

Romanesque Renaissance – Introduction

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‘Look at this majestic building with all its columns, and now you can imagine how many slaves these Roman emperors must have used to build it!’ I heard a tourist guide explaining to his group on the Piazza Venezia in Rome in 2016, as he pointed to the imposing marble monument to Vittorio Emanuele II. The *Altare della Patria*, symbol of the unified Italian kingdom of the nineteenth century, is in fact barely a century old, having been built in 1895–1911.¹ Apparently, even in our time it is not always easy to make out the refined differences between genuine ancient Roman architecture and later works of art which were meant to create a visual connection with the glorious past. Erroneous dating of old buildings, interpreting them as far older than they actually are, has happened in all centuries.

From the fifteenth century onwards, antiquarians, humanist scholars, architects and artists, striving for a revival of the architectural forms and principles of Ancient Rome, investigated respectable ruins and age-old buildings in order to look for useful models and sources of inspiration. They too, occasionally misinterpreted younger buildings as proofs of majestic Roman or other ancient glory. This especially was assumed for buildings that were consciously inspired by ancient Roman architecture, such as the buildings of the Carolingian, Ottonian and Stauffer emperors. But even if the correct age of a certain building was known (Charlemagne’s Palatine Chapel in Aachen, for example), buildings from c. 800–1200 were sometimes regarded as ‘Antique’ architecture, since the concept of ‘Antiquity’ was far more stretched than our modern periodisation allows.

The reflection on architecture from c. 800 to c. 1200 by antiquarians, architects and their patrons of the fifteenth, sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, and their use of these models for contemporary *all’antica* architecture, are the central topics of this volume, the proceedings of a conference held in September 2017 at the Dutch Institute for Art History at Florence. This introduction reflects on some central problems concerning this phenomenon, its geography and historiography, followed by some remarks on early modern ideas about ancient history (when was the ‘ancient age’?) and contemporary ideas about the formal characteristics of Roman architecture (how was one to recognise an ‘ancient building’ as such?).

1 Designed by the architect Giuseppe Sacconi (1854–1905).

0.1 Geography and Style

One of the best-known stories in this category is that of San Giovanni in Florence, the octagonal Baptistery in front of the cathedral, its main structure constructed in the eleventh century. Three centuries later, awareness of the actual building history was already lost when Giovanni Villani described it in his chronicle of the city as a former Roman temple of Mars. According to Villani, the Baptistery was the only witness to ancient Roman Florence that seemed to have survived the destruction of the city in the sixth century AD by the terrible Totila and his Ostrogoths (fig. 0.1).² As a supposed Antique temple, it became an important beacon for the first attempts to recreate an Florentine *all'antica* style by Filippo Brunelleschi and his companions in the fifteenth century. Its actual date remained a scholarly discussion topic in the following century (as explained in the contribution by Eliana Carrara and Emanuela Ferretti in this volume). In the fifteenth century, also elsewhere in Italy – even in Rome – Late Antique, Byzantine and mediaeval buildings were sometimes interpreted as former Roman temples or palaces. However, the same procedure can be traced in other parts of Europe from that period onwards. The quest for dignified roots and ancestors was becoming a central issue at all European courts and among (true and supposed) noble families, republics and cities. Humanist scholars and antiquarians were employed as court historians in order to unveil the glorious past of a dynasty, city or state, which might serve to underpin claims to privileges, rewards and even on territories.³ Finally, artists and architects would visualise these claims in their new works of art and architecture, which clearly presented uninterrupted or restored connections with mighty forebearers. In the search for ancient and respectable ancestors or predecessors, relations to Roman emperors, consuls and generals were obviously sought-after trump cards; but not always. In some situations, it could be more effective to refer to a local or regional hero or legendary founding father, and to look for local Roman or other ancient antiquities as a point of reference for new *all'antica* buildings and art.⁴

2 Giovanni Villani, *Cronaca* (ms. mid-fourteenth century). Vatican Library, Codex Chigiano LVIII 296.

3 K.A.E. Enenkel, K.A. Ottenheim, *Ambitious Antiquities, Famous Forebears. Constructions of a Glorious Past in the Early Modern Netherlands and in Europe* (Brill's Studies on Art, Art History and Intellectual History, 41), Leiden 2019.

4 K. Christian, B. De Divitiis (eds.), *Local Antiquities, Local Identities: Art, Literature and Antiquarianism in Europe, c. 1400–1700*, Manchester 2019.



FIGURE 0.1 Giovanni Villani, *Cronaca* (ms.), mid-fourteenth century; Vatican Library, Cod. Chigiano LVIII 296
PHOTO: PUBLIC DOMAIN

Remains of Roman architecture can look quite different in the various regions of Europe that once belonged to the Roman Empire. Meanwhile, in those countries that never had belonged to Rome, remains of other ancient heroic tribes became a point of interest, such as the Batavians in Holland, Germanic tribes in Germany, the Goths in Scandinavia or the Sarmatians in Poland.⁵ Consequently, all over Europe the antiquities presented by scholars and artists look quite different: the famous examples of Roman architecture, such as the Pantheon and the Colosseum, which in later historiography were presented as the ‘typical’ Roman model, must be regarded as just one series among countless others. Among these other models of ancient architecture, there are quite a few which in fact date from later periods, such as the Byzantine, Carolingian, Ottonian and Romanesque. Hence, the new *all’antica* designs created with such varying sources, stemming from different parts of Europe, can never be described as one coherent ‘style’. Nevertheless, we may call all these buildings

5 K.A.E. Enenkel, K.A. Ottenheim (eds.), *The Quest for an Appropriate Past in Literature, Art and Architecture* (Intersections. Interdisciplinary Studies in early Modern Culture, 60), Leiden 2018. Also available in Open Access, as <https://brill.com/abstract/title/36000>.

Renaissance architecture, but only if we do not use this term as referring to one uniform building *style* (based on the Pantheon or Colosseum, etc.), as too often has been the case in the past, but rather as an intellectual and artistic *strategy*: a conscious revival of an ‘ancient’ architecture based on a thorough study of ancient buildings – whatever the date and origin of these models. The examples presented and discussed in this volume, from Scotland to Poland to Sicily and back, all show different solutions – but all share a common strategy.

0.2 ‘Romanesque Renaissance’: A Brief Historiography

By coining the term ‘Romanesque Renaissance’ we are pointing to the phenomenon in architectural design between c. 1450–1650 of the use of examples, both structures and details, dating from the centuries after the collapse of the Western Roman empire until the rise of the early Gothic as a model for contemporary architecture. For reasons of simplicity, for which we hope the reader will forgive us, the amalgam of various architectural styles distinguished today within the period of c. 800–1200, such as Byzantine, Carolingian, Ottonian, etc., will be covered by the catch-all term ‘Romanesque’ whenever ‘Romanesque Renaissance’ is used in this volume (of course, in the individual cases presented here, much more precise sources of inspiration and references will be defined and analysed).

Scholarly research on the formal connections between Romanesque and Renaissance architecture has a long history. As early as 1886, Georg Dehio introduced the term *Romanische Renaissance*, but he used it for mapping a group of eleventh- and twelfth-century Romanesque churches in Southern France with a rather ‘classic’ appearance (such as St. Gilles du Gard).⁶ The first to describe the use of Romanesque architecture in Netherlandish and French fifteenth-century painting was August Grisebach in 1912.⁷ He was also the first to come up with the idea that in the fifteenth century, Romanesque

6 G. Dehio, ‘Romanische Renaissance’, *Jahrbuch der Preussischen Kunstsammlungen* 7 (1886), 129–140. His ‘Romanische Renaissance’ in Southern France is comparable to the (even problematic) term ‘proto-Renaissance’, introduced in the early twentieth century for the Romanesque architecture in Tuscany.

7 A. Grisebach, ‘Architekturen auf niederländischen und französischen Gemälden des 15. Jahrhunderts. Ein Beitrag zur Entwicklung der Formensprache der Nordischen Renaissance (II)’, *Montashefte für Kunstgeschichte* 5 (1912), 254–272, esp. pp. 254–257: ‘Die Grundlagen des neuen Formgefühls. Romanische Renaissance’.

architecture may have been regarded as a kind of Antiquity.⁸ In the 1920s, the role of Romanesque art and architecture as a source of inspiration in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, became a serious research topic among art historians, and within a few years Vojtěch Birnbaum, Hans Tietze and Werner Körte presented their findings independently.⁹

Notwithstanding their stimulating ideas, the subject was not taken further by other scholars in Renaissance architecture, and for decades the topic remained neglected. Apparently, the examples of conscious ‘Romanesque’ inspiration in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries did not fit with the preferred story of the development of the discovery of Roman Antiquity and the revival of its architecture as presented in traditional historiography, with Brunelleschi and Alberti taken as the basis and Bramante and Palladio as the zenith. With the bias of one single ‘Antiquity’ (in Rome and its surroundings), a monolithic view of the ‘true’ Renaissance was also developed, with central Italy as its epicentre. Other fifteenth- and sixteenth-century ideas about Antiquity, and other solutions for the reuse of models from the past which differ from the those of the ‘heroes’, were described in twentieth-century art history as ‘incorrect’, ‘provincial derivations’, or were simply ignored. The idea of different ‘styles’ in the same period seemed to be too disturbing, as long as the construction of art history continued to be based on the sequence, or even evolution, of fixed ‘style periods’.

This changed in the last decades of the twentieth century. Since the series of conferences organised at the *Centre d'Études Supérieures de la Renaissance* in Tours, from the mid-1980s onwards, and its successor, the *Rencontres d'architecture européenne* from 2003 onwards at the Centre André Chastel in Paris, the idea of one universal Renaissance has been replaced by the notion of manifold regional ‘Renaissances’ in Europe.¹⁰ Further new insight came from

8 ‘Antik und romanisch mag damals im Norden bei vielen die gleiche Bedeutung gehabt haben’, *Ibidem*, 257.

9 V. Birnbaum, *Románská renesance koncem středověku*, Prague 1924; H. Tietze, ‘Romanische Kunst und Renaissance’, *Vorträge der Bibliothek Warburg 1926–27*, Leipzig / Berlin 1930, 43–57; W. Körte, *Die Wiederaufnahme romanischer Bauformen in der niederländischen und deutschen Malerei des 15. und 16. Jahrhunderts*, diss. Leipzig 1930. Körte’s promising dissertation focuses on the use of Romanesque architecture in fifteenth-century painting, and in his preface he announced a second volume on architecture in the near future (‘Ein zweiter Teil, für den ein reiches Material bereit liegt, wird das Wiederaufleben der alten Formen in der wirklich gebauten Architektur untersuchen’, p. 4). Unfortunately, this book was never published.

10 Published in the *De Architectura* series by Picard, Paris. See J. Guillaume, ‘Avant-propos: renaissance ou renaissances?’ in: idem (ed.), *L’invention de la Renaissance. La réception des formes ‘à l’antique’ au début de la Renaissance* (*De Architectura*, 9), Paris 2003, 7–8.

several ‘reframing’ conferences which helped to correct the previous imbalanced geographical perspective on Renaissance art and architecture.¹¹ In recent years, also within Italy the prevailing view has been rebalanced by some important research projects on Southern Italian and Sicilian Renaissance architecture.¹² Meanwhile, the importance of local antiquities and their reinterpretations in early modern architecture has become a European research topic, with some fascinating results in recent years.¹³ As a result of all those initiatives in the last ten years, the definition of the ‘Antique’ has turned out to be far more elastic, encompassing more than ‘Rome’. This kind of less restricted definition of ‘Antiquity’ opens the way to a better understanding of the strategies used in the period c. 1400–1700 to construct an appropriate past in art, architecture and literature.

Alongside the widening of the geographic scope, the bias of fixed period styles has also lately been challenged as a result of the general acceptance of iconographic and iconological methods in architectural history. This also offered the opportunity to think about the reasons for different ‘styles’ within a single period and region. In 1974, Hermann Hipp introduced the concept of *modi* in his ground-breaking work on the use of Gothic architectural elements in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries.¹⁴ In the following decades, the usefulness of this approach was successfully demonstrated by Ludger Sutthof and

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- 11 For instance C. Farago (ed.), *Reframing the Renaissance. Visual Culture in Europe and Latin America 1450–1650*, New Haven /London 1995; M. Andersen, B. Bøggild Johannsen, H. Johannsen (eds.), *Reframing the Danish Renaissance. Problems and Prospects in a European Perspective* (Publications from the National Museum. Studies in Archaeology & History, 16), Copenhagen 2011.
- 12 ERC projects conducted by respectively Bianca De Divitiis and Marco Nobile. On Southern Italy: HistAntArtSI. Historical Memory, Antiquarian Culture, Artistic Patronage: Social Identities in the Centres of Southern Italy between the Medieval and Early Modern Period [<http://www.histantartsi.eu/project.php>]; on Sicily: ‘COSMED. Dalla stereotomia ai criteri antisismici: crocevia di sperimentazioni progettuali. Sicilia e Mediterraneo (XII–XVIII secolo)’. <http://www.cosmedweb.org/cosmed.php>.
- 13 See, for instance, F. Lemerle, *La Renaissance et les antiquités de la Gaule. L’architecture gallo-romaine vue par les architectes, antiquaires et voyageurs des guerres d’Italie à la Fronde*, Turnhout 2005; L. Corrain, F.P. Di Teodoro (eds.), *Architettura e identità locali I*, Florence 2013; H. Burns, M. Mussolin (eds.), *Architettura e identità locali II*, Florence 2013; M. Walker, *Architects and Intellectual Culture in Post-Restoration England*, Oxford 2017; K. Christian, B. De Divitiis (eds.), *Local Antiquities, Local Identities: art, Literature and Antiquarianism in Europe, c. 1400–1700*, Manchester 2019.
- 14 H. Hipp, *Studien zur ‘Nachgotik’ des 16. und 17. Jahrhunderts in Deutschland, Böhmen, Österreich und der Schweiz*, Hannover 1979 (phil. diss. Tübingen 1974); Idem, ‘Die ‘Nachgotik’ in Deutschland, kein Stil und ohne Stil’, in: S. Hoppe, M. Müller, N. Nussbaum (eds.), *Stil als Bedeutung in der nordalpinen Renaissance. Wiederentdeckung einer methodischen Nachbarschaft*, Regensburg 2008, 15–46; Idem, ‘Early Modern Architecture and

others.¹⁵ Finally, the phenomenon of ‘Romanesque Renaissance’ itself received renewed attention, first by Ian Campbell in 1995,¹⁶ followed by the dissertation of Michael Schmidt on historicism in late mediaeval and early modern architecture in Central Europe, published in 1999.¹⁷ His inspiring book offers several fascinating examples of the use of Romanesque forms and details in the later period. With a close study of local and ecclesiastical situations, Schmidt offers plausible interpretations of several of the case studies presented in his work. Nevertheless, the problematic concept of fixed ‘period styles’ is not questioned, and Schmidt tries to explain ‘Romanesque’ elements strictly as references to the eleventh and twelfth centuries; this is why he was not always able to find convincing explanations. Finally, he states that the concept of ‘Romanesque renaissance’ does not make sense because ‘in the sixteenth century there was no conscious mental revival of the Romanesque period’.¹⁸ Our volume aims to prove otherwise.

The missing key to understanding the phenomenon in its entirety seems to be found in a widening of the perspective of what was regarded as ‘Antiquity’ in early modern times by humanist scholars, artists and their patrons. They did not discern even the major stylistic differences between Antique, Late Antique and Romanesque buildings. Consequently, architectural citations from, or references to, Romanesque architecture may occasionally be explained as references to Antiquity as such. From the late 1980s onwards, Hubertus Günther has pointed to the wide range of possibilities of what was regarded as Antique by

‘the Gothic’, in: M. Chatenet (ed.), *Le gothique de la Renaissance* (De Architectura, 13), Paris 2011, 33–46.

- 15 L.J. Sutthoff, *Gotik im Barock. Zur Frage der Kontinuität des Stiles ausserhalb seiner Epoche. Möglichkeiten bei der Stilwahl*, Münster 1990; for England, see *inter alia*: M. Hall (ed.), *Gothic Architecture and its Meanings 1550–1830*, Reading 2002; for France: H. Rousteau-Chambon, *Le gothique des Temps modernes. Architecture religieuse en milieu urbain*, Paris 2003; for the Low Countries: J. Snaet, ‘For the Greater Glory of God. Religious Architecture in the Low Countries 1560–1700’, in: K. De Jonge, K.A. Ottenheim (eds.), *Unity and Discontinuity. Architectural Relationships between the Southern and Northern Low Countries (1530–1700)*, (Architectura Moderna, 5), Turnhout 2007, 251–298, esp. 280–286.
- 16 I. Campbell 1995, ‘Romanesque Revival and the Early Renaissance in Scotland, c. 1380–1513’, *Journal of the Society of Architectural Historians* 54 (1995), 302–325.
- 17 M. Schmidt, *Reverentia und Magnificentia. Historizität in der Architektur Süddeutschlands, Österreichs und Böhmens vom 14. bis 17. Jahrhundert*, Regensburg 1999, esp. 130–138.
- 18 ‘Der Begriff ‘romanische Renaissance’ erweist sich zur Charakterisierung der nordalpinen Renaissance als denkbar ungeeignet. Die Bezeichnung übersieht nämlich völlig, daß im 16. Jahrhundert *keine* breite Welle eines bewußten Romanisierens im Untersuchungsgebiet festgestellt werden kann’. *Ibidem*, 137–138.

the early antiquarians and humanist scholars.¹⁹ This innovative attitude also makes it possible to understand the imaginative antique sources of Renaissance architecture that do not fit into the traditional canon. In the last fifteen years, this approach itself has taken a new turn in the research of Stephan Hoppe²⁰ and Christopher Wood.²¹ Moreover, the outcomes of the international and interdisciplinary project *The Quest for an Appropriate Past* recently has demonstrated that according to humanist scholars and antiquarians of the fifteenth and sixteenth century, 'Antiquity' as such did not end with the fall of Rome in 476 AD but continued for centuries, even up to the twelfth century.²² This implies that Carolingian or Romanesque architecture could be used as models of 'Antiquity' even where the true age of the building was known.

Above all, we should remember that 'the Romanesque' as a stylistic concept is a nineteenth-century invention. Only two hundred years ago did a scholarly

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- 19 See, for instance, H. Günther, 'La rinascita dell'antichità', in: H. Millon, V.M. Lampugnani (eds.), *Rinascimento da Brunelleschi a Michelangelo*, cat. exh. Venice (Palazzo Grassi), Milan 1994, 259–305; H. Günther, *Was ist Renaissance? Eine Charakteristik der Architektur zu Beginn der Neuzeit*, Darmstadt 2009 (with a list of his most relevant publications on 288–289).
- 20 S. Hoppe, 'Romanik als Antike und die bauliche Folgen. Mutmassungen zu einem in Vergessenheit geratenen Diskurs', in: N. Nussbaum, C. Euskirchen, S. Hoppe (eds.), *Wege zur Renaissance. Beobachtungen zu den Anfängen neuzeitlicher Kunstauffassung im Rheinland und den Nachbargebieten um 1500*, Cologne 2003, 88–131; S. Hoppe, 'Northern Gothic, Italian Renaissance and beyond. Toward a *thick* description of style', in: M. Chatenet (ed.), *Le gothique de la Renaissance* (De Architectura, 13), Paris 2011, 47–64; S. Hoppe, 'Translating the Past: Local Romanesque Architecture in Germany and its Fifteenth-Century Reinterpretation', in: K.A.E. Enenkel, K.A. Ottenheim (eds.), *The Quest for an Appropriate Past in Literature, Art and Architecture* (Intersections. Interdisciplinary Studies in early Modern Culture, 60), Leiden 2018, 511–585.
- 21 C. Wood, 'Maxilian I as Archaeologist', *Renaissance Quarterly* 58 (2005), 1128–1174; C. Wood, *Forgery, replica, fiction: temporalities of German Renaissance art*, Chicago 2008; A. Nagel, C. Wood, 'What counted as an 'Antiquity' in the Renaissance?', in: K. Eisenbichler (ed.), *Renaissance Medievalisms*, Toronto 2009, 53–74; C. Wood, 'The Credulity Problem', in: P.N. Miller, F. Louis (eds.), *Antiquarianism and Intellectual Life in Europe and China*, Ann Arbor 2012, 149–179.
- 22 *The Quest for an Appropriate Past* was an interdisciplinary research project directed in 2014–2016 by Karl Enenkel and Konrad Ottenheim and funded by the Royal Netherlands Academy of Arts and Sciences (KNAW). The project examined the assimilation of the past into sixteenth- and seventeenth-century European literature, art and architecture, with particular attention to the mechanisms through which the local past, both Roman and mediaeval, was recovered and (re-)constructed. The proceedings of the various international conferences held as part of the project were published in 2018 as Volume 60 in Brill's *Intersection* Series, with 26 case studies from all over Europe: Enenkel & Ottenheim, *op. cit.* (note 5), <https://brill.com/abstract/title/36000>.

debate arise as to the distinction between ‘real’ Roman art and the art of a thousand years later.²³ In 1813, William Gunn (1750–1841) coined the English term ‘Romanesque’, which was meant to indicate an inferior derivation of genuine ‘Roman’.²⁴ In 1818 the French antiquarian Charles Duhérissier de Gerville (1769–1853) introduced the term *l’art roman* (Romanesque art) in France to distinguish it from *l’art romain* (Roman art).²⁵ By analogy with the Romanesque languages, both regarded the former as an inferior copy and adaptation of the latter, the true Roman art which was seen as perfect and timeless. This idea was immediately widely accepted. Further dissemination of this understanding came in 1824, when Arcisse de Caumont (1801–1873) published a first attempt to differentiate the manifold architectural styles of the Middle Ages.²⁶ In those years, Caspar Reuvens, who later would become the father of Dutch archaeology, was the first in The Netherlands to explain that the (eleventh-century) octagonal chapel at Nijmegen was not a former Roman temple but a Christian building of a later age.²⁷ Presenting the new idea of distinguishing between real Roman remains and later styles, in 1827, he did not yet use the term *romaans* (Dutch for ‘Romanesque’) but instead informed his readers that this was a mediaeval style described elsewhere in Europe as ‘New Greek, Early German, or Saxon’.²⁸

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- 23 T. Waldeier Bizzarro, *Romanesque Architectural Criticism. A Prehistory*, Cambridge 1992; L. Huang, ‘L’invention de l’expression “architecture romane” et ses traductions: réception d’un terme architectural et stylistique dans l’historiographie du XIX^e siècle’, in: R. Carvais, V. Nègre, J.S. Cluzel, J. Hernu-Bélaud (eds.), *Traduire l’architecture*, Paris 2015, 97–105.
- 24 William Gunn, *An Inquiry into the Origin and Influence of Gothic Architecture*, London 1819. (NB: Gunn’s introduction is dated 1813). C.f. Waldeier Bizzarro, *op. cit.* (note 23), 132–149: ‘Chapter Five: Gunn’s “Romanesque”, de Gerville’s “romane”, and their critical legacy’.
- 25 Charles Duhérissier de Gerville in a letter to the Rouen antiquarian Le Prévost. See M.F. Gidon, ‘L’invention de l’expression *architecture romane* par Gerville, d’après quelques lettres de Gerville à Le Prévost’, *Bulletin de la Société des Antiquaires de Normandie* 42 (1934), 268–288; E. Williams, ‘The perception of Romanesque art in the Romantic period: archaeological attitudes in France in the 1820s and 1830s’, *Forum for Modern Language Studies* 21 (1985), 303–321, esp. 308; Waldeier Bizzarro, *op. cit.* (note 23), 132–149.
- 26 Arcisse de Caumont, ‘Essai sur l’architecture du moyen âge, particulièrement en Normandie’, *Mémoires de la Société des Antiquaires de Normandie* 1 (1824), 535–677.
- 27 R[euvens], in: *Antiquiteiten, een oudheidkundig tijdschrift* 11 (1823), vol. 1, p. xv and 123; C.J.Chr. Reuvens, *Over het verband der Archeologie met de hedendaagsche kunsten*, Leiden 1827, 16; A. van der Woud, *De Bataafse hut. Verschuivingen in het beeld van de geschiedenis (1750–1850)*, Amsterdam 1990, 150. (The early modern reception of this octagonal chapel is discussed in my contribution later on in this volume).
- 28 ‘nieuw-Grieks, voor-Duits of Saksisch’. Reuvens *op. cit.* 1823 (previous note), 123.

0.3 When Did Antiquity End? Perspectives of Early Modern Periodisation

One must take into account that in the period between c. 1400 and 1700, ideas of the periodisation of history differed greatly from our present scheme, and that for the intellectuals of those days, 'Antiquity' did not mean the same as it does for us.²⁹ The current, 'classical', system of periodisation of the cultures around the Mediterranean, in the Middle East and Europe from c. 3000 BC to c. 1500 AD, one subdivided into several well-defined sub-periods, is a rather recent invention based on nineteenth-century scholarship. For early modern intellectuals, 'Antiquity' was chronologically, historically and stylistically less clearly defined.³⁰ The divisions between antiquity and the present time were partly vague, partly perceived in a different way. In general, the idea of long chronological and cultural continuums was more important than what were more or less subtle divisions into various historical periods. One of the dominant ideas was that a new age had dawned with the birth of Christ and the foundation of the Roman Empire, one which simply continued up to their own time, and which would only come to an end with the Last Judgement. The idea of a *translatio imperii*, the transfer of the imperial power from ancient Rome to the German emperors of the Holy Roman Empire, fits with these notions of long continuous connections between antiquity and the humanists' own time. The concept of the 'Middle Ages' as an interruption of the historical bond between past and present, as defined by fourteenth- and fifteenth-century Italian scholars, was not yet generally accepted, certainly not in the countries north of the Alps.

Nevertheless, historians of various countries, in their attempt to organise the historical events of the previous 1500 years, came up with various sub-periods. As a matter of fact, not only the subject of their studies but also their political and religious preferences played an important role in the various ideas about the course of time.³¹ Some examples follow.

In c. 1450, the Florentine sculptor Lorenzo Ghiberti (1378–1455) divided the history of the arts into five periods:

29 For a more detailed discussion of this problem, see: Enenkel & Ottenheim, *op. cit.* (note 5), 2–6 and Enenkel & Ottenheim, *op. cit.* (note 3), 81–93.

30 D.J. Wilcox, 'The Sense of Time in Western Historical Narratives from Eusebius to Machiavelli', in: E. Breisach (ed.), *Classical Rhetoric and Medieval Historiography*, Kalamazo (MI) 1985, 167–237; U. Neddermeyer, *Das Mittelalter in der deutschen Historiographie vom 15. bis zum 18. Jahrhundert* (Kölner historische Abhandlungen, 34), Cologne / Vienna 1988.

31 Neddermeyer, *op. cit.* (note 30), 108–114.

1. classical antiquity to the triumph of Christianity in 312 AD,
2. the time of decay of the arts from 312 AD onwards until the year 1000,
3. the era of the *maniera greca* (Byzantine art), from c. 1000 to 1160,
4. a time lacking any form of proper art, from c. 1160 to 1266, and
5. the time of the rebirth of the arts in Tuscany from 1266 (the year of Giotto's birth) until the time of Ghiberti himself.³²

One of the most influential overviews of the history of mankind became the *Chronicon Carionis*, a detailed history of the world written by Johann Carion, Philipp Melanchthon and Caspar Peucer and published in 1558–65 in five volumes:³³

Volumes 1 and 2: the time before Emperor Augustus,

Volume 3: the eight centuries from Augustus up to Charlemagne (1–800 AD),

Volume 4: the time from Charlemagne to Frederick II of Hohenstaufen (800–1250),

Volume 5: covering the three most recent centuries, up to Charles V.

Another periodisation was offered by Joachim von Watt (Vadianus), court historian to the Habsburg rulers. He defined the period from Julius Caesar up to the rise of the Merovingians (fifth century AD) as the 'true' *antiquitas*. For the following centuries, he distinguished between three major eras:³⁴

- 1: *media antiquitas*, the centuries from the earliest Merovingians to the Ottonian emperors inclusive (c. 600 to 1100);
- 2: *aetas posterior*, 'a later period' after 1100;
- 3: the recent period, from the late fifteenth century onwards, which was called *aetas nostra* and did not belong to history.

Yet another scheme was offered by Bartholomäus Keckermann in the early seventeenth century, with his historiography of ancient writers (*scriptores chronicorum*). He defined the year 300 AD as the watershed between the ancient (*vetustus scriptores*) and 'more recent' authors (*recentiores scriptores*). The latter were subdivided into three periods, corresponding to 'distant', 'middle' and 'recent' history:³⁵

32 Lorenzo Ghiberti, *I commentari* (ed. L. Bartoli, Florence 1998), introduction to Volume II.

33 Johann Carion, Philipp Melanchthon, *Chronicon Carionis*, Wittenberg 1558 (vols. I, II, III); vols. IV and V added by Caspar Peucer in 1562 and 1565.

34 Joachim Vadianus (von Watt), *In farraginem antiquitatem. De collegiis et monasteriis Germaniae veteribus* 1537, (in: Melchior Goldast, *Rerum Alamannicarum scriptores aliquot vetusti* I–III, Frankfurt 1606, vol. III, 157–205).

35 Bartholomäus Keckermann, *De natura et proprietatibus historiae*, Hanover 1610.

- 1: *remotiores* scriptores, 300–1200;
- 2: *medios* scriptores, 1200–1500;
- 3: *recentiores* scriptores of the last hundred years, after 1500.

Notwithstanding the great differences between such ‘periodisations’, it is interesting to note that actually nobody saw 476 AD, the ominous year of the Fall of Rome, as a break between periods. Instead, several authors presented the years around 300 AD, i.e. the age of Constantine and the rise of the Christian church, as the starting point of a new era. Further transitions were the year 800, with its revival of the western Empire under Charlemagne, and the mid-thirteenth century, with the collapse of the Hohenstaufen dynasty after Frederick II, or a little earlier. The most recent centuries, from c. 1200/1250 up the humanists’ own time, were generally called ‘the contemporary age’, sometimes excluding the most recent hundred years. Even today, it makes sense to see the thirteenth century as the dawn of a new era in Europe and around the Mediterranean, given the rise of the cities, the intensification of international commerce and the increase in archival documents. In architecture, this was the time of the spread of the Gothic all over Europe, which around 1500 was recognised as contemporary or modern.

So, the centuries between c. 800 and 1200 were commonly not regarded as belonging to a distinct ‘mediaeval’ period but rather as a phase within a long continuing ‘Antiquity’. Heroes from these centuries were valued as the equals of those of Roman history, and on some occasions, fifteenth- and sixteenth-century historians and their readers even labelled the times around 1000 AD as the Golden Age of their history. This was done, for example, to the Norman knights who had conquered Sicily in the eleventh century, creating their independent kingdom in the twelfth century. As some contributions in this volume will show, in Sicilian Renaissance architecture we can discern many references to the Norman buildings in and around Palermo, with the architects and patrons neglecting the now famous Roman and Greek remains on Sicily. Elsewhere besides, as the examples from Liège, Scotland and Poland will show, the venerable memory of the Catholic church of centuries previously inspired patrons, antiquarians and architects to use these old buildings as models for contemporary commissions. In these cases, the actual building dates of the sources of inspiration were (more or less) known, but nevertheless they were supposed to be old enough to be regarded as ‘Antique’. Awareness of the real building date was only possible where there was a vigorous oral tradition or archival sources. Otherwise, buildings from the same period (and in the same style) could just as easily be dated a thousand years earlier.

0.4 How Did Renaissance Scholars and Architects Recognise a Roman Building?

In investigating the reception of antiquities in early modern times, we should take into account that until the late eighteenth century even scholarly people – antiquarians, humanists, artists – were unable to date ancient buildings or ruins in the absence of additional information from texts, inscriptions or perhaps coins. There were no tools yet for a visual analysis of ancient architecture, comparable for instance with Vasari's differentiation of styles in painting. People had enormous problems with identifying and dating even the best-known ruins in Rome, and an overview of the development of ancient architecture was lacking. Architecture from the thirteenth century onwards – what we now call the 'Gothic' – could be recognised as such because of its complex vaulting, elegant ribs and tracery, etc. In general, this kind of architecture was called 'modern'. But anything before the Gothic, all those variations of architecture with thick walls, barrel vaults or sturdy ribs and columns, could not be further distinguished. Nobody saw clear differences between a 'Romanesque' and a 'Roman' building. In fact, all architecture from King Solomon's time up to Charlemagne and his successors was more or less regarded as pertaining to one continuous building tradition, rich in variation but without any major changes or stylistic developments.³⁶ Above all, we should realise that north of the Alps in particular, many architectural remains of real Roman structures look rather different from those in Rome: the Porta Nigra in Trier, for instance, dates from c. 180 AD, just 60 years after the Pantheon and 20 years before the Arch of Septimius Severus in Rome, but nevertheless, with its robust outline and its simplified geometrical capitals, it seems to belong to a complete different world (fig. 0.2). A millennium later, this monumental example would be a source of inspiration for the emperors of the Holy Roman Empire and their entourage. Apparently, their architects were rather successful in these efforts, giving rise to confusion about the real age of their works just a couple of centuries later – a mystery only to be unravelled in the 1820s, as we just have seen.

Notwithstanding their lack of reliable dating methods and their lack of awareness of the formal development of architecture and decorative details, the early modern antiquarians, historians and architects who investigated the remains of old buildings had tried to define at least some criteria for recognising remains of the Roman past (or of other ancient origin). These criteria will recur in the papers presented in this volume, although not always all at once:

36 Enenkel & Ottenheim, *op. cit.* (note 3), 104–117.



FIGURE 0.2A Trier, Porta Nigra, c. 180 AD
PHOTO: AUTHOR

1 *Roman spolia and inscriptions.* From late Antiquity onwards, Roman building materials have been reused when former structures had lost their function. In particular, monolithic columns, precious marble and refined carvings often found a new destination in later buildings, partly because they were easily at hand, partly because of their immaterial value as testimonies to the former Empire. We find them reused in Carolingian, Norman and Romanesque buildings all over the former Roman Empire, in Spain and Sicily as well as Aachen. Even Roman bricks and tiles were reused sometimes, and especially those with the stamp of a Roman legion on them were easily recognised as such. These Roman spolia, marble as well as brick, were also recognised by the early modern antiquarians and could become a major argument in favour of (mis-)interpreting the whole building as a former Roman structure. Likewise, former funeral stones with inscriptions or decorative sculpture of Roman origin, installed in Romanesque walls, could support the erroneous idea of an ancient origin for the whole building.

2 *Massive walls and vaults.* Architectural historians in general tend to think Renaissance architects were mainly interested in the five classical orders of the



FIGURE 0.2B
Trier, Porta
Nigra, c. 180 AD
(detail)
PHOTO:
AUTHOR

columns and the system of pediments, refined architraves and friezes etc. as being the essential features of classic Roman architecture. Certainly, architects and antiquarians made endless series of drawings of these elements and tried to institute a coherent system for their use. Nevertheless, the most impressive memories taken home by Northern artists and architects from a voyage to Rome were the overwhelming scale of the ruins, their massive, thick and high-rising walls, and the huge barrel vaults and groined vaults, as for example in the interior of the Colosseum, at the Baths of Caracalla, those of Domitian, in the House of Nero, on and around the Forum and the Palatine Hill (fig. 0.3). Back home, massive walls, orderly constructed with rectangular hewn stones, could then erroneously be identified as Roman work. Plain barrel vaults, groined vaults, or vaults with sturdy, massive ribs without refined profiles also belonged



FIGURE 0.3 Rome, Baths of Caracalla, 212–217 AD
PHOTO: AUTHOR

to the formal grammar of what was regarded as 'Antique'. This occurred even more often in the former Roman border zone along the Rhine and Danube, the *limes*, where the cellars and turrets of mediaeval castles were interpreted as the remains of Roman *castella* mentioned in ancient texts.

Since this will form the subject of a separate publication in the nearby future, I will here merely refer to three different sources in order to support this argument. In 1470, Gerhard van Schueren argued that the castle of the Dukes of Cleve, called the *Schwanenburg*, was built on the remains of a Roman castle because of its very old and heavy stones in the lower parts which had become visible when in 1440 a tower collapsed and old walls behind became discernible.³⁷ In the late sixteenth century the famous military engineer Daniel

37 Gert van der Schueren (R. Scholten ed.), *Clevische Chronik : nach der Originalhandschrift des Gert van der Schuren nebst Vorgeschichte und Zusätzen von Turck, einer Genealogie des Clevischen Hauses ...*, Cleves 1884. [<http://digital.ub.uni-duesseldorf.de/ihd/content/titleinfo/2300117>]. J.H. Schütte, *Amusements des Eaux de Cleve*, Lemgo 1748, 164; J.E. Buggenhagen, *Nachricht über die zu Cleve gesammelten theils römische theils*

Specklin presumed that he could identify several Roman fortifications in the Alsace mountains, indicating ‘strong towers and walls erected by the Romans against the Alemannian tribes’ of enormous strength, ‘so strong that nobody could ever destroy them.’³⁸ A century later, in 1661, vicar and historian Johan Picardt stated that the oldest parts of the castle at Bentheim (Westphalia) were the remains of the castle founded by Drusus Germanicus, again because of its massive construction of walls, vaults and the heavy tower.³⁹

3 *Iconography of architectural sculpture.* A third potential clue for identifying ancient ‘Roman’ buildings was the iconography of the sculptured decoration. Although it is difficult to believe today, apparently in the fifteenth, sixteenth and seventeenth centuries the Christian symbolic meaning of much of the Romanesque architectural sculpture found on capitals, columns and friezes was no longer evident. People had become used to the clear iconographic schemes of recognisable Biblical scenes, as had become common practise from the thirteenth century onwards. Much of the content of the previous period, such as scatological monsters, lions mauling other animals or humans, aggressive birds, etc., were no longer connected to the Christian faith and became regarded as characteristically pagan. A famous example is offered by St Margaret’s Chapel in the imperial castle of Nuremberg, where fragments of Romanesque sculpture on the outer wall were regarded as the decoration a former temple dedicated to Diana, as Conrad Celtis informs us in 1502.⁴⁰

vaterländische Altherthümer, Berlin 1795, 12; R. von Busch, *Studien zu deutschen Antikensammlungen des 16. Jahrhunderts*, diss. Tübingen 1973, 44–60.

38 ‘alte starken Thürme und Mauern, so die Römer wider die Alemanier erbaut haben’, ‘gewaltige dicke lange Mauer, so hart das sie kein Mann zerbrechen kann’. Daniel Specklin, *Architectura von Vestungen*, Strassburg 1589, 87v, 88.

39 ‘The construction of the exceptional and heavy tower, the Kronenburg, the court chapel, and the beer cellar, being the oldest parts of this mighty house, evidently show that these parts are Roman works’. (‘De structuer van den raren en swaren vierkanten Toorn, die Croonenburgh, de Hof-Capelle, den Bier-keller, als zijnde de oudste stucken deses machtigen Huyses, geven overvloedigh te kennen, dat dese stucken zijn Roomsche wercken’). Johan Picardt, *Korte Beschryvinge van eenige Vergetene en Verborgene Antiquiteten der Provintien en landen gelegen tusschen de Noord-zee, de Yssel, Emse en Lippe*, Amsterdam 1660 (reprint Leiden 2008, with an introduction by W.A.B. van der Sanden), 94.

40 ‘Generally, there is a legend that earlier on this mount was a temple dedicated to Diana, and to substantiate this, they point to an idol and to several old and no longer identifiable images’. Conrad Celtis, *Norimberga*, 1502. Original quote in Latin, at full length in Hoppe 2011, *op. cit.* (note 20), 55 (with bibliographical references).

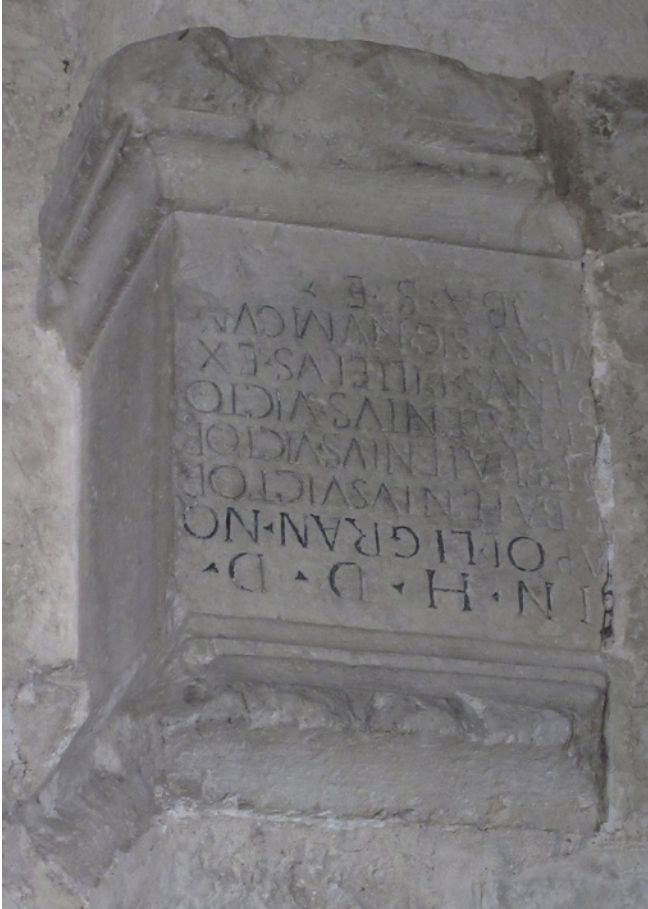


FIGURE 0.4
 Brenz (Germany),
 St. Gallus' church,
 c. 1200, with a
 Roman funeral
 stone, upside down,
 supporting the
 vault of the
 southern apse
 PHOTO: AUTHOR

Another example is St Gallus' Church in Brenz an der Brenz (Swabia) of c. 1200. Here, we find all of the aforementioned 'Roman' features: embedded in its interior walls is a genuine ancient Roman funeral stone (fig. 0.4), the apse is covered by a groined vault, and the nave contains two rows of sturdy stone columns with abstract block capitals, with some sculptured ornamentation (fig. 0.5). But what really attracted attention c. 1500 was the decoration of the exterior frieze all around the building, depicting all kinds of animals and creatures (fig. 0.6). The church was described in 1536 by the humanist scholar Andreas Althamer (1500–c. 1539) as a former heathen temple precisely because of this decoration: 'Had the aforesaid true and proper faith then been widespread among the population, would they not have carved other Christian works of the Passion of the Lord or sacred stories? Since nothing of this can now be



FIGURE 0.5 Brenz, St. Gallus', c. 1200, view of the nave
PHOTO: AUTHOR

seen, I must conclude that before the planting of the Faith in this place, it was not persons of Germanic origin who built this edifice, but rather Romans: this because my fellow countrymen [also] say that they were built by heathen, as they call these peoples.⁴¹

As far as we can currently understand the phenomenon, these humanists, antiquarians and artists investigating their local or regional antiquities must have presumed that the built remains of the ancient local population did not differ in style or construction from those erected by the Romans. Apparently, they believed that all their forebears – Romans as well as Batavians, Germans, Gauls, etc. – shared the same civilisation and the same kind of architecture. This is the reason why Romanesque buildings were sometimes even misunderstood as being Batavian or Germanic in origin, as for instance with the

41 Andreas Althamer, *Commentaria Germaniae in P. Cornelii Taciti Equis Rom. libellum de situ, moribus & populis Germanorum*, Nuremberg 1536. Original quote in Latin, at full length in Hoppe 2011 (note 20), 54–55 (with bibliographical references). For the architectural history of the church, see: B. Cichy, *Die Kirche von Brenz*, Brenz 1991³.



FIGURE 0.6 Brenz, St. Gallus', c. 1200, ornamental frieze along the outside walls (detail)
PHOTO: AUTHOR

example of Conrad Celtis, who in 1502 described the sculptured portal of (what we would take to be) a Romanesque abbey as a former 'Temple of the Druids'.⁴² A possible exception to this prevailing idea of one universal ancient building style is the application of so-called *Astwerk*, 'branch-work', in the late fifteenth century: Gothic structures with seemingly organic trees and branches (all carved in stone) instead of the usual ribs and colonettes. This may be connected with theories about the origin of German architecture in particular, as having lain in the forests outside the Roman Empire; this will not be further discussed in this volume.⁴³

42 Conrad Celtis, *De origine, situ, moribus et institutionis Norimbergae libellus*, Nuremberg 1502. Quote at full length (and comment) in: Wood 2008, *op. cit.* (note 21), 1–13.

43 See: H. Günther, 'Das Astwerk und die Theorie der Renaissance von der Entstehung der Architektur', in: M.C. Heck, F. Lemerle, Y. Pauwels (eds.), *Théorie des arts et création artistique dans l'Europe du Nord du XVI^e au XVIII^e siècle*, Villeneuve d'Asq / Lille 2002, 13–32; H. Hubach, 'Zwischen Astwerk und Feston. Bemerkenswertes zum Epitaph des kurpfälzischen Hofgerichtssekretärs Paul Baumann von Oedheim', in: H. Hubach, B. von Orelli-Messerli, T. Tassini (eds.), *Reibungspunkte. Ordnung und Umbruch in Architektur und Kunst*, Petersberg 2008, 115–122; Hoppe 2011, *op. cit.* (note 20), esp. 52–54,

The characteristics formulated by the early modern antiquarians for identifying the Roman (or otherwise ancient) origin of a building, or its remains, also came to serve as design ‘tools’ for creating new buildings with references to local antiquity: the suggestion of thick walls, the use of groined vaults or rather ‘archaic’ sturdy ribs, ‘exotic’ sculptured decorations on capitals and/or friezes, and the application of real or fake Roman inscriptions, etc.

0.5 The Structure of This Volume

The papers collected in this volume are presented in two sections. The first section, ‘Romanesque architecture and the venerable past of the church and the realm’, consists of case studies from all over Europe, presenting the reference to ‘Romanesque’ architecture: not intended to refer to the ancient Roman past but rather to a later, but still venerable, old period around 1000–1250 AD. This section starts with contributions on Sicily and Southern Italy by Stefano Piazza, Emanuela Garofalo and Marco Nobile. They discuss the importance of the eleventh- and twelfth-century Kingdom of the Normans as the most favoured episode in the history of the island and its consequences for fifteenth- and sixteenth-century Sicilian architecture. Bianca de Divitiis next discusses the situation in the Kingdom of Naples, with special attention paid to the veneration of Emperor Frederick II in Capua. The next three papers focus on the veneration of the age-old past of the Catholic Church of centuries previously in early modern times. Ian Campbell revisits the ground-breaking ideas of his 1995 paper on the ‘Romanesque’ revival in late mediaeval and early modern Scotland. Barbara Arciszewska discusses some reflections on the first centuries of the Christian church in Poland by fifteenth- and sixteenth-century scholars and patrons. Stefaan Grieten and Krista De Jonge consider the palace of the Prince Bishop of Liège and early sixteenth-century ideas about the glorious age of the eleventh-century Bishop Notker. Sanne Maekelberg and Krista De Jonge present a later case study from the Southern Low Countries analysing seventeenth-century ideas about ‘true’ chivalresque residential architecture and the visualisation of the (supposedly) ancient, knightly descentance of the house and its owner. Finally, Richard Schofield presents a close reading of San Michele in Isola in Venice, analysing its architectural details and its connections with earlier Venetian buildings.

with further literature. See also E.M. Kavalier, *Renaissance Gothic. Architecture and the Arts in Northern Europe 1470–1540*, New Haven / New York 2012, 199–229.

The second section, 'Romanesque Architecture as Imaginary Antiquity', presents case studies of the use of Romanesque architecture – misinterpreted as ancient Roman buildings – as source of inspiration for contemporary *all'antica* architecture. Eliana Carrara and Emanuela Ferretti revisit the historical discourse concerning the origin of the Baptistery of Florence. Hubertus Günther presents a detailed case study of the presumed Greek origin of San Giacomo di Rialto in Venice and its consequences for Venetian Renaissance architecture. Stephan Hoppe explains, with three examples, the use of 'Romanesque' elements in residential architecture in southern Germany and Austria and the importance of the network of learned courtiers and educated artists. Widespread ideas about the pagan origin of centralised Romanesque churches are discussed by Konrad Ottenheim, with a focus on the octagonal St Nicolas' Chapel in Nijmegen (The Netherlands). Lex Bosman offers another case study from the Low Countries, illustrating the long-lasting impact of such misinterpretations in historiography. Finally, Kristoffer Neville analyses comparable problems in seventeenth-century Sweden, where mediaeval churches were venerated as proofs of the high culture of the Ancient Goths.

Together, these papers offer a broad view of the variety of the use of 'Romanesque' elements in early modern architecture. The authors hope to stimulate others to think anew about the quest for the 'revival' of antiquity between the fifteenth and seventeenth centuries and the wide range of early modern possibilities for formulating one's ancient past and place in history. In the end, this was all about the creation of dynastic, national or regional identities, in which the best historians, poets and artists were proficient. Understanding some of the artful but artificial statements formulated then may still be helpful in unveiling biases in current debates about comparable subjects.