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ROMANESQUE ART 2000

A Worn Out Notion?

INSTEAD of offering a coherent essay I should like to make some random remarks on some of the issues and problems advanced by the conference in which this paper was given. I am afraid that these remarks will not be at the level of discretion, lucidity, and sensibility that Walter Cahn had in his noble essay elsewhere in this volume. But let me say that it is a great honor for me to be invited to write in homage to a distinguished colleague and friend, remembering on this occasion some memorable encounters in the Art Department at Yale University, at the Cloisters symposium in New York in 1988, and especially of an evening in the *Closerie de Lilas* in Paris, to which our much missed master and friend, Louis Grodecki, had invited us.

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In Flaubert's unfinished last novel, *Bouvard et Pécuchet*, the two "Philistines" discuss problems of art history, especially the classification of historical monuments according to their style. They complain: "Mais le style d'un monument ne s'accorde pas toujours avec la date qu'on lui suppose. Le plein cintre, au XIIIe siècle, existe encore dans la Provence. L'ogivé est peut-être fort ancienne! Et des auteurs contestant l'antériorité du roman sur le gothique." Flaubert finished this passage with the ironic sentence "Ce défaut de certitude les contrariat."[1] Now, one knows that Flaubert's *œuvre posthume, Bouvard et Pécuchet*, is a bitter satire of French nineteenth-century positivism, with its silly belief that the whole reality of nature and man could be dominated—or better still, domesticated—by sci-

entific classification. Flaubert himself called this book "une espèce d'encyclopédie critique en farce."[2] With the classification of medieval architecture as either Romanesque or Gothic, Flaubert found a particularly striking example for his denouncement of the philistine belief in the unequivocal nature of classification. Bouvard and Pécuchet learned from such general encyclopaedias as the *Grand Larousse* that the round arch was a characteristic of Romanesque architecture, but they heard to their astonishment and annoyance that this characteristic survived in certain regions right into the thirteenth century. They also learned that the ogive or rib vault was a Gothic invention but was also much older than the style itself. To add insult to injury it even seemed that the anteriority of Romanesque architecture in relation to Gothic was not certain.

Flaubert's famous satire on the futility of classifications is one thing; another is the floating and uncertain character of our notion of "Romanesque." "Romanesque" is perhaps the most vague and imprecise of all our conventional stylistic classifications in art and architecture. Let me tell you an amusing anecdote that illuminates the uncertain or undefined character of the term Romanesque. Late in 1961 or early in 1962, I had a long telephone conversation with Paul Frankl, then at Princeton, shortly before his death. He was, of course, the distinguished author of the ponderous and awesome book *Das System der Kunstwissenschaft* as well as the much better known volume *The Gothic*.[3] We were discussing the column-statues on the *Portail Royal* in Chartres Cathedral. Frankl, a true addict of systematic classification had originally been

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1. G. Flaubert, *Bouvard et Pécuchet: œuvre posthume*, avec introduction et notes par Édouard Maynail. (Paris, 1954), 124.

2. Flaubert, (as note 1), iii.

3. P. Frankl, *Das System der Kunstwissenschaft* (Brünn & Leipzig, 1938); *The Gothic: Literary Sources and Interpretations through Eight Centuries* (Princeton, 1960).

an architect and later studied art history with Wölf-flin, the inventor of the so-called *Kunstgeschichtliche Grundbegriffe*.[4] In his studies on medieval architecture Frankl used to call Romanesque buildings "additive" and Gothic monuments "divisible."[5] All the French monuments of the second half of the twelfth century, such as the cathedrals at Sens, Laon, or Paris, which we used to call Gothic or early Gothic, showed in his eyes a "divisible" character and as such had still to be labeled "Romanesque." Frankl was puzzled by the question as to why sculptural historians referred to the statue-columns of the *Portail Royal* as Gothic, even though the predominant style of the period when they were made was Romanesque. This contradiction irritated his desire for unified classification, so he finished our phone-call with the following words "I understand that Doctor Sauerländer calls the body of the statue-columns at Chartres 'Romanesque' and their heads 'Gothic'!" This is where you end up if you want sty-listic classification to be regimented. You have to split the monuments.

There are many aspects of the term "Romanesque" that have never been clarified. Typical of such un-defined areas, for example, is our lack of knowledge as to what was the time, or the span, of the so-called Romanesque style. This question was never clearly answered because the chronological borders of the Romanesque style are widely varying in the differ-ent parts of Europe. In the nineteenth century the Romanesque style was thought to immediately fol-low the period of Carolingian art. Buildings such as Saint Michael's Hildesheim, or the so-called "*Basse-

Œuvre" at Beauvais, were simply called "*frühromanisch*," or "early Romanesque."[6] It was only in the twentieth century that architectural historians began to look at the period between 950 and 1050 as a stylistic en-tity in its own right with a definite character. The English, who were generally late to accept the term "Romanesque," called this period "Saxon" as distin-guished from the later "Norman."[7] The Catalan archi-tect Puig i Cadafalch spoke of the "*primer art Románic*," "*Le premier art roman*," which became later in French "*L'art préroman*."[8] The Germans began to distinguish their imperial art from around the year 1000 from the art of the rest of Europe and called it "Ottonian."[9] In each case these parochial distinctions between Euro-pean Romanesque in general and preceding styles of a more local or regional character had a nationalistic, patriotic, or folkloristic bias. In England there was an old tendency to regard "Saxon" as more homespun and original than "Norman," which had been imported from France after the conquest. In Puig i Cadafalch's important concepts of "*primer art románic*," the political desire for Catalan autonomy played an important role (see Madeline Caviness elsewhere in this volume). In Germany the concept of Ottonian Art was first elabo-rated by Arthur Haseloff during the reign of the Em-peror William II and then enlarged and generalized by Jantzen during the 1930s. It was emotionally and ideologically connected with the perceived greatness of the Holy Roman Empire and its resurrection in the Great German Reich.[10] "Ottonian" has become an in-ternationally accepted term for stylistic classification. But Hanns Swarzenski reported that his father, Georg

4. For information on Frankl, see U. Wendland, *Biographisches Handbuch deutschsprachiger Kunsthistoriker im Exil,* Vol. 1 (Munich, 1999), 152–157.

5. P. Frankl, *Der Beginn der Gotik und das allgemeine Problem des Stilbeginns. Festschrift Heinnrich Wölfflin,* Beiträge zur Kunst- und Gesistegeschichte (Munich, 1924), 107–125; *Die Baukunst des Mittelalters. Die frühmittelalterliche und romanische Baukunst* (Pots-dam, 1926).

6. For a survey of different opinions concerning the Roman-esque style in the nineteenth century see G. Dehio and G. von Bezold, *Die kirchliche Baukunst des Abendlandes historisch und syste-matisch dargestellt,* Vol. 1 (Stuttgart, 1892), 145–154. Dehio speaks of "Frühromanismus des 9. und 10. Jahrhunderts." R. de Last-eyne, *L'Architecture religieuse en France à l'époque Romane* (Paris,

1929), asks on p. 227: "A quelle date doit-on fixer la naissance de l'art roman?" and then goes on: "C'est là une de ces questions auxquelles il n'est guère possible de répondre." For de Lasteyne Romanesque architecture begins with the eleventh century "au début du XIe siècle"; but he also writes "une foule des détails pro-pres à l'art Roman se rencontrent déjà au IXe et au Xe siècle."

7. See the useful survey by T. Cock, "Rediscovery of the Romanesque" in *English Romanesque Art 1066–1200.* Exhibition catalogue, ed. by G. Zarnecki et al. (London, 1984), 360–364.

8. Puig i Cadafalch, *La geografia i els origens del primer art romà-nic* (Barcelona, 1930); *Le Premier Art Roman,* (Paris, 1928).

9. H. Jantzen, *Ottonische Kunst. Festschrift H. Wölfflin* (Mu-nich, 1935), pp. 96–110; *Ottonische Kunst* (Munich, 1947).

10. See A. Haseloff, *Der Psalter Erzbischofs Egbert von Trier.*

Swarzenski, one of the most distinguished historians of medieval illumination and minor arts, deeply distrusted the term "Ottonian." It also seems characteristic that Adolph Goldschmidt never used the word "Ottonian" in his monumental corpus of medieval ivories. Be this as it may, our discipline has long since become used to distinguishing among the Carolingian, Pre-romanesque, Ottonian, and Romanesque styles. There are sensible and pragmatic reasons for such distinctions. After becoming used to such concepts as *primier art romanic* or "Ottonian," over time these terms can no longer be, and should probably not be, abolished.

When did these intermediary styles come to an end? When did the Romanesque style begin—or more precisely—when do art historians let the Romanesque style begin? There is, I think, general agreement today that Romanesque art and architecture began around the middle of the eleventh century with the rise of the historical period that Marc Bloch has called the "second feudal age."[11] The beginning of Romanesque art would then be contemporary with the Gregorian Reform (see Dorothy Glass elsewhere in this volume) and, more importantly, with the industrial revolution of the eleventh century with its far-reaching innovations in agriculture and warfare. The "modern" way of building, which we used to call Romanesque, was part of this industrial revolution. Let me illustrate this radical change in the technique of construction by a striking example. Speyer Cathedral, an important, if in German literature a sometimes overrated building, was erected at the critical moment of the passage from pre-Romanesque to Romanesque architecture. There, the outer walls of the aisles, which date from about 1030, show a technique of construction using small irregular stones (Fig. 1). The French would call it *"Petit appareil,"* which is a technique characteristic of the *"primer art romanic"*—as in the Ottonian style. It

FIGURE 1. Speyer, Cathedral of St. Mary and St. Stephen. Construction of the outer walls in the nave (courtesy of the Zentralinstitut für Kunstgeschicht, Munich).

is indicative of a certain decline in craftsmanship and technical skills in the Early Middle Ages. Some thirty years later we can see that the clerestory of the same building, which dates from about 1060, has large regularly cut stones without any trace of mortar between them. (Fig. 2), like that of a Roman wall.[12] It represents significant technical progress when compared to the wall of the aisles. This progress is a result of the "indus-

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Codex Gertrudianus in Cividale; historisch-kritische Untersuchung von H. V. Sauerland, kunstgeschichtliche Untersuchung von A. Haseloff (Trier, 1901). H. Jantzen, 1935 (as note 9), 96: "Dieser Reichtum entspricht durchaus der politischen Machtfülle Deutschlands unter den sächsischen Herrschern sowie der Vormachtsstellung Deutschlands zu jener Zeit in Europa"; H. Jantzen, 1947 (as note 9), 7: "Die Anfänge der deutschen Kunst sind untrennbar mit der Entstehung des Reiches verknüpft."

11. M. Bloch, *La Société féodale* (Paris, 1939).

12. H. E. Kubach und W. Haas, *Die Kunstdenkmäler von Rheinland-Pfalz. Der Dom zu Speyer*, Vol. 1 (Munich, 1972), 478–567.

FIGURE 2. Speyer, Cathedral of St. Mary and St. Stephen. Construction of the clerestory (courtesy of the Zentralinstitut für Kunstgeschicht, Munich).

trial revolution" of the eleventh century and is a hallmark of the new Romanesque style in architecture.

Here, then, we have a clear upper limit for the beginning of the Romanesque style—between 1030 and 1060. But I am not sure if all architectural historians have really understood and would accept the elementary fact that the foundation of the new Romanesque style in building was an "industrial revolution," just as the style of new constructions in iron developed out of the industrial revolution of the nineteenth century. It is much more tempting to introduce spiritual causes for the rise of the new style, which of course nobody will deny. Moreover, it is necessary to look beyond the limits of ecclesiastical architecture if we want to

grasp the whole range of technical innovations during the eleventh century. Some of our nineteenth-century predecessors, such as the great Viollet-le-Duc, were aware of the relevance of secular buildings. They studied fortresses and cathedrals, bridges and cloisters on equal terms. For an example one may look at Viollet-le-Duc's drawing of the "*Chateau de la Roche-Pont*"—a fantasy castle imagined by the architectural historian—from his curious book "*Histoire d'une forteresse*" (Fig. 3).[13] For a long time art historians have restricted their interest in Romanesque architecture to ecclesiastical and monastic buildings. There has been a highly welcome revival of the study of secular Romanesque buildings—of castles and houses—in recent years,[14] and this revival will change our whole idea of Romanesque architecture. If we want to know what really went on during the technical innovation of architecture during the eleventh century we will have to consider buildings of all kinds.

Everyone will agree if we say that the great time of the Romanesque style, the moment of its most powerful flowering, was the twelfth century—the period of the crusades, of the pilgrimage to Santiago and to Bari, of the rising communes, and of the first troubadours. Great monumental sanctuaries were erected over the tombs of the Saints from Saint-Sernin at Toulouse to Saint Nicholas at Bari. A new form of monumental sculpture that had not existed since the days of the Roman Empire appeared at the entrances of these sanctuaries. Monastic architecture became statelier than ever before at sites such as Cluny or Clairvaux. A revival of Early Christian architecture developed in the Holy Roman Empire in the so-called school of Hirsau and Ottonian traditions were revived in the churches in and around Cologne.

But art history with its stylistic classifications has split this great century into two parts. The first of these parts is the period of the innumerable Romanesque buildings in France, south of the Loire, in Italy, in Norman England, and in the Empire. The second part is the period of the Gothic buildings in Capetian France,

13. E. Viollet-le-Duc, *Histoire d'une forteresse* (Paris, 1978), 161.

14. Amongst many excellent recent issues of the *Bulletin monumental* are the following: "Deux donjons construits autour de l'an mil en Touraine, Langeais et Loches" (1988/1); "Les demeures urbaines patriciennes et aristocratiques (xiie–xive siècles)" (2002/1); and "L'architecture en Terre Sainte au temps de Saint Louis" (2006/1).
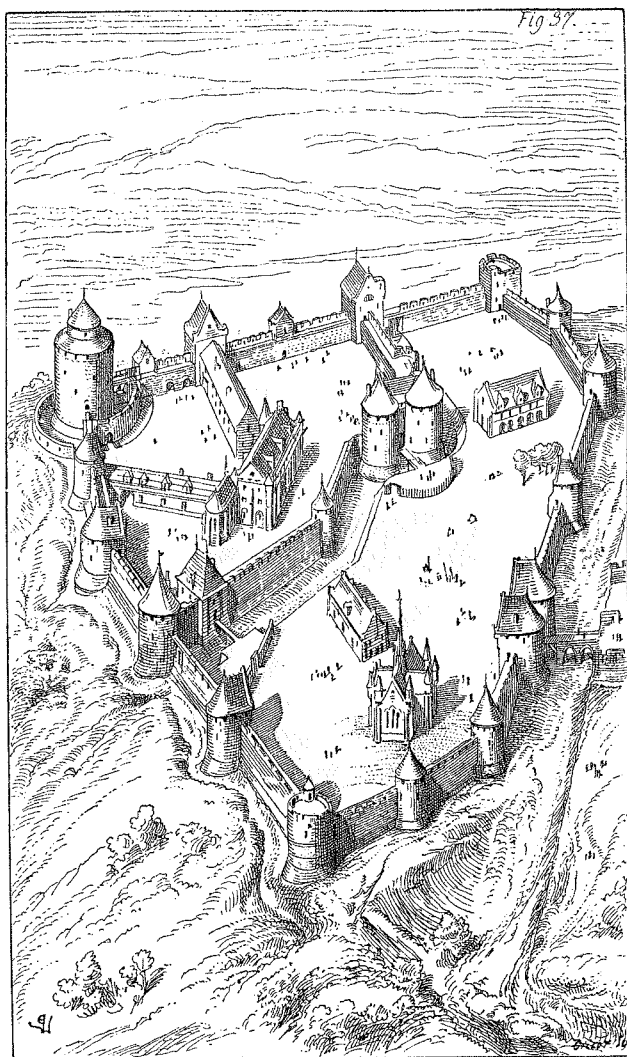
FIGURE 3. Eugène Viollet-le-Duc (1814–1879). Drawing of the imaginary Chateau de la Roche-Pont, from *Histoire d'une Fortresse* (courtesy of the Zentralinstitut für Kunstgeschicht, Munich).

which were soon followed in parts of England. All of this happens in the same century. So we are back to Frankl's dilemma in the face of the statue-columns of the *Portail Royal* at Chartres and to the troubles of Bouvard and Pécuchet who might complain: "Il y avait donc des monuments gothiques en plein douzième siècle?"

Of course in strictly historical terms, this dilemma is fictitious and is only a problem for our retrospective classifications. Suger of Saint-Denis, Bernard of Clairvaux, the bishops and chapters at Laon, Paris, and Sens would never have understood it. For them Saint-Sernin at Toulouse and the new choir at Saint-Denis, Saint-Lazare at Autun, or Saint-Remi at Reims were all "modern" buildings erected over the tombs of their holy founders in order to create a more spectacular architectural frame for their veneration. Only we, the art historians of the nineteenth, twentieth, and twenty-first centuries, have begun to distinguish twelfth-century buildings that we call Romanesque from others that we classify as Gothic. We have developed technical, stylistic, and aesthetic criteria to justify these distinctions. In addition we have introduced spiritual, theological, and iconographical arguments, just as if the new choir at Saint-Denis corresponded to or was imbued with a new, eventually neo-platonic, "philosophy" like the choir of Saint-Benoit-sur-Loire, although both buildings were nothing but a kind of martyrium over the tomb of a famous and highly venerated founder-saint. From architecture we have expanded this distinction to other arts—sculpture, stained glass, illumination, etc.—and, finally, we find ourselves in the same trap as Bouvard and Pécuchet. We are no longer sure what we should classify as Romanesque and what we should label as Gothic. Let me illustrate this confusion with just a few examples. The scene of Christ washing the Apostles' feet from the frieze on the façade of the abbey church at Saint-Gilles du Gard (Fig. 4) can be compared to the same scene on a capital from the cloister of Notre-Dame-en-Vaux at Châlons-en-Champagne (Fig. 5). Both carvings probably date from the same period in the Eighties of the twelfth century, although Saint-Gilles may be slightly earlier.[15] Stylistically, they are not very different from one another. Publications on the sculpture from Saint-Gilles describe it as Romanesque, but those on the capital from Châlons-en-Champagne list it as Gothic. I have no doubt that some professor of art history

15. The most recent publication on Saint-Gilles is by A. Hartmann-Virnich and H. Hansen, "La Façade de l'abbatiale de Saint-Gilles du Gard" in *Congrès Archéologique de France* 157 (1999), 271–292. For the cloister of Notre-Dame-en-Vaux at Châlons-en Champagne, see S. Pressouyre, *Images d'un cloître disparu* (Paris, 1976).
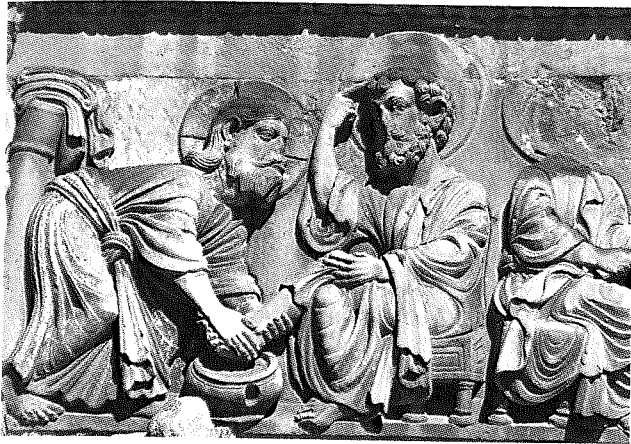
FIGURE 4. Saint-Gilles, Western façade. Detail of the frieze showing The Washing of the Feet, circa 1140–50 (photo: Colum Hourihane, Index of Christian Art, Princeton University).

FIGURE 5. Châlons-en-Champagne, Notre-Dame-en-Vaux. Detail of a capital from the cloister, showing The Washing of the Feet, ca. 1170–80 (photo: Colum Hourihane, Index of Christian Art, Princeton University).

would explain that the sculpture from the frieze at Saint-Gilles looks flat, and that the figures on the capital at Châlons display a new vigor, and that such a difference corresponds to the essential character of the Romanesque and Gothic styles. Perhaps such an observation is not totally wrong, but the only reasonable statement concerning these sculptures from Provence and the Champagne remains: these present two variations of the narrative language spoken by French sculptors in the second half of the twelfth century. We should give up the idea that there was a continuous evolution from Romanesque to Gothic as from Pop to Op. An even more striking example comes from the well-known chandelier that the emperor Frederic Barbarossa gave to the Palatine Chapel at Aix-la-Chapelle in 1165 (Fig. 6), which can be compared to a relief from a portal of the royal collegiate church at Mantes-la-Jolie near Paris (Fig. 7). The figures on the chandelier and on the portal are nearly identical and it may well be that the sculpture at Mantes imitates Mosan metalwork, such as the chandelier at Aix.[16] But art historians classify the chandelier at Aix-la-Chapelle as Romanesque and the portal at Mantes, as Gothic. This once again forces us to look at the problem in applying such classifications. The metalwork could as well be called Gothic, as the sculpture might well be labeled Romanesque. Needless to say, our professor of art history might argue that the integration of the carving into the portal of a building that we call Gothic, justifies calling the sculpture at Mantes Gothic, although its design is identical with the figures on the Romanesque chandelier at Aix-la-Chapelle. Again, this argument is not totally wrong, but I am afraid that Bouvard and Pécuchet would still be disturbed. Instead, I would propose that we become a little less concerned with using such traditional stylistic classifications as Romanesque. They are practical and comfortable if applied with caution, but we should also recognize how they can strangle us if taken and accepted as absolute and rigorous norms. Romanesque is not after all anything more than a catchword that

16. See W. Sauerländer, "Die Marienkrönungsportale von Senlis und Mantes," in *Wallraf-Richartz-Jahrbuch* 20 (1958), 115–162.

FIGURE 6. Aachen, Palatine Chapel. Detail from the chandelier, showing The Annunciation, Second half twelfth century (courtesy of the Zentralinstitut für Kunstgeschicht, Munich).

art history has inherited from such early nineteenth-century architectural historians as Arcisse de Caumont and Charles de Gerville, who needed a term for the study and characterizations of buildings in Normandy that were neither Carolingian nor Gothic. The difficulty and the confusion began when this catchword was transferred from architecture to the other arts, and art historians had to invent a "Romanesque style." For the second half of the twelfth century—for the period of Nicolaus of Verdun, the Portico della Gloria of Monreale at Santiago, of the mosaics at Monreale, and the Winchester Bible—the term Romanesque can only be used with great caution or it should simply be forgotten.

But still I have not finished with the problem of the time span of the Romanesque. The thirteenth century was the glorious period of the great Gothic cathedrals from Toledo to Cologne, from Salisbury to Reims. A distinguished French publisher once wanted to persuade me to call a book on this period by the title *L'envol des Cathedrals,* as if the Gothic cathedrals were balloons flying to any corner of Europe. Half of Europe, however, remained Romanesque until 1250 and sometimes even longer. If we turn our eyes to Italy in the second half of the thirteenth century, we would see neither Niccolo Pisano nor Cimabue classified as Gothic artists; but would we call them Romanesque? Once more it becomes evident that such a stylistic catchword as Romanesque, which was once coined for a specific kind of architecture, is much too narrow to embrace the richness and the diversity of the figurative arts in thirteenth-century Europe outside the realm of the new Gothic style.

The stylistic milieu in the Holy Roman Empire is even more complicated and shows a Babylonian confusion of different stylistic languages. Some distin-

FIGURE 7. Mantes, Collegiate Church of Notre Dame. Detail of an angel from the north portal, end of the twelfth century (courtesy of the Zentralinstitut für Kunstgeschicht, Munich).

guished monuments and some famous sculptures absorbed Gothic fashion, but the majority of buildings, sculptures, and paintings were unaffected by the new style and many look thoroughly Romanesque even after 1250. Most intriguing for the question of the chronological limits of the Romanesque are those splendid, exuberant buildings and artifacts that fit into neither of the two stylistic categories, that are neither Romanesque nor Gothic. Again I shall discuss just two striking examples. In the early thirteenth century the canons of Saint Gereon at Cologne decided to crown the central part of their church, the so-called *decagone*, with an additional construction that was nearly thirty-

five meters high and topped with a rib-vaulted cupola (Fig. 8). There can be no doubt that the architect responsible for this stupendous addition had a sound knowledge of Gothic buildings and their methods of construction, and that he even knew of flying buttresses, which were otherwise unknown in Germany at that time. Yet the new *decagone* for Saint Gereon is not what could be called a Gothic monument. It is a magnificent example of Rhenish late Romanesque architecture with its old-fashioned tribunes, fan-like windows, and dwarf-gallery, as well as some Gothic elements (Fig. 9). What would afficianados of stylistic classification do with such a chameleon? Thank God for zoologists, who in their studies of the evolution of animals had discovered so-called transitional specimens. Following their example, nineteenth-century architectural historians invented the notion of a transitional style, or *Übergangstil* in German, which was regarded as being on its way from Late Romanesque to Early Gothic.[17] Saint Gereon at Cologne is a fine example of such a transitional phase. Once again we are back in the trap of Bouvard and Pécuchet. In order to fit such an imposing monument as the *decagone* of Saint Gereon into the classification system that art historians had defined, it had to be denounced as merely transitional. The belief in a continuous evolution of architecture from one style to the next lingered behind this qualification, which could more accurately be called a disqualification. From such a perspective, Saint Gereon was placed in the middle of the road, where it could be described as neither perfectly Romanesque, nor perfectly Gothic. It ended up being a sort of architectural bastard. So we are faced with the collapse of rigid and unified stylistic classification in the face of the living organism of a great monument. During the 1930s, German art historians looked for a way out of this dilemma. They called a building such as Saint Gereon by the term *Staufisch*—simply bypassing the traditional vocabulary of architectural historians. *Staufisch,* however, had an unpleasant smell of Barbarossa and German imperialism, which was even worse than Ottonian. The term lingered on for some time after

17. See W. Sauerländer, "Style or Transition? The Fallacies of Classification discussed in the Light of German Architecture 1190–1260" in *Architectural History* 30 (1987), 1–29.
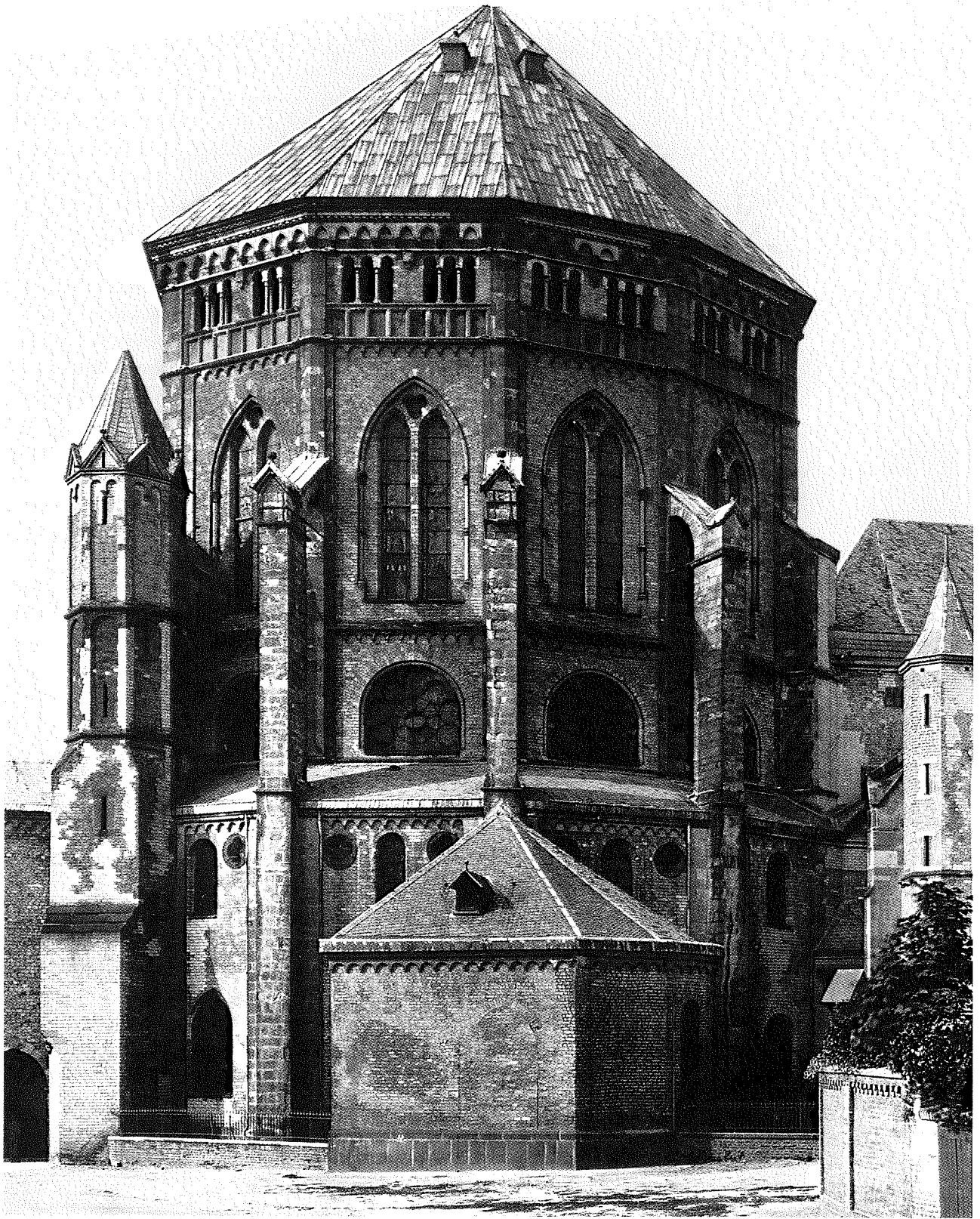
FIGURE 8. Cologne, Saint Gereon's Basilica, The exterior of the *decagone*, completed in 1227 (courtesy of the Zentralinstitut für Kunstgeschicht, Munich).
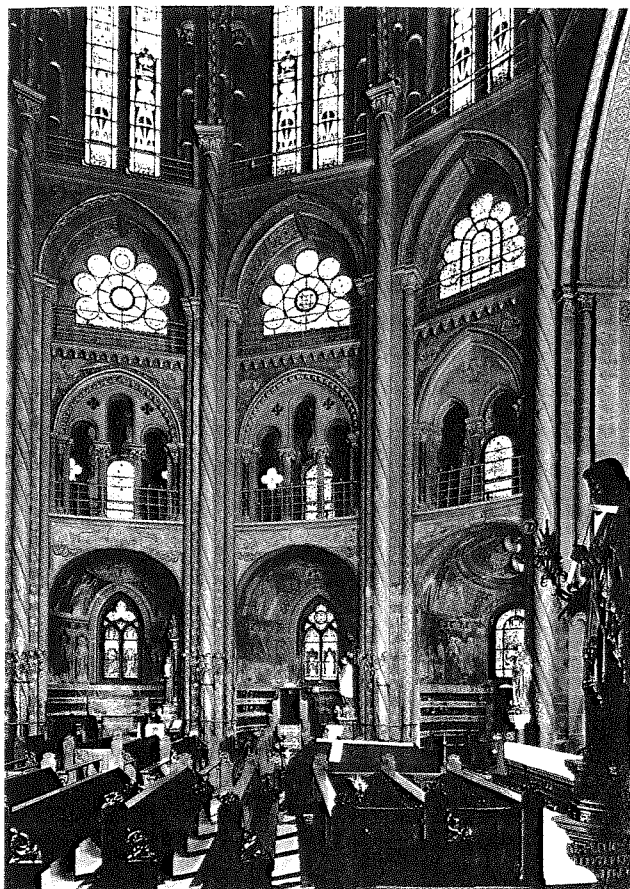
FIGURE 9. Cologne, Saint Gereon's Basilica. The interior of the *decagone*, completed in 1227 (courtesy of the Zentralinstitut für Kunstgeschicht, Munich).

1945, but now seems to be more or less out of fashion. It seems to me that there is another way out of this dilemma of stylistic classification. The *decagone* of Saint Gereon, with its extraordinary height, its shining light, its sumptuous structure, is a monumental "*martyrium*" over the tombs of early martyrs (Fig. 9). It is a spectacular room for the veneration of old saints that belongs to such a spiritual family of monuments as the new choir at Saint-Denis (erected over the tombs of the founder saints), the new sanctuary of the cathedral at Noyon (which served as a shelter for the shrine of Saint Eligius), or the corona at Canterbury (a shrine

for the crown of Becket's head). The classification of monuments according to purely stylistic criteria was certainly of considerable importance for the study of medieval architecture, but it also had its shortcomings. If we read monuments as frames for liturgical or cult use, if we understand them as *lieux de memoire,* then the stylistic differences between them remain, but become less important and we can avoid such absurdities as the notion of transitional buildings. Cologne's Saint Gereon can then be situated in its legitimate place among the great monuments of the twelfth and thirteenth centuries erected around and above the tombs of the founder saints.

Another relevant German example of the problem of time and the Romanesque is the so-called Golden Gate of the Church of Our Lady in Freiburg in Saxony. It is one of the jewels of German medieval sculpture and perhaps even more beautiful and certainly more sophisticated than the bulky statues of Bamberg and Naumburg (Fig. 10). Over one hundred years ago, Adolph Goldschmidt wrote of such monuments that "It is not easy to work with the terms Romanesque and Gothic in German art of the thirteenth century."[18] Goldschmidt was a clever man and a very cautious scholar—a true *rarus avis* in our discipline—and he was aware of the dissonances between the rigidity of modern art-historical classification and the diversity of ancient monuments. What could those addicts of rigid classification do with a portal such as the Golden Gate? The architecture is Romanesque and Italian in origin, the placement of the statues and figures on the jambs and in the *voussoirs* is Gothic and French, whilst the style of its sculptures is Saxo-Byzantine (Fig. 10). The answer can only be to forget the usual stylistic classifications and to accept that the character and the beauty of this portal resides not in its stylistic unity, but in its eclecticism and its exuberant decoration. It was the main entrance, the *Porta Speciosa,* that gave access to the most important church of a city that was, thanks to its silver mines, enormously rich; it was the portal to the sanctuary of Our Lady who was the

18. "Mit den Schlagworten *romanisch* und *gotisch* istes nicht leicht in der deutschen Skulptur des XII, Jahrhunderts zu schalten." A. Goldschmidt, "Die Stilentwicklung der romanischen Skulptur in Sachsen," in *Jahrbuch der königlich-preussischen Kunstsammlungen* 21 (1900), 225–241.
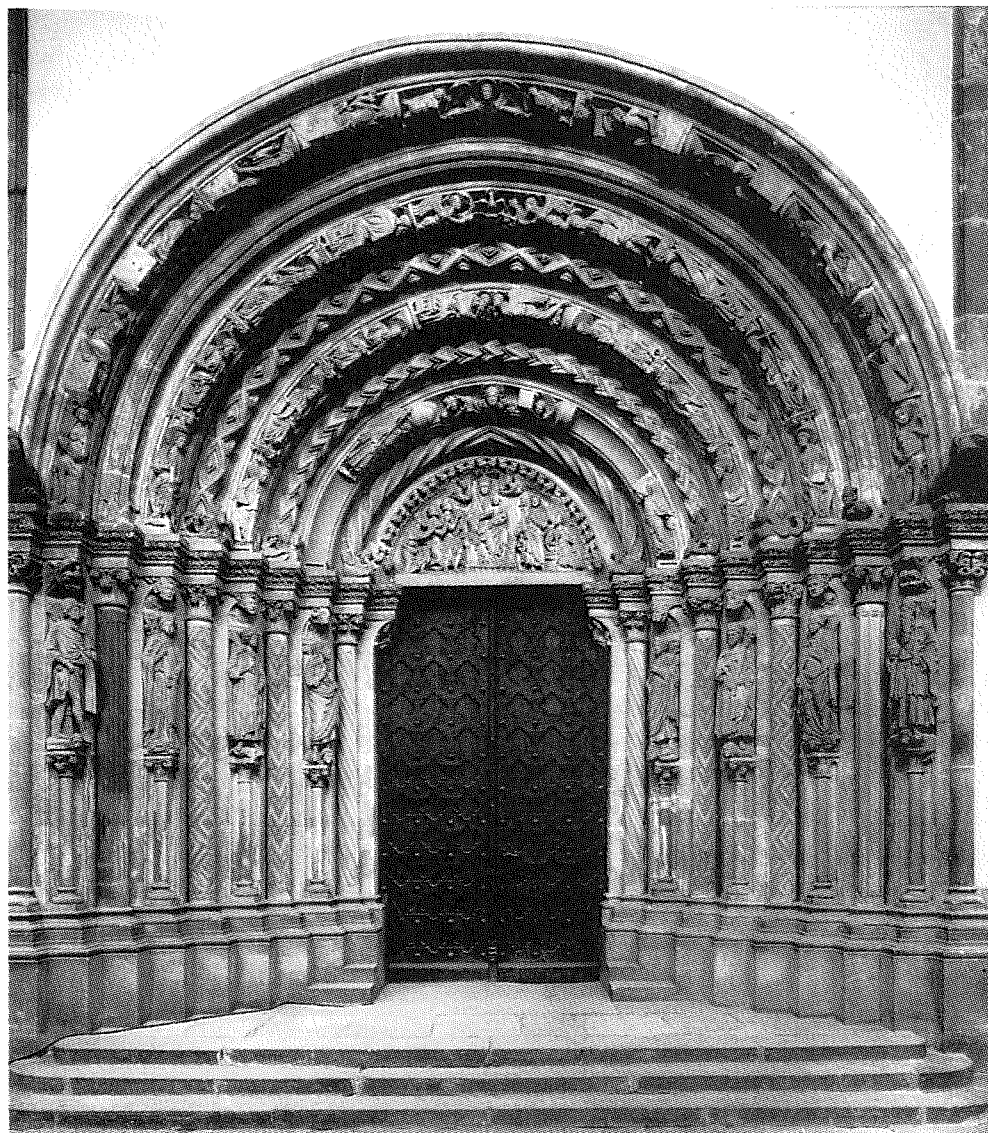
FIGURE 10. Freiberg, Saint Mary's Church, Exterior, south. The Golden Portal, circa 1235–
40 (courtesy of the Zentralinstitut für Kunstgeschicht, Munich).

patron of this wealthy town. And now the question remains as to whether it is Romanesque or Gothic; or is it even transitional and who would like to decide? [19] I am afraid that this is a question that should not even be contemplated. I shall conclude these random reflections on the period and geography of the Romanesque style, which hopefully have revealed the instability and insufficiency of our classification system.

In a general book called *Arte e Lettere in Europa: Universita e diversity*, which was published some forty years ago, Vladimir Weidle wrote that "Romanesque Art has still no true stylistic unity. We cannot speak of

19. The most recent publication on the "Golden Gate" at Freiberg is by F. Uhlig, "Die Goldene Pforte des Freiberger Domes," in *Meisterwerke mittelalterlicher Skulptur* ed. H. Krohm (Berlin, 1996), 119–135. Uhlig says: "Die Goldene Pforte liesse sich mit

Begriffen wie *splendor, venustas, variatio, subtilitas, artificiosa, compositio* beschreiben" (p. 114). This sentence corresponds exactly to our view.

Romanesque style in the same way that we apply the term to Gothic art or Classical art in Italy, but it would be possible to speak of Romanesque styles in terms of dialects as distinct from general languages."[20] I would not proclaim Vladimir Weidle to be an authority on the problems of Romanesque art, but nevertheless he had a point. Whilst early medieval art, be it Carolingian, Anglo-Saxon or even Ottonian, flowered in a restricted number of places, such as courts and important monasteries, and while Gothic art became a universal European language from East Anglia to Siena, Romanesque art has been extremely poly-central. Its flowering coincided with a period of demographic growth, expanding colonization, and the rise of cities. It prospered all over Europe, but in many different dialects. It was different in Toulouse and in Poitiers, in Verona and in Pisa, in Ratisbon and in Cologne. In my eyes, nothing is more misleading than the dreams of such twentieth-century art historians as Richard Hamann, or Arthur Kingsley Porter, who tried with camera and car to discover a network of stylistic interrelations connecting Toulouse and Poitiers, Saint-Gilles and Angoulême, Modena and Jaca, Provence and Tuscany. On the contrary, the astonishing thing about Romanesque art is its regional diversity that corresponds to the political and economic particularism of the period. This diversity is one of the principal reasons why it is difficult to define its character. In 1924, Erwin Panofsky, still under the spell of Alois Riegl, spoke of massive bulk as characteristic of Romanesque sculpture.[21] Such a definition may make sense in the light of some German monuments, such as the tomb of archbishop Fredrich of Wettin in the cathedral at Magdeburg, but it would be absurd to apply this definition to such masterpieces as the tympanum at Vézelay or to any Burgundian sculpture.

In 1931, Henri Focillon spoke of the "*loi du cadre*" or the law of the frame as the guiding principle for any composition in Romanesque sculpture.[22] It was an admirable intellectual effort to tame the restless, anarchic, and fantastic aspects of Romanesque sculpture and to subdue them under a kind of Cartesian order. It was a very French, very Parisian interpretation. In contrast, Meyer Schapiro saw discordance, free imagination, and the dissolution of hierarchical order as the driving forces behind Romanesque sculpture.[23] None of these definitions is totally aberrant, but none is entirely satisfactory either. Romanesque style, like the chameleon it is, defies any rigid and generalizing definition.

Of course, we shall and should continue to use the term Romanesque, but we need to be aware that it is nothing more than a catchword for academic communication. Romanesque is perhaps even less dangerous a term than the much better defined Gothic, with all the mystifications that go along with it. But let me come to another point. I am not certain whether it is really true that studies in Romanesque art have diminished or that their number has decreased in recent times. Maybe this is true in the context of the decrease in medieval studies in general. Even then, however, statistics may possibly show that the number of publications on medieval art has not decreased, but only that they have lost their long-held, important position in the field of art history. The truth is that every year a respectable number of studies on Romanesque architecture, sculpture, minor arts, and manuscripts appear. The true reason for the impression of a decrease in Romanesque studies, for a feeling of uneasiness even of loss among medievalists, must be looked for elsewhere. There is a crisis that may be even more accurately defined as a shift in the perception of

20. This is referred to in H. Sedlmayr, *Epochen und Werke: Gesammelte Schriften zur Kunstgeschichte* (Mittenwald, 1982), 48.

21. E. Panofsky, *Deutsche Plastik des 11. bis 13. Jahrhunderts* (Munich, 1924), p. 16: "Massenform"; p. 17: "ästhetische Entdeckung der Masse"; p. 27: "Bauwerk als Bildwerk—beide in gleicher Weise dem neuartigen Massenprinzip gehorchend."

22. See H. Focillon, *L'art des sculpteurs Romans* (Paris, 1964). See also W. Sauerländer, "En face des Barbares et à l'écart des dévots. L'humanisme médiéval d'Henri Focillon," in *Relire Focillon* (Paris, 1998), 73–74. See also W. Sauerländer, "L'art des sculpteurs Romans et le retour à l'ordre," in *La Vie des formes. Henri Focillon et les arts* (Ghent, 2004), 137–154.

23. M. Schapiro, *Romanesque Art*, (New York, 1977); see also *Romanesque Architectural Sculpture*. The Charles Eliot Norton Lecture (Chicago, 2006)—reviewed by W. Sauerländer, "The Art Historian" in *The New York Review of Books*, Vol. 54, No. 11 (28 June 2007).

Romanesque art. Traditional studies on Romanesque art and architecture throughout Europe—whether they are on building campaigns, problems of chronology, the stylistic inter-relations between different centers, or even iconography—no longer correspond to the changed interest in the Middle Ages that we now have. They have become dead letters. We need new comprehensive studies on the function and life of monuments that have come down to us as empty stone shells and that as images have become isolated as objects of either aesthetic or iconographic interest.

Let me give one example: back in the 1980s a monumental publication in four fat volumes on Romanesque architecture in the Rhineland and the Meuse valley appeared in Germany. It contained an excellent archaeological study of each building, but not a single word on either the religious function, the cult, the liturgy, the feasts, or the processions. These activities were the reasons for their construction, and they filled the sanctuaries with life; they often explain their special architectural features, which are usually analyzed by art historians as mere technical or formal devices.[24] Another example: a corpus of the shrines that were once the magical centers of all these stately Romanesque churches in the Rhineland and the Meuse valley with their splendid choirs will be published, it is hoped, in the near future. For practical reasons it seems necessary to separate the study of technical architecture from the study of metalwork—but this is also highly artificial. Architectural analysis and an examination of filigree and punched copper plates have to be combined to reconstruct the full religious intention that once united buildings and shrines into one living whole. It is only then that we can arrive at a comprehensive understanding of the monuments we call Romanesque. It is absurd for us to know every tile or capital of a building like Saint-Sernin at Toulouse, and at the same time know nothing of the altars in the eleven chapels that once surrounded the tomb of Saint Saturninus in its center. It may be idealistic, and the

dangers of dilettantism cannot be denied, but we must proceed from a technical, stylistic, iconographic study of the Romanesque to a more comprehensive study of the living monuments. The decrease in studies and publications on Romanesque art is less a decrease in quantity than a decrease in perspective and range. It is up to us to change this. If we, the art historians, who know the monuments, the images and the objects, and who should also know the sources, fail to do this, then we shall give over the field to those fashionable dilettantes who shower us with books on the body, on lust and sex, on demonology, and fear in Romanesque art. We, the art historians, have to enlarge the field of Romanesque studies in order to save it.

After these ominous and too pompous words, let me conclude with a scherzo that may illustrate what I have in mind, and what I have expressed in rather obscure sentences. The Romanesque monuments in the north of Italy are perhaps more approachable for a comprehensive study of their form and function than the monastic churches in France or Germany. They are closer to secular life in the civic communities that surround them. A striking example is the magnificent façade of the cathedral at Fidenza—Borgo San Donnino—that small Emilian town that always struggled with its powerful neighbors, Parma and Piacenza, and that sought in this threatened position the protection of the Emperor. The façade of the cathedral is a key monument in Italian Romanesque sculpture and much ink has been spilt on the problems of its chronology and the attribution of its sculptures (Fig. 11).[25] But much more fascinating than these conventional art-historical problems is the telling coincidence between form and function on this façade. The gable of the west portal (left) shows Pope Hadrian II investing the arch-deacon of Borgo San Donnino with the miter and the crosier in the presence of the Emperor (Fig. 12). The ecclesiastical right of the arch-deacon of Borgo to have the miter and hold the crosier was contested by the bishop of Parma who was the eccle-

24. H. E. Kubach and A. Verbeek, *Romanische Baukunst an Rhein und Maas*, 4 vols. (Berlin, 1976–1989).

25. The most recent publication on the cathedral at Borgo San Donnino is by Yoshie Kojima, *Storia di una cattedrale. Il duomo di San Donnino a Fidenza; il cantiere medievale, le trasformazioni, i*

restauri (Pisa, 2006). All the earlier bibliography can be found in this work. See also W. Sauerländer, "Fidenza e la sua cattedrale," in *Il Medioevo Europeo di Jacques Le Goff*. A cura di D. Romagnoli (Milan, 2003), 231–237.
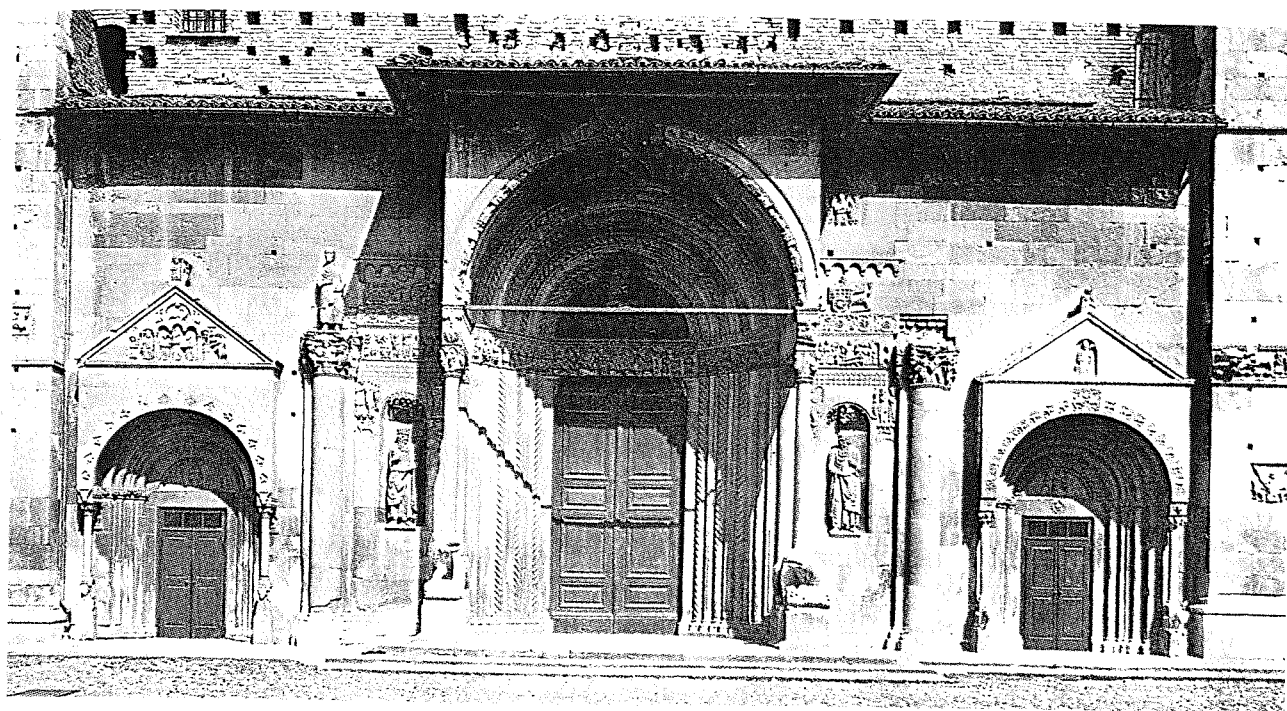
FIGURE 11. Fidenza, Cathedral of San Donnino, West façade. Portals, circa 1170–1220 (photo: Courtesy of the Zentralinstitut für Kunstgeschicht, Munich).

FIGURE 12. Fidenza, Cathedral of San Donnino, West façade. Portal on the left gable, showing an unidentified youth holding a sword to the left of the seated Charlemagne, Pope Hadrian II investing the archdeacon of Borgo San Donnino and the sick man with his horse tied to a church, all surmounted by the Lamb of God, circa 1170–1220 (photo: Giovanni Freni, Index of Christian Art, Princeton University).
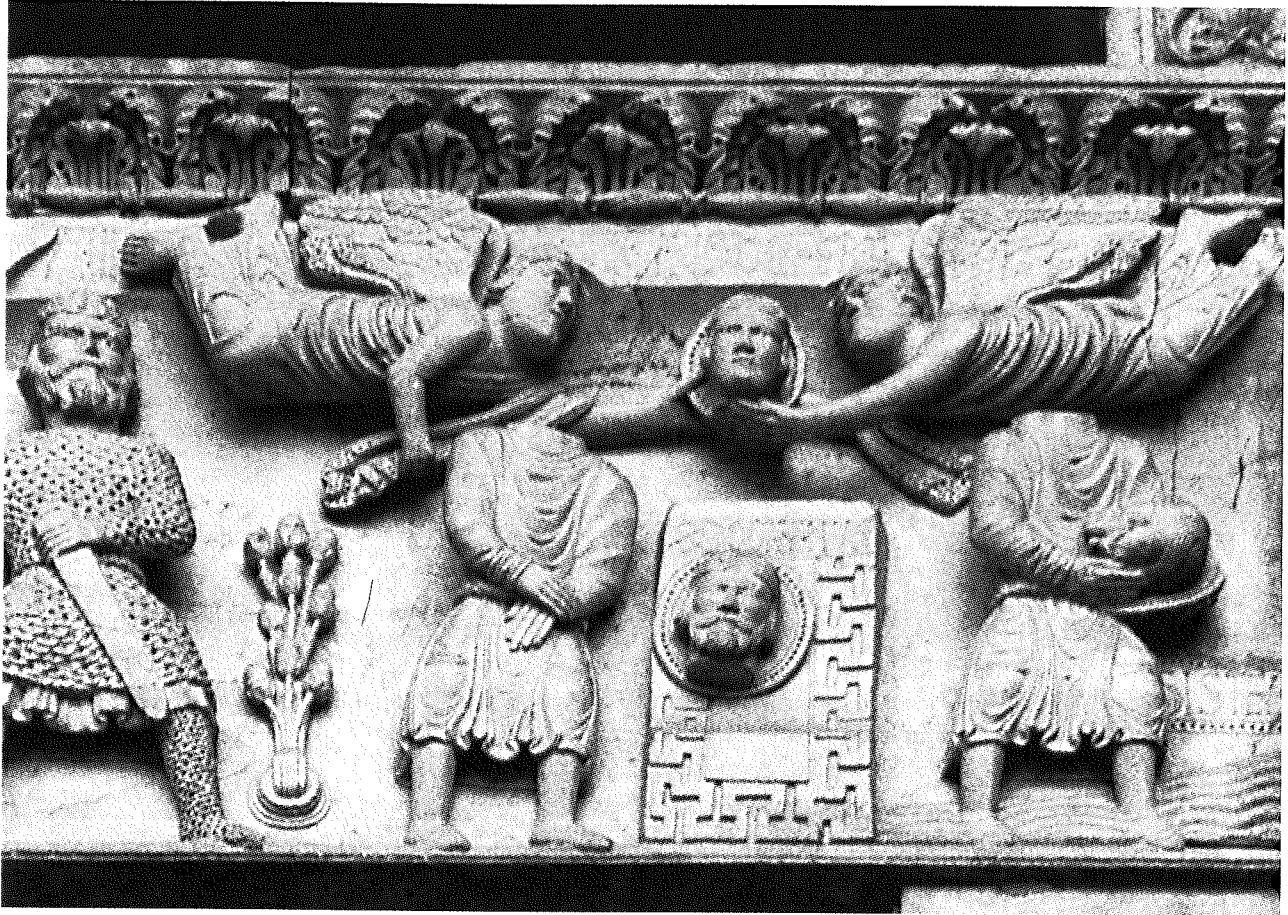
FIGURE 13. Fidenza, Cathedral of San Donnino, West façade. Central Portal. The persecution and martyrdom of Donninus, circa 1170–1220 (photo: Giovanni Freni, Index of Christian Art, Princeton University).

siastical ordinary responsible for Borgo San Donnino. So this relief is a charter in stone that insists on papal privileges for the church of Borgo San Donnino. In 1162 the Emperor Frederic Barbarossa quarreled with the great north Italian cities; he had confirmed the privileges of Borgo San Donnino and this affirmation was probably the impetus for the construction of the new cathedral with its ambitious façade, rivaling those of the neighboring cathedrals. Saint Donninus had suffered martyrdom under Emperor Maximian on his flight from Germany in a place that later became Borgo San Donnino. His body was subsequently discovered and a church built over his tomb. The twelfth century saw a great increase in regional pilgrimage to the tomb of Saint Donninus and this was certainly

another reason for the construction of the modern cathedral with its richly sculpted façade. A spectacular narrative relief showing the persecution and the martyrdom of Donninus is found on the lintel of the main portal (Fig. 13). Pilgrims visiting his tomb thus saw the representation of his martyrdom upon entering the church. Another relief further to the right is even more closely connected with pilgrimage to the tomb of the Saint. The town of Fidenza is situated on both sides of the Stirone, a local river that is a tributary of the Po. After hearing the joyous news of the discovery of Saint Doninus's body, the people of the neighboring village of San Dalmazio rushed in great numbers to Borgo San Donnino. The bridge over the Stirone collapsed while they were crossing it and the

FIGURE 14. Fidenza, Cathedral of San Donnino, West façade. The collapse of the bridge and the miraculous saving of the pregnant woman, circa 1170–1220 (photo: Courtesy of the Zentralinstitut für Kunstgeschicht, Munich).

crowd fell into the river and drowned. A pregnant woman was miraculously saved. The inscription above the relief of the miracle reads, "*Sic Sanctis exequiis celebratis a ruina pontis liberatur*" (Fig. 14). Naturally it was Saint Donninus who had saved the life of the pregnant woman and she is shown standing quietly in the midst of the disaster. The message to the pilgrims arriving at the tomb of Saint Donninus is evident when they were visually reminded of the miraculous protection they could expect from him. But the images on the façades of the cathedral are still more explicit. A family of pilgrims—child, father, and mother—is shown arriving from the countryside and approaching the tomb of Donninus in the carving directly below this relief (Fig. 15). The mother resembles the pregnant woman in the relief above showing the miracle of the Saint. Here, Romanesque carvings, cults of saints, along with religious and popular life and belief are all
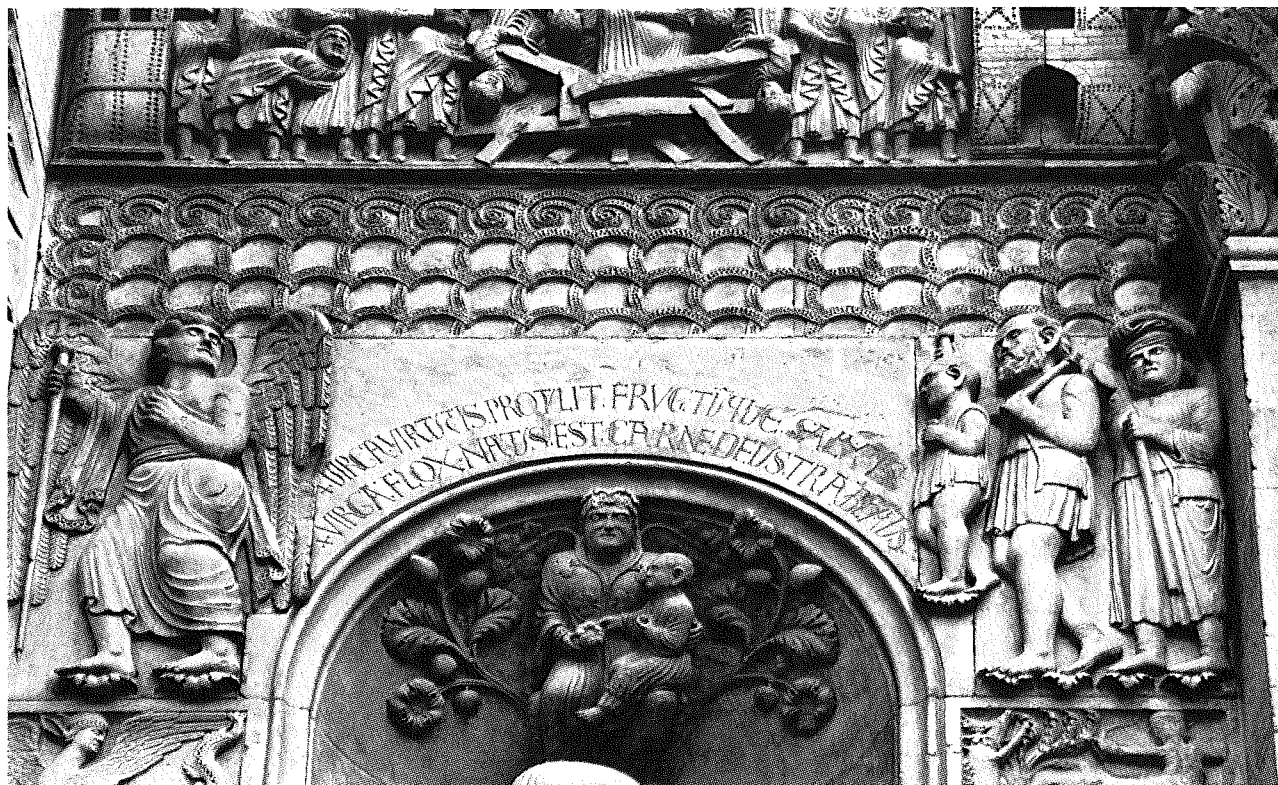
FIGURE 15. Fidenza, Cathedral of San Donnino, West façade. The arrival of the pilgrims, circa 1170–1220 (photo: Giovanni Freni, Index of Christian Art, Princeton University).

interwoven. Perhaps Borgo San Donnino can be considered a special case (it has a peculiarly Italian flavor linking patron saint, city, and countryside), and yet I hope that these random observations have shown how Romanesque images can be read without the need for traditional classification and perspectivism. This is a reading that does not simply forfeit questions of style, chronology, or attribution, but that gives the traditional approach a new and fuller meaning in the larger context of medieval studies.