolition in Paris, encouraging the viewer to compare his image to the *Monuments* series and to consider the classical model's influence on the transformation of the site. I have suggested that the *Pont Notre-Dame* and *Pont-au-Change* paintings bought by Breteuil, like the *Innocents* painting, relate to Enlightened discourses on moral, hygienic and aesthetic reform, which was particularly important for Breteuil's political role.

Unlike previous scholars, I have demonstrated that the figures depicted in each focus painting were crucial to viewers' understandings of the images of ruins. In the *Monuments* series the classical figures historicised the act of contemplating antique ruins, relating to Rousseau's and Saint-Pierre's writings. The figures depicted in the *Innocents* image were included to encourage the Salon viewer to interpret their reactions to the tomb removal in terms of Enlightenment debates and to consider the transformation of the actual site in relation to broader urban reforms. The figures represented in the *Pont Notre-Dame*, particularly the laundresses, are central to the interpretation of the site's transformation. Similarly, the figures depicted in the *Pont-au-Change* represent the process of ordering through state authority. Arguably, Robert ignored Diderot's advice concerning the figures in his images because they helped him to represent the cyclical nature of history, particularly in view of the parallels between the practices of the Ancients and those that emerged in eighteenth-century France and that were evident when Roberts' paintings were compared with one another by viewers.

In the *Monuments* series the classical edifices constructed by the Romans represented the model for modern French architecture, while the *Innocents* image showed the disintegration of the outmoded gothic aesthetic. The unsightly church and unsanitary cemetery would be replaced with the classical monument, the Fontaine des Innocents.

Also, Robert highlighted the intact classical portico amongst the ruined houses in his *Pont Notre-Dame*. The scenes of demolition ordered by the state are depicted by Robert's paintings discussed in chapters 2 and 3, and like his *Monuments* series, his representations of man-made ruins referred to the past, present and future of the sites. As discussed in chapter 2, new cemetery designs would allow visitors to contemplate individual tombs like monuments or ruins. In chapter 3 it was shown that Paris itself was becoming a place in which to spectate, promenade, and, contemplate the city's classical monuments. Robert's innovative technique was inspired by artists such as Piranesi and Panini, and informed by garden design, which like the capriccio technique, allowed imaginative manipulation of the landscape.²³³

The *Monuments* commission represents a crucial point in Robert's career, wherein he elevated the genre of landscape painting in such a way that the series had a complex historical narrative that was expressed by the ruin motif and figures. The depicted edifices and figures were both historically and politically symbolic, as were his paintings of Paris. While the *Monuments* series was displayed in the Salon, it was commissioned to decorate the King's Fontainebleau dining room, to be seen by members of the Court. Yet, the works that Robert contributed to Salon exhibitions were not intended to be interpreted as individual images but rather as part of a kind of series. By examining together the images discussed in this thesis, I have shown that not only did Robert innovatively represent the landscape, but also, he constructed narratives between his works to be interpreted by the Salon's *parterre*-like audience.

This thesis has shown that the French monarchy created a sense of continuity with Ancient Rome, which Robert signified using the ruin motif in his representations of the monuments in Provence and the urban changes in Paris. Notably, in eighteenth-century Britain, the Whigs' interest in antique ruins supported the notion that the Glorious Revolution had allowed Britain to claim the mantle of civilisation once held by the

²³³ Jean de Cayeux has examined Robert's role as a garden designer and discusses the influence that garden theory had on his landscape paintings. He demonstrates that Robert and his contemporaries (including René Girardin, Jean-Jacques Rousseau's pupil) were familiar with British garden theorists. For example, Ermenonville, which was designed by Girardin and became the resting place for Rousseau, whose tomb was designed by Robert, had been inspired by English gardens such as Leasowes and Stowe. Notably, Robert's friend, Claude-Henri Watelet's *Essai sur les jardins* (1774) was inspired by Rousseau's philosophy on nature and British Whig politician Thomas Whately's essay on gardens, see Cayeux, *Hubert Robert et les jardins*, 148.

Romans, which was authenticated by the discovery of Roman ruins on British soil.²³⁴ British theories about the landscape, particularly with regards to garden design, shaped and were shaped by post-Revolutionary, Whig-led, Protestant discourses. The ruin motif is often associated with the picturesque, an aesthetic theory popularised in eighteenth-century Britain and rooted in Whig ideology.²³⁵ While there has been considerable discussion around the politics of the picturesque and the varying interpretations of ruins in the context of eighteenth-century aesthetic theory in Britain, further research needs to be carried out concerning its relationship to French aesthetic theories, particularly in terms of the ideology of the landscape.²³⁶ Seeing that Robert represented the impact that Enlightened discourses had on the landscape using the ruin motif, his work and perhaps other eighteenth-century French landscape paintings can be considered from a new perspective. If I am right that Robert was using the Salon to encourage viewers to see inter-relationships between his diverse oeuvre and a wide range of discourses, it is worth bearing in mind that several such discourses were international in their scope.

²³⁴ Ayres, *Classical Culture and the idea of Rome in Eighteenth Century England*, 84.

²³⁵ See Ann Bermingham, *Landscape and Ideology, the Rustic Tradition, 1740–1860*, London, 1986 and Mayhew, ‘William Gilpin and the Latitudinarian Picturesque’, 349–366.

²³⁶ Malcolm Andrews, *The Search for the Picturesque: Landscape Aesthetics and Tourism in Britain, 1760–1800*, Aldershot, 1989 and David Marshall, ‘The Problem of the Picturesque’, *Eighteenth-Century Studies*, 35:3, 2002, 413–437.

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