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THREE REVOLUTIONARY ARCHITECTS,
BOULLÉE, LEDOUX, AND LEQUEU

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Déjà l'aurore s'empare du monde . . .
les arts se réveillent;
un nouveau jour commence.

Ledoux

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INTRODUCTION

As late as the 1920's the works of Boullée and Ledoux were discussed only if they had some local interest. Beyond this their works were referred to very briefly, at best, and the authors were commonly disparaged. In an article published in 1929 I attempted to direct attention to their historic significance. Subsequent publications of mine on Ledoux, including the first monograph, were followed by French biographies in 1934 and 1945. As to Boullée and Lequeu, my essays in the *Art Bulletin*, 1939 and 1949, seem to be the only biographical studies on these two men.

Continued research yielded much new material. Moreover, I will discuss the predecessors of these three men who were also highly interesting personalities, and enter another hitherto neglected field, that of eighteenth-century French architectural theory. Some of the treatises I have used are rare and not easily accessible, while others are too lengthy for the average reader. Therefore, selected passages which provide a deeper insight into the thought of the era and reveal the character of their authors have been assembled in my notes. The bibliography lists monographs and essays of general interest; further bibliographical references are included in the notes. Those interested in Ledoux will find here

sources that are missing in other biographies, just as they will find among the illustrations many designs not before reproduced.

This book ventures into unmapped territory. It attempts to lay the groundwork for an investigation of the architecture of the era which culminated in the French Revolution. Although the attempt here is to clarify the historical position of the architects by setting off their production against the general trends of their period, it does not pretend to say the last word on the development which it will discuss for the first time. I know that one can look at the extremely original works of these three architects from various angles. It is to be hoped that others will not limit themselves to pointing out the shortcomings of this attempt, but will carry on with independent and better interpretations based on a renewed scrutiny of their works, and of the treatises referred to in the text.

To begin with, I should like to make it clear that I do not regard as "revolutionary architects" those architects who were commissioned by revolutionary authorities in the years 1789-1799 to design public buildings, memorials or ephemeral decorations for revolutionary celebrations. The architects considered here did not