Jürgen Krüger
Rom und Jerusalem.
Kirchenbauvorstellungen der Hohenzollern im 19. Jahrhundert
Berlin: Akademie Verlag, 1995, 320 pp., 84 illus. DM 98 (cloth).

Michael Imhof
Jahrhundert in Deutschland, Grossbritannien (Old English Style), Frankreich, Österreich, der Schweiz und den USA

Karen David-Sirocko
Georg Gottlob Ungewitter und die malerische Neugotik in Hessen, Hamburg, Hannover und Leipzig

While these three books on nineteenth-century architecture are largely concerned with matters German, the implications of the material go well beyond the confines of that country. Krüger’s book on aspects of nineteenth-century church patronage involves the interweaving of a number of apparently disparate issues: the aspirations of two major Prussian rulers, King Friedrich Wilhelm IV and the Prussian king and German emperor, Wilhelm II; the theological programs that go into devising churches; and the actual organization of church building. The monuments Krüger deals with were the outcome of political considerations and reflected very specific dynastic, doctrinal, and missionary aspirations. In a continuation, or perhaps revival, of the Central European link between church and state, rulers were heavily involved in church building and the formulation of doctrines. It has to be remembered that the Prussian family (the Hohenzollern) had for centuries been strict Protestants—that is, Calvinists—although Lutheranism was an increasing influence. Romanticist thought, however, set Friedrich Wilhelm IV on a search for an older legitimation of his Christian beliefs, which, during a period of threatened or actual revolutions, he conveniently coupled with a search for older ways of legitimizing worldly power. The majority of Romantics found their models in the later Middle Ages; but a strong minority (including the Prussian king’s contemporary, Ludwig I of Bavaria) leaned toward the older Christian world of Rome, Byzantium, and the Holy Land. Apart from a small number of German buildings, the book concentrates on Prussian ecclesiastical activities in Rome and Jerusalem. The undertakings discussed are, architecturally speaking, of a very diverse nature and size, from the earliest example in the 1820s of the chapel decoration in the Prussian Embassy in Rome (Palazzo Caﬀarelli), of which not even a view has come down to us, to the new, Early Christian-style interior of the so-called Basilica in Trier (a large hall of the fourth century A.D.) and the Friedenskirche, a church on the grounds of a park near Potsdam largely designed by the king himself. In 1839–1841 the Prussian king initiated an English-Prussian bishopric in Jerusalem (which lasted until 1886) in order to remind the world of European Christian missionary power—and that under the special banner of North European Protestantism.

Jerusalem was to occupy an even more important position in the church activities of Wilhelm II, who took a continuous personal interest in “his” buildings out there, especially the Erlöserkirche (Holy Savior) of the 1890s. Jerusalem and even more so Bethlehem subsequently became places where all the diverse European Christian religions openly competed with their churches and charitable institutions, resulting in a fascinating melee of styles. The book deals with a number of other church-building activities of the imperial family, especially in and around Berlin, but unfortunately not with Wilhelm’s most important church, the Kaiser Wilhelm Gedächtniskirche, nor, curiously, do we find much about the late German Lutheran Church in Rome.

Krüger, a social historian and historian of religion, maintains that the Patrocinium, the particular dedication of the churches, provides the chief historical link for the series of structures he discusses. The dedication of the Holy Savior, unusual for Protestants, seemed appropriate especially for the place of the original Holy Sepulchre in Jerusalem. Krüger devotes much space to the iconography of interior decorations and points to the importance of foundation and dedication ceremonies for our understanding of the institutions. It is, however, difficult at times to follow Krüger’s main arguments because they are embedded in a great number of lateral issues and also because he chose not to follow the story through chronologically. It is evident that this book has a built-in supranational dimension, but Krüger makes little of that. An English reader would certainly want to study parallels in the ideas and practices of Anglo-Catholicism. The strongest link between the countries was the “Chevalier” Christian Carl Josias Bunsen, an historian and archaeologist as well as Prussia’s ambassador in Rome, who initiated much of the movement and later, as Prussian representative in London, mixed with artists and the church elite there.

The chief problem with the book is that Krüger explicitly does not want to stress what he sees as narrowly architectural aspects and is especially wary of the problem of style (see, for example, pages 211–212). There is, indeed, a question of continuity between the early Christian style chosen during the first half of the nineteenth century and Wilhelm II’s heavy, late-nineteenth-century German neo-Romanesque. In the end we are told that the patron saint of a church and the dedication ceremonies associated with it are “more important as carriers of meaning” than the architecture (back cover). Such a statement, however, is not conducive to interdisciplinary progress. Surely, in principle, the same importance should be given to phenomena of all kinds. The success or otherwise of a cross-disciplinary investigation depends on the strength of the linking causalities or analogies.

Michael Imhof’s Historistisches Fachwerk is a compendium magnum of international scope and as such without parallel. Close to 700 pages and 1,386 illustrations deal with what is a huge subject. The merit of the book lies in its lavishness; many buildings are revealed with not just one but several views. Fachwerk translates as half-timbering and timber framing, the latter in the narrower sense of the word, as used in English vernacular building. The book is thus not a work on building with timber
in the wider sense but is based on a definition of wooden architecture that stems from late-medieval and early-modern vernacular housing in northwestern Europe. A further merit of the book is its geographical spread, with even a few pages on late-nineteenth-century work from Canada and the East Coast of the United States. Another section deals with France, from Marie Antoinette's Hameau at Versailles to the style normand at the beginning of this century. Viollet-le-Duc is, however, largely absent, which is a pity considering the crucial comments he made about pan de bois in the 1850s, for instance, maintaining that all wooden construction is of Germanic origin (Dictionnaire d'architecture, vol. 6 [Paris, 1858], 215).

About one-third of Imhof's book is devoted to England, where his strength lies in tracking down and coordinating writers, illustrated works, and actual buildings. Most of the 200 or so English illustrations are taken from illustrated books. Much is familiar, by designers such as George Devey or Norman Shaw, but who has heard of T.J. Ricauti's wildly picturesque Sketches of Rustic Work of 1840–1842, or the large and noble Cheshire-type timber-framed hall at Greynog, near Newtown in Powys, Wales, of c. 1840, which turns out to be a complete fake in rendered brick (65, 674), or the earth-hugging "Tudor Village" by F.L. Pearson, at Hever Castle in Kent of 1903–1908 (117)? The bulk of the book, however, deals with Central Europe. Nowhere else is this type of construction so prevalent. The term Fachwerk conjures up far more than timber framing, belonging to that category of German architectural terms that are both imprecise and evocative. Fach is perhaps best translated as compartment; Fachwerk is thus compartmentalized work. The history of German wooden architecture during the nineteenth century, not surprisingly, is very much more complicated than elsewhere. In simple statistical terms, most regions continued to construct the majority of buildings in wooden frame almost until 1914, especially in heavily forested regions like the Sauerland, southeast of the Ruhr. Today its small towns are considered highly picturesque and authentic, yet many of the houses are barely 100 years old, and a continuing vernacular runs alongside the revivals. Imhof deals briefly with in-between versions, especially technisches Fachwerk, timber framing with a somewhat mechanical look, which, beginning around 1830, was used for utilitarian buildings as well as average suburban and small-town domestic work.

The situation around the midcentury is characterized by a plethora of trends: real vernacular and utilitarian work; "Swiss cottage" style (of the Berlin, Karlsruhe, etc. versions); English decorative fashions imported via the cottage books; and a more detailed study of old German work itself—in other words, the beginning of vernacular revivals, which receives the greatest attention from Imhof. Georg Gottlob Ungewitter, Germany's most important neo-Gothicist during the 1850s, was also the first to imitate closely the late-Gothic and Renaissance urban timber-framed houses and to provide a neo-Gothic theory of truthful construction as his justification. His pupil Carl Schaefer was a close follower in theory and practice. Their influence and that of their numerous disciples was enormous: by 1890-1900 hardly any German villa came without at least some so-called German half-timbering.

The weak point of this book is a lack of system to guide one through the admittedly large number of major issues. However possible Imhof deals with his material in the time-honored art historical way by named designer. But this is, arguably, one of the least important variables. Traditionally, timber framing covers a broad range of buildings, in fact all types, but principally domestic, from grand urban burghers' houses to farmhouses, mountain huts, cottages, and chalets. Imhof only very briefly touches on these types as such (although we are promised a further book on the Swiss cottage). The book primarily deals with the modern suburban or country villa. Although Imhof rightly maintains that he cannot deal with the issue of nineteenth-century domestic architecture as such, this deprives him of an opportunity to discuss major aspects of the meaning of timber-frame revival. The author occasionally reveals himself as expert in construction techniques, but he does not systematically treat this issue; it would be interesting to understand the ways in which revivalist construction methods differ from traditional ones. Nor does he address the large overlap between survival and revival, perhaps unique in the history of architecture and building. One reason for suspecting that this overlap was wide is the fact that in Germany, in contrast to England, timber framing remained cheaper than construction in brick (446, 448).

A major related issue is the question of the national, the regional, and the local. In his multicity study, Imhof wants to get away from a narrowly defined focus on German timber framing (633), but he does not manage to establish other kinds of taxonomies. From at least the middle of the nineteenth century, antiquarians searched for stylistic and technical-geographical subdivisions, such as Frankish, Saxon, etc., but there was rarely much agreement. (It is interesting to note that the most recent overview of vernacular building, Encyclopedia of Vernacular Architecture of the World, edited by P. Oliver [Cambridge, 1997], vol. 2, retains the classifications "Germanic" and its subspecies "Saxon" and "Franconian.") Again and again, Imhof wants to come to the conclusion that regionalism did not play an important role in the revival period, at least not until the 1890s. An important discovery, however, is the Meiningen School (it was probably more a coincidence that during this period the theater of the capital of this diminutive Thuringian principality was known throughout Europe for its historicizing stage sets). Add to the problems of classification those of definition of such key terms as vernacular (not necessarily the same as regional style), country (169), popular (volkstumlich, 441), and vernacular revival, and you are faced with a mind-boggling complexity of issues. Imhof is not much help in sorting it out, but he is not alone: to this date, German architectural historians have still not dealt properly with their nineteenth- and twentieth-century vernacular revivals. The point of greatest subtlety is probably the moment when, between 1900 and 1910, the regional (now expressed with the terms Heimat and Heimatschutz) becomes the vernacular, when we decidedly move from the imitation of old decorative motifs to the imitation of constructional techniques purely as techniques, and especially to old techniques of surface treatment. At that point the nineteenth-century love of lively timber framing suddenly came to an end.

What, then, is Imhof's conclusion? The
book, in effect, deals primarily with the external appearance of buildings and the pictorial aspect of revival. It is not about plans, construction, or meaning: "... in the last resort it is the external appearance... that matters" (643). The key term of the book is, simply, the picturesque and its (somewhat broader) German version, malerisch. As a characterization of the nineteenth-century revivalist movement, this term is both correct and unsatisfactory. As a visual quarry, however, Imhof's book will not be replaced for a long time.

Karen David-Sirocko's Ungewitter is the first monograph on Germany's most influential later nineteenth-century neo-Gothic architect. The explanation for this long neglect is complex. Ungewitter died at the age of forty-four in 1864, when there was not much building in Germany and the period of Romanticism's heroic defense of Gothic had passed. German architectural writers of the twentieth century erected an immense barrier around 1900, and recognition was withdrawn from all revivalists. Occasionally, more conservative twentieth-century designers, such as Fritz Schumacher, remembered and recognized the role played by the Gothicist preachers of architectural truthfulness. But not only did Ungewitter miss out as far as major buildings were concerned, his theoretical work also never gained much currency. His late work, *Lehrbuch der gotischen Konstruktionen* (Leipzig, 1859-1864), essentially consists of a large number of plates with Gothic details and very lengthy explanatory texts. By that date it was old-fashioned compared, on the one hand, with the strictly theoretical-historical works of Semper and Viollet-le-Duc or, on the other hand, with the increasing number of descriptive historical works. Sirocko is hesitant in assessing the book, which was most likely used as a quarry of details. Indeed, Ungewitter became widely known for a number of other pattern books that had attractive illustrations chiefly of secular work, notably *Entwürfe zu gotischen Mühlen* (Leipzig, 1851; translated as *Plans... des Meules du Moyen Age* [Leipzig, 1856]), and *Entwürfe zu Stadt- und Landhäusern* (Leipzig, 1856; translated as *Projets des Maisons de Ville et de Campagne* [Leipzig, 1856]). Ungewitter's lively perspectives—combined, especially in the title pages, with an element of fairy-tale narrative—were not too far from Viollet-le-Duc's presentations, and their quality of detail often equaled the characterization of materials and textures beloved by the later English Gothic Revivalists.

David-Sirocko manages to distill from Ungewitter's short but succinct forewords to the pattern books an architectural theory that one might call eclectic in the wider sense of the term. Ungewitter starts off with the recognition of the Gothic cathedral as the basis of all other architecture (118) and goes on to an emphasis on truth, which is no longer so abstract as in the treatises of the first half of the nineteenth century (for example, those of his mentor, Auguste Reichensperger) and is exemplified in countless details of construction in diverse materials. Then there is due stress on the picturesque, which is firmly linked to diversity in planning and construction. With regard to copyism, one of the major theoretical preoccupations of those years, Ungewitter stays on the fence: invention may be desirable, but adherence to the right period of Gothic is recommended in most cases.

David-Sirocko's book is subtitled *Pictoresque Neo-Gothic in Hesse, Hamburg, Hanover and Leipzig*. It may seem unimportant where in Germany we find a good neo-Gothic building, but there was an intense rivalry between these towns and regions, especially between the Kassel (Hesse) and Hanover schools of neo-Gothic. The rivalry can still be felt in Sirocko's repeated claims that the famed Hanover school and its founding hero, Carl Wilhelm Hase, considered the father of North European pure brick Gothic revival, was essentially dependent on the early ideas of Ungewitter (190, 205). Architectural historians in Hanover will not be pleased.

German provincial obscurity did not, however, preclude dense international connections. Ungewitter avidly studied Viollet-le-Duc and even visited him in Paris in 1860. He was even more interested in what was going on in High Victorian Gothic. (By the 1850s Pugin's influence could be taken for granted.) More suprisingly, Ungewitter's most important extant buildings can be closely associated with contemporary work in Britain. The small and middling churches in the middle of Germany, such as Neustadt bei Marburg (an der Lahn) or Hundelshausen, keep to an early Gothic style, solid-looking structures in richly colored sandstone. The latter church sports a wooden paneled roof in its nave (rare for Germany), complete with massive crossbeams and king posts, strongly reminiscent of Burges's project for Brisbane Cathedral. An English observer would be inclined, perhaps a little arrogantly, to appropriate Ungewitter as a middle-ranking High Victorian master. David-Sirocko even goes as far as the United States to compare Ungewitter's illustrations with the works of Carl Pfeiffer and the early houses of Burnham and Root (216-222).

A valuable addition to the chapter on England is a further reflection on what is perhaps Ungewitter's most important contribution, the revival of regional/vernacular wooden construction. Arguably, the new "Old English" of Norman Shaw and Eden Nesfield (which, in turn, provides the background to Arts and Crafts architecture in the late 1880s) was influenced by illustrations of the very heavy half-timbering that Ungewitter produced from the late 1840s on. Here we also find elements that somewhat make up for the lack of real explanation of the vernacular revival in Imhof. The two authors are curiously at odds on this crucial issue: Imhof writes that "regional building traditions very largely go unnoticed [in Ungewitter's work]" (269), whereas in David-Sirocko's view, "Ungewitter excels with his pronounced interest in the regional characteristics of architecture" (186). One is inclined to accept the latter statement. What is urgently needed is not only a German but an international investigation of vernacular revivals in architecture.

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