apparent in impressed lines scored in the parchment surface through the use of a metal drypoint.

Böker ends his critical introduction with an overview of the agency of the masters and architects associated with the drawings—the nineteenth-century masters of the Gothic Revival as well as the names of those associated with the original creation of the drawings: Peter Parler, Meister Michael, Hans Puchbaum, Laurenz Spennng, Jodok Dotzinger, Jorg Ochs, Anton Pilgram, Gregor Hauser, Wolfgang Denck, Benedikt Ried, and Wolfgang Rinxner. Some of these names are known because of their well-documented relationship with construction campaigns on some of the greatest late Gothic churches (Parler and Ried, for example, made important contributions to the Cathedral of St. Vitus in Prague and Puchsbam at Vienna Cathedral), while others (such as Rinxner, who assembled a pattern book for his fellow masons providing invaluable insights into practices in the masons' lodge) are less well known. While some of this material produces an arid discourse on problems of attribution, the new work on watermarks coupled with the author's art historical acumen create some rewarding aperçus. Perhaps the most exciting aspect of late Gothic vaulting was the production of curving ribs following interlocking circular trajectories that sometimes flow together into sinuous patterns. Thanks to Böker's analysis of the drawings in relation to actual works of architecture, we are able to watch the design process in the hands of masters Puchsbam, Spennng, and Ried.

Leafing through the drawings we can grasp many essential aspects of Gothic creativity. This mode of production, right from the start, privileged sleight of hand and illusionism and the creation of astonishing effects through the manipulation of form, space, and light. Gothic's earliest manifestations came through the dramatic juxtaposition of the historicizing forms of classical antiquity with the mass and elongation of the supporting elements, made possible through lightweight vaulting and an exterior support system. Through the process of critical response (contraction and expansion), increasing focus was placed on linearity and convexity—particularly with the invention of window tracery. The drawings attest to the astonishing survival in late Gothic of a few basic concepts: externalized structure; illusionistic interiors; juxtaposed geometric forms that run together to create double curves; rounded torus moldings that seem to turn into fillets before our very eyes; and squares interacting with octagons and manipulated rectangles. As indicated above, one of the most exciting developments apparent in the drawings is the passage from webbed rib vaults with diminished emphasis upon bay divisions to the apparently free-flowing forms of the vaults of Ried's Wlatslaw Hall in Prague.

Perhaps the most obvious feature of the drawings is the combination of lines generated with the aid of instruments (straight-edge and compass) and luxuriant foliage elements. In late Gothic we encounter a paradox: foliage, once employed principally in the sculpture of capitals, seems to migrate across the extrados surfaces of arches and gables, up pinnacles and spires, establishing pride of place in oversized finials (particularly in the work of Spennng in Vienna; see drawings 17.061 and 103.067). The increased linearity of late Gothic combined with the absence of capitals and the sinuous forms of double-curved vault and vault patterns lend to Gothic the kind of organic-forest look that made it susceptible to the rhetorical manipulations of Vasari and Raphael and the invention of the great founding myth—that of forest origins. Some years ago, Paul Crossley proposed that this myth was based on the way that northern builders theorized their architectural production correspondingly; in one of the drawings (103.068), sinuous forms of foliage actually take over and dominate the architectural frame, while the multiple turned squares of the spires of Vienna and Strasbourg lend to these designs the appearance of organic growth.2

It is to be anticipated that this impressive publication will unleash a new burst of interest in the human processes of response and creativity that lie behind Gothic architecture.

STEPHEN MURRAY
Columbia University

Notes

Alexandre Gady
Jacques Lemercier. Architecte et ingénieur du Roi

Travelers in seventeenth-century France went out of their way to see the château at Richelieu. Diaries of the period regularly mention the majestic complex, rebuilt by the eponymous cardinal from 1631, when his family seat was raised to the status of a duchy. For a small tip, the obliging custodian would give you an informative tour, which we find reflected in the unusually detailed accounts of visitors to the site. The greatest draw was Cardinal Richelieu's exquisite art collection, of which Michelangelo's slaves, originally carved for the tomb of Julius II, were given the pride of place over the portal of the vestibule.

The architecture itself reflected a sensibility for the rare and reberche; the facades of the inner courtyard were encrusted with antique sculpture, most brought back from Rome by the cardinal's agents. If that decor did not satisfy your taste for grandeur, there was also the regularly planned town erected ex nihilo alongside the château. The entire ensemble was laid out on a system of grand axes that served both to announce the house and allow it visually to dominate the countryside. The hierarchical
organization of forecourts and the dramatic landscaping of the garden would have a tremendous impact on later country residences, prefiguring both Vaux-le-Vicomte and Versailles. Even among the king’s own palaces, there were few more potent displays of wealth, power, and prestige. How tragic, then, that from 1805 this extraordinary building was slowly dismantled and sold for scrap. Nothing but a few poor vestiges remains.

In many ways, the fate of the château parallels the historical fortunes of its designer. Jacques Lemercier was one of the most important architects of the first half of the seventeenth century, a successful and sought-after figure even before he became the cardinal’s trusted collaborator. Aside from Richelieu’s château, he also built the Palais Cardinal (today the Palais Royal), the church and collegiate buildings of the Sorbonne, and the Pavillon de l’Horloge du Louvre—part of his extension of what is now the west wing of the Cour Carrée. He took over the construction of Val de Grace from François Mansart and rebuilt Richelieu’s château at Rueil, where he was also responsible for the famous gardens, a rustic playground of terraces, cascades, and fountains.

Lemercier was by far the dominant French architect of the 1630s and 1640s, yet he has remained a shadowy figure due in part to the traditional characterization of the period. Historians have tended to celebrate the complex and refined classicism introduced by a younger generation of architects in the 1640s, and Lemercier’s work has often suffered in comparison. Indeed, by the mid-eighteenth century, his reputation had already been eclipsed by that of François Mansart and Louis Le Vau, and the destruction of many of his most important buildings did nothing to reverse this process. Richelieu is only the most infamous example. Of the original college of the Sorbonne, the church is all that remains. The Palais Cardinal was almost totally destroyed by fire in 1763; the present building is a late eighteenth-century creation. The château at Rueil was razed in the nineteenth century, the gardens parceled and sold off. These facts might explain why Lemercier has had to wait so long for a unified study of his career.

Alexandre Gady’s recent monograph has now largely filled this gap. The book, which began as a doctoral thesis, is one of several new studies produced under the guidance of Claude Mignot at the University of Paris IV, a body of work that is slowly regenerating the field of French seventeenth-century architecture. Following his own groundbreaking research on Pierre Le Muet, Mignot’s students have also tended to concentrate on previously neglected figures, often in a biographical mode. Most of these dissertations and master’s theses remain unpublished. One can only hope that their authors take Gady’s lead in making their work available to a wider public.

In writing the first fundamental study of Lemercier, the author’s aim was basic: to establish a firm chronology of his projects and document their realization. This endeavor is not easy for a prolific and historically remote figure such as Lemercier: it involves reconstructing a number of very complex building campaigns as well as retrieving dozens of small, forgotten commissions, and it requires piecing together a complex web of professional relationships, all from fragmentary and widely dispersed sources. Readers who are familiar with Gady’s scholarly guidebooks of Paris and his many published articles will not be surprised at the result. The whole is characterized by an astonishing precision, rigor, and diligence. It is an accomplished book, enriched by superb production values.

Although the author describes the book as a traditional monograph, its organization is in fact unusual. The first of three parts is devoted to the architect’s biography; it establishes the sequence of his commissions and explains how each led to the other, typically via existing ties between his patrons. Gady is particularly good on the sketchy, early periods of Lemercier’s life, namely his training under his father, his sojourn in Rome circa 1607 through 1611, and the beginning of his career back in France. This latter discussion contains a major discovery. The Archives nationales holds a widely known drawing of the château and gardens at Montjeu in Burgundy, one of the earliest working drawings of a garden à la française and an abiding mystery to scholars since its discovery in the early twentieth century. The author convincingly attributes it to Lemercier and dates it to 1619–20 on the basis of a contemporary contract for the terracing. The château’s owner, Pierre Jeannin, seems to have jump-started the architect’s career.

Lemercier would go on to work for Marie de Medici at the Louvre and at the Luxembourg Palace before finally entering Richelieu’s service and that of the cardinal’s “creatures” circa 1627 with the commission for the Palais Cardinal. This first section also explores Lemercier’s own “support system”—his preferred contractors and site managers. There are interesting peripheral discussions, including one on the status of the title Premier architecte du roi, which Lemercier was the first to hold, and a suggestive chapter on what we know of the architect’s private life.

The second part—really the heart of the book—is a formal analysis of Lemercier’s architecture, organized as a list of discrete motifs and design strategies. Here the author grapples with one of the central themes of French architectural scholarship in the last twenty-five years, that is, how his architect contributed to the evolving tradition of Renaissance classicism in France. This approach is particularly welcome for Lemercier because his work has mostly been seen in light of his Roman sojourn, rare for French architects of the time. The somewhat haphazard structure of the section is unduly confusing, but the picture that emerges is essentially one of an innovator working within a predominantly French tradition. Lemercier has long been known, for example, for importing the Counter-Reformation Roman church façade to French practice—at the Sorbonne, Rueil, Richelieu, and elsewhere. In contrast, Gady emphasizes the earlier Parisian examples of the form as well as the personal manner in which Lemercier modified it in different
contexts. The author also counterbalances the architect’s received image with an analysis of the remarkable court façade of the Church of the Sorbonne, the first example in France of a classical pedimented portico supported on free-standing columns. Similar innovations include the first French appearance of a hemispherical dome supported on a drum—also at the Sorbonne—and the use of “false” or square domes, most famously in the Pavillon de l’Horloge. In all of these cases, new forms are naturalized, so to speak; they are adapted seamlessly to a French building tradition in a way that disguises their real novelty. The false dome is a perfect example: it quickly became a symbol of the monarchy itself and was used as such well into the nineteenth century.

The third section consists of a numbered catalog of sixty projects arranged in chronological order, with a documented construction history in each entry. There are also two additional catalogs of problematic attributions and of works that can be definitely rejected. The author is nothing if not thorough, as each entry is a model of scholarly detective work. Indeed, Gady’s ability to adduce precisely the records needed entirely masks how difficult it is to do research in French archives. This section will be an essential reference for decades to come, as dependable as it is easily consulted.

In the context of the study as a whole, however, the choice of relegating the detailed description of the buildings themselves to a separate catalog has some distinct drawbacks. In the first place, it means that each project is discussed and illustrated in at least three different places, continually forcing the reader to search for passages and illustrations in different parts of the book. A more serious consequence is that the formal analysis of motifs in the second part is separated in each case from any discussion of the circumstances that shaped the process of design, including the nature of the site, the patron’s desires and resources, and the requirements of the commission. As a result, the second part often reads as a confusing rush of plans, facades, and details, while the catalog sometimes suffers from a lack of comparative material.

In one sense, the book’s organization is original and inventive. It offers three different styles of narrative—three different ways of doing architectural history. Yet, in each there is a deliberate narrowness to the way the inquiry is framed. Interpretation is kept to a strict minimum, and there is little in the way of methodological reflection. The job Gady has set himself is not to change how we see the field but simply to fill the blank spaces in what we already know. Most frustrating is that there is little attempt to reconstruct the potential reception of the work. Only a few tantalizing pages, for example, treat Cardinal Richelieu himself. His extensive building program must certainly have entailed some appropriation of architecture and its role as representational display, but this viewpoint is minimized. Such an account need not reduce the buildings to the status of a political instrument, even if that is what they were. One would have also welcomed a fuller explanation of Lemercier’s relationship with François Sublet de Noyers and his attitude towards the minister’s purist architectural vision, especially in light of its influence in the second half of the century. Ultimately, the lack of contextualization leads the author to take the same critical stance that has always dogged Lemercier’s historical image, namely, to judge his achievement in comparison to Mansart or Le Vau, using criteria that are themselves dehistoricized. The odd result is that after five hundred pages, the architect’s reputation comes out only marginally better for it.

ANTHONY GEBINO
University of Oxford

Notes
1. Elie Brackenhoffer, for example, visiting from Strasbourg soon after the building’s completion in 1644, was stunned by the opulent interiors. The window panes, he recounted, were set in silver mullions and the hearths of the fireplaces flagged in rare marbles and alabaster. The rooms were covered in decorative paintings and carved panels. The shutters were gilded “so that even on the exterior, one is dazzled by the brilliance of the gold.” Brackenhoffer, Voyage en France, 1643–1644, trans. Henry Lehr (Nancy, 1925), 219–12, esp. 229.
3. Drawing of château and gardens at Montjeu, Burgundy, Archives nationales, N III Sâone-et-Loire 32.
4. See, for example, the catalog of the recent major exhibition: Hilliard Todd Goldfarb, ed., Richter. Art and Power (Montreal, 2002).