美术史与观念史

范景中 曹意强 主编

VII

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HISTORY OF ART AND HISTORY OF IDEAS

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2009年3月为恩斯特·贡布里希爵士诞辰百年纪念。在德国，将于3月30日召开贡布里希国际学术讨论会，同时，中国美术学院也召开纪念贡氏的学术讲演周，曹意强教授主编的《新美术》也专设纪念栏目。本刊特发表贡氏此文，以作纪念，并为国内正在兴起的美术史与考古学交汇的学术思潮提供旁参。因此文极难寻觅，故用英文刊录，以广流传。

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From Archaeology to Art History

Some Stages in the Rediscovery of the Romanesque

E. H. GOMBRICH

"In scholarship there are no reserved seats". I had to think of this remark by Aby Warburg when I began to prepare this contribution to the memorial volume of my dear admired friend and former student Sixten Ringbom. Remembering his most interesting study *Stone, Style and Truth. The Vogue for Natural Stone in Nordic Architecture, 1880–1910*[1], in which the revival of the Romanesque style plays a not inconsiderable part, I proposed the above topic for my paper. I had first been led to the subject by the accident of an invitation asking me to celebrate the restoration of an old village church near the shores of the Lago Maggiore by giving a lecture on its architecture. I had to reply that I knew nothing about Medieval Lombard styles, but on being pressed I agreed to speak about the appreciation of the Romanesque through the centuries, a lecture that was even published as a pamphlet by Einaudi of Torino.[2] It was thus that I discovered how much the subject – as distinct from the topic of the Gothic Revival – had been neglected in the past. The main exception being the excellent contribution by Thomas Cocke on "the rediscovery of the Romanesque" printed in the Catalogue of the Great Exhibition of the *English Romanesque* held at the Hayward Gallery in 1986, which, however, is confined to the British Isles.

I don't know whether I was more gratified or dismayed when I discovered through the pages of the *Burlington Magazine* that a substantial book on that very topic has by now been published by the Cambridge University Press: *Romanesque Architectural Criticism, A Prehistory* by Tina Waldeier Bizzarro in 1992.[3]

My first impulse was, of course, to change the subject, but I had meanwhile done a little more work on it for a lecture in Cambridge[4] and I found, on reflection, that some of my ideas might still deserve an airing. For however meritorious the new book may be, the author deals predominantly with the concept and nomenclature of the architectural style before the 19th century[5], and though her last chapter is called "An Introduction to Latter-day Criticism" it barely mentions the German contribution, which, as I hope to show, was considerable.

It is a topic moreover that may permit us to reflect on the distinction to which I allude in my title, the distinction between archaeology and Art History which is not made in that recent book. Yet it concerns a rather urgent problem in our studies. What is called the "New Art History" may, (as I have said elsewhere) turn out to be the old archaeology. By this I mean that the champions of the new trend frown on the so-called élitism of traditional art history and its canon of values, which they want to replace by objective social analysis. I agree with them, that art history is indeed concerned with values, with appreciation, in contrast to archaeology that has always concentrated on the objective evidence which the relics of the past may offer to the historian or sociologist.

I am able to exemplify this vital distinction right at the outset of my story, by quoting the very foundation document of our studies, Giorgio Vasari's *Lives of the Most Excellent Architects, Sculptors and Painters*, first published in Florence in 1550.[6] Vasari's work is of course a celebration of what we still call the "Renaissance", the rebirth of the arts after their demise or debasement during the Dark Ages, the "Middle Ages" that intervened between the glories of antiquity and their gradual recovery which began in the late 13th century. It goes without saying, that given this picture of the course of history, what we call the Romanesque could not have been considered art by Vasari. Its buildings did not follow the classical rules, its images were merely grotesque and barbaric. Yet Vasari, who is so frequently dismissed by modern art historians who cannot accept his attributions, was no fool. He shared the general opinion about the course of history that attributed the coming of the dark ages to the ruin of the Roman Empire, the invasion of the barbarians and the coming of Christianity with its opposition to pagan culture, but looking at the sculpture of the Arch of Constantine which so obviously represented a decline from classical standards, he rightly asked himself whether these blanket explanations could be wholly correct? After all, the arch was erected after Constantine's victory over Maxentius in 312 AD, a good many years before these three factors could have taken effect, and yet it shows marks of decline. It was safer to say that the wheels of fortune had turned and so, to quote his words, "Sculpture, painting and architecture went from bad to worse until the arts were as good as lost". What there remained of the art of painting, in his view, was due to the "Greeks" who cultivated a clumsy and ugly manner, figures with staring eyes which looked like possessed, open palms and standing on tiptoe, which, as Vasari says, can be seen in any ancient church in Italy.

"Architecture", Vasari admits, "lost less of its former perfection ... since it is necessary and useful for the health of the body" (p. 228/9). Whoever takes the trouble to read the pages which Vasari devoted to Medieval architecture in the introduction of his work will come to agree that he looked at these buildings not as an art historian but as an archaeologist. He had consulted the *Historia Langobardorum* by Petrus Diaconus, and picked out points of historical interest, quoting some old inscriptions and listing buildings which, he admits are "great and magnificent though their architecture is very rude" (p. 233/4). A series of murals at Monza near Milan interested him, because it shows that the old Lombards shaved the back of their heads, wore their hair thick in front and, that their shoes were open to the toes, etc. (p. 234). In other words paintings wholly devoid of artistic merit in his eyes were still important as historical documents. But Vasari's aesthetic bias in favour of Vitruvian standards did not blind him to the quality of such monuments as San Marco in Venice and particulary the Cathedral of Pisa, for which he found eloquent praise, giving special credit to the "judgement or talent" of Buschetto, the architect, for having adjusted the size and shape of the many columns imported by the Pisans from various parts of the world, and most of all for contriving "with great ingenuity" to achieve a gradual reduction of their scale on the façade (p. 237/8). What attracted Vasari's censure and ridicule was notoriously the style we still call Gothic (p. 233) on which he had conferred that misleading name because he remembered the destruction of Rome at the hands of the Vandals and the Goths and identified the manner of building that so blatantly contradicted the classical tradition with these Teutonic tribes. It was a fateful error, that was to linger on, for good or ill, through many centuries.

What Vasari bequeathed to posterity, then, was the tendency to identify the styles dominating the Middle Ages with two contrasting national tra-ditions, the Goths and the Byzantines. For a long time, indeed up to the 19th century, any medieval buildings in Europe that lacked the

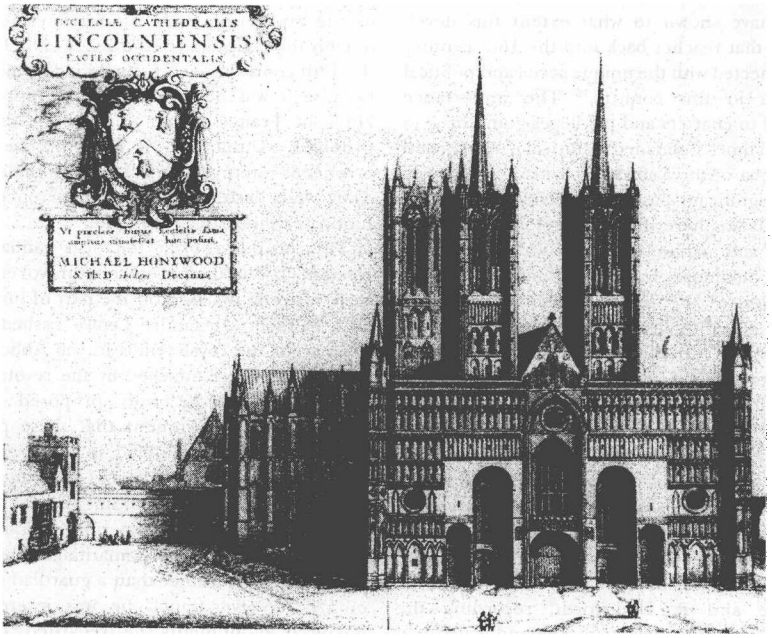
characteristics of Gothic architecture, notably the pointed arch, was dubbed "Byzantine", thus masking the identity of the style we now call Romanesque.

Vasari and a good many of those who followed him was somewhat confused about the chronology of these two unclassical styles of building which flourished in the dark ages, but the inconsistency of his terminology could not remain unnoticed for long. It was clear that the excesses of decoration which he blamed on the Gothic barbarians did not come into vogue till some five hundred years after the sack of Rome by Alaric. What happened in the preceding century, in other words in the period we now characterise as Romanesque?

It is the growing awareness of this problem in the 17th and 18th centuries that is indeed the main topic of Tina Waldeier Bizzarro's book. She rightly follows Paul Frankl's standard work on *The Gothic*[7] in stressing the importance of Jean-François Félibien who wrote in 1687 that there are "two sorts of Gothic buildings". "The oldest have nothing commendable except their solidity and their grandeur. As to the modern ones, they are of a taste so opposed to that of the ancient Gothic that one can say that those who made them slipped into an equally great excess of delicacy as the others had into extreme heaviness and clumsiness ..."[8]

For more than a century the Romanesque style had thus to serve as a foil against which the growing appreciation of the Gothic style could develop. A typical example (not previously noticed) is a Latin Treatise of 1764 by the Viennese Jesuit Christian Rieger. Rieger also makes the point that there are two types of Gothic, the ancient and the modern. The ancient buildings resemble monsters, since they only aimed at solidity regardless of beauty, while the modern ones commend themselves by the beauty of proportion and the skilled workmanship that can still be admired in the great cathedrals including St. Stephens in his native Vienna.[9]

Writing in 1768 the famous spokesman of the Neo-Classical taste in architecture, Francesco Milizia, still sided with Vasari in his dislike of the Gothic style, but he followed the great antiquarian Scipione Maffei who, in 1731, had dismissed the theory of the barbarian origin of medieval architecture as mere nonsense.[10] Like Maffei, Milizia considers it a slander to speak of the bad style as "Gothic" since he knows that Theodoric, King of the Goths and of the Italians, was a highly civilized ruler who erected splendid buildings in Ravenna, Pavia and Verona in what was then the current style. "The Barbarians possessed no architecture, neither a good one nor a bad one. Our arrogance attributes to them that monstrous architecture that was born among ourselves because of our love of variety and caprice. When the Barbarians arrived, not much more was conserved in Italy of the Roman method (*L'uso Romano*) than had a bearing on solidity of construction and the general proportions, but as far as beauty was concerned, the proper taste (*buon gusto*) had already been lost before the Barbarian invasion." According to Milizia it was three centuries after Charlemagne in the 10th and 11th century that a general effort was made to emerge from that state of ignorance and clumsiness, but with poor success. If architecture had formerly been heavy and clumsy, one now went to the opposite extreme,[11] a contrast we have already encountered in the previous quotations. It seems to me more than likely that it was this passage in a famous standard work that ultimately led to the coinage of the term *Romanesque* in English and *Roman* in French around 1820. Indeed, the careful analysis of the history of this coinage that forms the core of Bizzarro's book appears to confirm this hypothesis. Bizzarro is anxious to assign priority in this matter to the English antiquarian William Gunn (1750–1841), Rector of Irstead in Norfolk and a close friend and correspondent of John Flaxman, the Neo-Classical sculptor. We learn (p. 139) that Gunn "was a Latinist, a Classicist, and aficionado of



1. W. Hollar, Lincoln Cathedral. *From Dugdale and Dodworth, Monasticum Anglicanum 1655.*

Italian culture", who (like Flaxman) had resided in Rome for a time. Both of them were apparently particularly interested in "Rome's glorious architecture" and its decline. He would no doubt have read Milizia.

Bizzarro is able to demonstrate that Gunn's treatise, "*an Inquiry into the Origin and Influence of gothic Architecture*", though not published before 1819, must have been written more than six years earlier and it was there that the author introduced and justified the term "Romanesque", having mentioned earlier in the treatise that the architects from Italy who erected stone churches after the conversion of the heathen built them "*more et opere Romano*" (140). We need not here follow our author in her account of the French antiquarians who introduced the terms "Roman" into French architectural history, Arcisse de Coumont (1802–73) and Charles Alexis Adrian Duhessier de Gerville (1769–1853). Suffice it to take note of the enthusiasm these writers displayed for the researches of English antiquarians.

In England, of course, medieval buildings with round arches had long been called "Norman" and continued to be so called till the coming of art historians from central Europe somewhat confused the issue, since they preferred the European term Romanesque. Indeed England may well claim priority in the systematic study of medieval art and architecture. Thomas Kendrick and

others have shown to what extent this development that reaches back into the 16th century was connected with the unique social and political situation in this country.[12] The importance attached to charters and privileges going back to medieval times stimulated historical research, and the trauma of the Reformation made a recovery of this significant past more difficult and more urgent. It was here that archaeology, under the name of antiquarian studies was widely cultivated among amateurs leading ultimately to the foundation of the Society of Antiquaries 1707 which is still going strong. It may be said that here the road led directly from Muniment to the Monument. The dates of tombstones and of the foundation of buildings became intensely relevant, not so much for the history of art as for history. A manuscript by John Aubrey of around 1650 entitled *Chronologia Architectonica* illustrates the characteristic details of Norman architecture.[13] It was this interest also which led to the publication after 1660 of the truly monumental multi-volume *Monasticon Anglicanum* by W. Dugdale and R. Dodsworth, recording the monuments and convents in England which had been suppressed during the Reformation.[14]

The authors were lucky enough to find an illustrator worthy of this subject, the Bohemian engraver Wenceslas Hollar whose view of Lincoln Cathedral (Fig. 1) exemplifies the care and accuracy with which he portrayed both the Norman and the Gothic elements of that magnificent building. But over this and other important English publications mentioned in Thomas Cocke's study we must not forget or neglect the most spectacular archaeological work of the period, I refer to the great French scholar Bernard de Montfaucon who must have employed a large team of draughtsmen and engravers first to record the monuments of classical antiquity in a famous standard work, and then to turn to the monuments of the French monarchy in a five volume work published in Paris between 1729 and 1733.[15] The plates of this work have preserved for us the aspects of many monuments now lost, notably the sculptures of the abbey of St. Denis of the 12th century which he included in his survey because it was believed that they represented kings of France rather than Old Testament prophets. Unhappily it was precisely this erroneous interpretation that led to their doom. They were destroyed during the French Revolution as symbols of a hated past.

This eruption of a fanatical vandalism is relevant to our theme, since it provoked, in its turn, a strong reaction on the part of historians. One of them, Alexandre Lenoir rushed to the defence of the royal tombs in the Abbey of St. Denis which were attacked by the revolutionary crowds. It was he who proposed to the revolutionary government that these precious relics should be assembled in a museum that might illustrate the history of France in a sequence of rooms extending from the early Middle Ages to the great period of François I.[16] We know that this heroic Samaritan saw himself as an archaeologist rather than a guardian of works of art. However much he was interested in medieval monuments he regarded them as symptoms of the Dark Ages and the debasement of art, much as Vasari had done.

The same prejudice pervades even the first attempt to write a history of medieval art from the end of the Roman Empire to the Renaissance. Its author was another learned Frenchman Count Seroux d'Agincourt, who was originally inspired to undertake this enormous task by Winckelmann's *History of Ancient Art* published in 1764. It was his intention to write a continuation of that work covering the thousand years from 400–1400. He had assembled a large team of artists in Italy which he employed to contribute to the plates of that ambitious enterprise which was however not published before the second decade of the 19th century, since the French Revolution had delayed its completion.[17] A glance at the captions of these plates suffices to show that the author considered the works he recorded as belonging to what he

calls "the period of decadence". Some of the passages in the text referring to sculpture still reflect the tradition of Vasari: "The state of barbarism into which these arts declined is demonstrated by the works produced at the time, which must be considered the absolute decadence of the arts".

Naturally the author was referring here to works of the figurative arts rather than to architecture. The images produced in the Romanesque period were universally found to be childish and even repellent. There is no more striking evidence of this attitude than the fact that the first history of caricature ever written, J. Malcolm's book of 1813,[18] opens with a chapter illustrating the arts of "savages" and of the early Middle Ages. For the author the magnificent Anglo-Saxon pendrawing in a codex of the Psalms in the British Museum (Fig. 2) shows in his words "The near relationship between caricaturing and the first dawning of genius ... the artist has given a gigantic Christ with a back almost doubled, releasing comparatively pygmy persons from the jaws of a monster, figurative of the prison for souls: sufficiently terrific for the imagination of a Calmuck or a South American Indian" (p. 12).

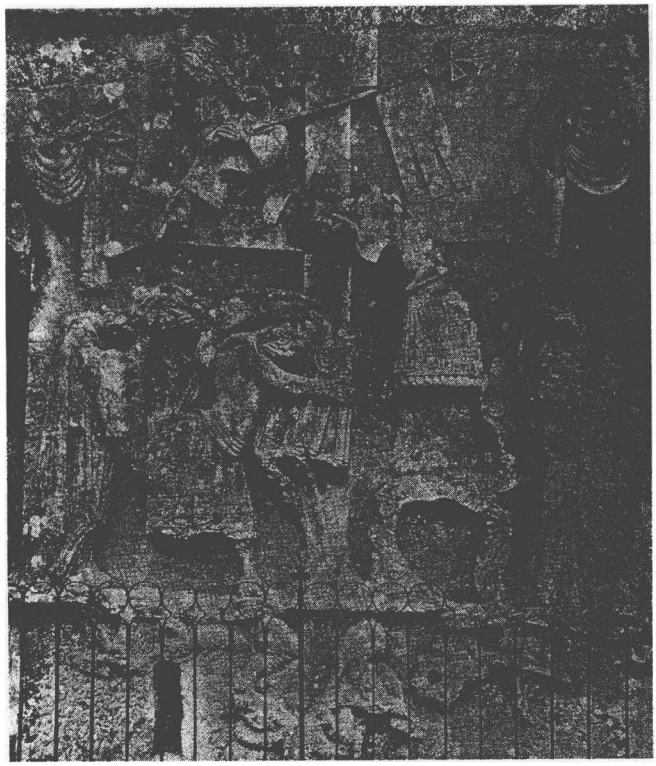
The comparison is by no means isolated: in his Academy lectures on sculpture (published in 1829, but written earlier)[19] John Flaxman refers to the early phases of sculpture: "We find, in most countries, attempts to copy the human figure in early times equally barbarous, whether they were the production of India, Babylon, Germany, Mexico or Otaheite. They equally partake in the common deformities of great heads, monstrous faces, diminutive and mis-shapen bodies and limbs" (p. 201).

The fact is that any distortion of the human figure was considered grotesque and repellent and automatically removed the image concerned from the realm of art into that of archaeology.

The duality to which I alluded is reflected in the title of a journal published by Johann Wolfgang Goethe in Weimar in the 1820s, he called it *Aus Kunst und Altertum, ("concerning art and antiquity")*. One of the articles from Goethe's own hand[20] illustrates, almost to perfection, the transition between the documentary and the aesthetic. Goethe was writing about a Romanesque relief carved in the rock (Fig. 3) near a place called Horn which had recently been copied and published in a lithograph.

2. Christ at the Mouth of Hell. *From J.P. Malcolm,* A Historical Sketch of the Art of Caricaturing, *London, 1813, pl. VI. After a Psalter, 1041–66 A.D. London, British Museum, Tib. C.vi.*

The erudition expended by Goethe on the interpretation of this monument is as characteristic as it was misguided. The period was obsessed with the idea of oriental influences governing the art and symbolism of the Dark Ages, and Goethe surmised that the figures of the sun and moon flanking the cross (which actually allude to the



3. The Descent from the Cross, *The Externstein, Horn (Westphalia), XIIth century.*

eclipse reported in the Bible) sym-bolised the dualism of good and evil attributed to the Manicheans. He referred not only to a plate from d'Agincourt but also to two publications about Mithras, since the cult images of the Persian religion also regularly show the sun and the moon.

Contemplating the lithographic reproduction due to the sculptor Christian Rauch, Goethe rightly could not resist the suspicion that the execution of the design was pervaded by a "faint whiff" of 19th century taste, but he did not hesitate to attribute the merits of the composition to the original relief.

He had no doubt about the sources of these merits: He fully accepted Vasari's construction according to which the arts had wholly disappeared from Western Europe and only survived in ever diminishing strength among the Byzantines. However, we know from an earlier essay by Goethe in the same Journal[21] that he attached more value to that tradition than Vasari had done. He was convinced that it was among

these artists that the skills of composition had survived from antiquity. Interestingly enough, he also postulated that the "monkish artists" responsible for the relief in question, who may have belonged to the conquering court of Charlemagne, must have carried pattern books with them, which they followed all the more faithfully, since the very repetition of its figures would confirm their truthfulness. Thus Goethe did not hesitate to attribute to the composition in question the merit of "simplicity and nobility".

"The man who lowers the body of the dead Christ appears to have stepped on a small tree which bends under his weight, and thus there is no need for showing a ladder which is always awkward ... but what we must praise in particular, is the thought of showing the head of the Saviour leaning against the face of His mother who stands on the right and even gently presses it with her hand – a beautiful and dignified motif that we have encountered nowhere else even though it befits so exalted a mother. Later representations show her convulsed in sorrow, fainting among her women, till finally Daniele da Volterra shows her lying in an undignified way on her back". "Probably", Goethe continues his reflection, "artists never found their way out of this horizontal accent because they needed it as contrast to the upright stem of the cross". There could be not better proof than these comparisons to show that Goethe approached this early relief not only as an archaeologist but also as a sensitive lover of art.

To appreciate the full significance of Goethe's exercise in "the formal analysis" of an early medieval monument, we must also consider the date and context of the essay. By the time of its appearance the Romantic Movement in Germany was in full flood, and enthusiasm for the Middle Ages, "The Age of Faith", had challenged the Classical Tradition with which Goethe was identified. He had made many enemies by his resistance to the exaggerated bias of the medievalisers and their gushing reaction to early works. All the more he may have wanted to demonstrate that a cool appraisal need not stand in the way of the appreciation of genuine artistic achievement. Much to the disappointment of his friends, the brothers Boisserée, he had put this conviction to the test in his discussion of the gains and losses resulting from the innovations of the Van Eycks,[22] and his approach triumphed again in this essay that ranked an early medieval relief higher than the famous composition of one of Michelangelo's followers.

There was one consequence of the Romantic Movement which neither Goethe nor any other Art lover could disapprove of: the increasing concern for the preservation and restoration of ancient monuments. Spurred, no doubt, by the vandalism of the French Revolution and the neglect of earlier generations, this growing concern manifested itself on both sides of the Rhine by voluntary, and soon also legislative, efforts to save what could still be saved of the architectural heritage of the past.[23]

In France it was Prosper Merimée, best remembered today as a creator of the figure of Carmen, who in his capacity as Inspector of Ancient Monuments, acquired immense merits both as a conservator and a historian of medieval art. In 1837 he published a perceptive essay on the religious architecture of the Middle Ages[24] in which he attempted a concise characteristic both of the Romanesque and the Gothic style, singling out the contrasts between massive solidity and lightness of structure, between the emphasis on the horizontal and the vertical. Essentially, of course, these contrasts go back to the formulations of Félibien, but Merimée was more original in claiming that each of these autonomous styles followed the same inherent law of development from tentative beginnings to maturity and to inevitable decadence, when the structure became smothered in decoration. That interpretation still influenced the great French art historian Henri Focillon in our century.

Merimée's greatest merit, however, was his discovery and rescue of the murals of the church

4. God appears to Abraham, *fresco in the church of Saint-Savin-sur-Gartempe (Vienne), XIIth century.*

of Saint-Savin-sur-Gartempe near Vienne, dating from the 11th and 12th centuries (Fig. 4), on which he wrote a report to the Ministry in 1831 and published a monograph in 1845 that still repays reading:

"At first sight the paintings of Saint-Savin strike one by the faults of their design and the coarseness of their execution, in one word by the ignorance and lack of skill of the artists. But looking at them more attentively one will recognise a certain grandeur which works of more recent periods completely lack. Compare for instance one of the compositions in the nave with a painting by Jan van Eyck: the latter is certainly more correct, more exact, much closer to nature, but its style is low and *bourgeois*, to use an expression of the studios. The murals of Saint-Savin with all their myriad failings exhibit something of that nobility that is so impressive in the works of classical antiquity" (p. 112).

Like Goethe, Merimée attributes these reminiscences of classical art to the influence of the Byzantines, thus essentially accepting Vasari's construct, but unlike Goethe he does not mainly see this influence in the skill of composition, but rightly concentrates on such details as the methods of painting drapery, showing the limbs and their movements underneath. Thus Merimée must be counted among the first who paved the way to a proper historical appreciation of Romanesque painting.

It was Prosper Merimée who became the mentor and predecessor of the most learned medievalist architect of the 19th century, Viollet-le-Duc, one of those super-human personalities of the past whose energy and industry must inspire us with awe.[25] His name is of course associated with his advocacy of Gothic which he interpreted as the ideally functional style, but from the beginning his activities as a restorer as well as an architect also brought him into contact with Romanesque buildings. It was Merimée who commissioned him to restore the Abbey of

Vézelay which was in danger of collapse. Here as elsewhere we may regret Viollet-le-Duc's lack of caution in refashioning an ancient building, but we cannot deny him the credit of having preserved and recorded so much of the French medieval heritage. His *Dictionary of Architecture* became a standard work and it was he who inspired the first museum of plaster casts of medieval sculpture, the Trocadéro in Paris, which opened its doors to the public in 1882 and marked an epoch, by making so many of the monuments from distant sites known for the first time.

But for all the importance of these developments in France, we still must look to Germany for the decisive transition from archaeology to art history and its effect on the appreciation of the Romanesque. It is well known that it was the German historian Carl Friedrich von Rumohr who first cleared the ground by his sober and critical approach to traditional notions. The chapter of the *Italienische Forschungen* entitled "On the common origin of the architectural schools of the Middle Ages"[26] takes its starting point from a dissection of Vasari's assertions, which leads him to reject both the terms 'gothic' and that of 'byzantine' for building styles of Western Europe, the first, because the style so described by Vasari originated obviously many centuries after the Gothic invasion of Italy, the second because genuine Byzantine influence was rare indeed in the West. For the first, he proposes the name 'germanic architecture' since the term 'german', that had been used, was too narrow to embrace the varieties of the style in France and in England (p. 594); for the second he settles finally for the term "pre-germanic", not a very happy coinage, since Rumohr himself showed himself particularly interested in the monuments of Lombard Italy such as Pavia.

Whether or not Rumohr's interesting pages should be classed as archaeology or art history may be a moot point. Unlike his chapters on painting his approach to architecture is purely factual. Yet it was in the very years that Rumohr worked, that a new approach to the testimonies of the past developed in Germany that finally effected this transition. I refer to the philosophy of history propounded by Georg Friedrich Hegel in his university courses in Berlin in the 1820s. In his grand metaphysical scheme intended to account for the progress of mankind, Hegel assigned every nation a providential role in the march of the divine spirit through history and taught his hearers to look at every style of the past as a manifestation of that spirit. I have tried to show elsewhere to what extent the majority of German scholars who were to lay the foundation of art historical studies had imbibed this heady doctrine.[27] Thus Karl Schnaase, the author of a six volume history of art which appeared between 1843 and 1864, had attended Hegel's lectures and wrote in his first work on his travels in the Netherlands[28] of 1834 that architecture could never be anything but the creation of the national spirit (p. 369).

It was Franz Kugler, one of the most learned and prolific pioneers of art history, who stole a march on Schnaase by publishing the first ever hand-book of art history in 1842 covering the whole panorama from ancient America to 19th century Europe.[29] The 13th chapter, that takes up 97 pages, is entitled "The Art of the Romanesque Style". The author explains in the opening pages why he has adopted this novel term, following the use of linguistics in which the languages deriving from Latin are called *Romanisch*. A footnote (p. 416) explains why the author has preferred this term to that of the Byzantine style which he himself had used in the past.

This very derivation of the term, however, appears to have presented something of an intellectuel problem to Kugler. Following the Hegelian scheme he wished to represent the Romanesque as a stage on the road of progress towards the Gothic, which he called the Germanic Style. "In the beginning of the Romanesque era", we read, "the new Germanic *Volksgeist* could only

announce its presence in a semi-barbarous and fantastic manner. In the second half of the 11th century, the style, while heavy and limited in expression, had acquired an independent physiognomy, that gradually, in the 12th and early 13th century, approximated the classical style" (p. 417). Yet – Kugler continues – this return to classical antiquity contradicted the mentality of the nation and thus provoked the Germanic *Volksgeist* to oppose it in the form of the truly Germanic – the Gothic Style. Kugler's handbook is not illustrated, but there is no denying its merits in having listed and described a large number of monuments of the period. His failures, of course, are due to his fanatical bias which shows itself at its least attractive in his attempts to belittle the art of other nations, particularly those of Italy: "it was the Germanic *Volksgeist* through which these independent artistic strivings came to life and the merit of having achieved most in this respect belongs to Germany ... Italy appears throughout most of the period to have been incapable of truly artistic creations and only towards its end we encounter magnificent artistic achievement – no doubt due to German influence" (p. 484). The allusion is to the art of Nicolò Pisano whom Vasari had singled out as the harbinger of the Renaissance and whose "miraculous" innovations Kugler seeks to explain by postulating the influence of German sculptors like those who had created the *Goldene Pforte* at Freiberg (p. 501).

It is ironic to recall that Kugler became the mentor and close collaborator of Jakob Burckhardt whose *Cicerone* of 1855 contributed so vitally to the appreciation of Italian art (including romanesque monuments) among the German public. True, Burckhardt had testified earlier in his career to his admiration of medieval architecture in the North, but as a Swiss he was relatively free of nationalist bias.

In any case it so happened that Kugler's insistence on the essentially German character of the Gothic style had become unsustainable immediately after his handbook came out. In 1843 a German architectural historian who had spent some time in Paris, Franz Mertens, published his finding that the style had actually originated in the Isle de France, with the designs of Abbot Suger for St. Denis.[30]

Not that pet ideas can so easily be changed by awkward facts. The discovery may even have contributed to pushing German chauvinists closer to racialism. Thus Wilhelm Lübke wrote in the introduction of his long and scholarly chapter on the Romanesque of his *History of Architecture* of 1855:[31] "The fact that the German element was the essentially creative one, the active principle in the development of the new building style, emerges most clearly from a cursory geographic survey. This survey demonstrates that the most lively architectural activity is to be found among the predominantly Germanic people, the Germans, the English, the Northern French and North Italians with their largely Germanised tribes" (p. 252).

This idea became something like an article of faith in German art historical writings. Anton Springer (who was actually critical of Hegel's metaphysics)[32] defined in his *Letters on Art History*[33] the Romanesque style as "the Roman manner modified by Germanic elements" and explained the high vitality of North Italian art by the "indelible remnants of Germanic ideas, "due to the presence of Germanic tribes in these regions". Not that this obsession can wholly detract from the vital contribution which that generation of German art historians made to our knowledge of Romanesque architecture. In 1858 Kugler let his handbook be followed by a multi-volume history of architecture in which he devoted almost six hundred pages to the Romanesque style.[34] In the same year Lübke's *History of Architecture* appeared in a second expanded edition even more profusely illustrated with woodcuts than the first edition had been. Yet it may be said that for these authors the study of Romanesque monuments was still somewhat closer to archaeology than to the history of art. Their love, and that of the reading