Fabrizio Nevola considers the form, function, and significance of shops and the other commercial spaces contained in the ground floors of the Renaissance palaces of Siena, Florence, and Rome. Home Shopping: Urbanism, Commerce, and Palace Design in Renaissance Italy also investigates the social interaction between the private environment of the home and the public space of the street. Contrary to much that has been written about the palaces of the fifteenth century, their designers did not abandon botteghe (shops), nor more broadly construed commercial functions. The resulting buildings are hybrid structures in which the proud individual façades of private patrons’ palaces were configured to serve the needs of trade. Today, urban space is largely experienced as a succession of shop fronts, and commercial activities overwhelm all other functions. Early modern Italy was not much different.

Entering the architectural dialogue in 1830, the term néo-grec came to characterize the stylistic movement represented by Henri Labrouste’s Bibliothèque Sainte-Geneviève, but the meaning of the term was always elusive. Josephine Grieder analyzes the confusing record of remarks by architects and the subsequent commentary by scholars and historians, noting the difficulty of aligning the terminology with visible architectural phenomena. The Search for the Néo-Grec in Second Empire Paris turns to contemporary books and journals for testimony about the visual characteristics of the style and traces the subtle shift in its meaning as néo-grec became inextricably linked with the urban transformation effected by Napoleon III and Haussmann.

Focusing on three nineteenth-century railroad lines in Norway, Mari Hvattum investigates the architectural and cultural significance of early railways. In Panoramas of Style: Railway Architecture in Nineteenth-century Norway, she argues that the seemingly frivolous historicism of mid-nineteenth-century railway architecture should be understood as an attempt to craft appropriate cultural associations for the new Norwegian nation state. Railway architects created an architecture that fused the local and the global, the modern and the traditional, into a new whole. They designed buildings with a mimetic and emblematic relationship to their surroundings, construing the railway journey as—to paraphrase the cultural historian Wolfgang Schivelbusch—a “panorama of style.”

The Spatial Practices of Privilege focuses on the children’s cottage that stands on the grounds of the Breakers, in Newport, Rhode Island. Designed by Peabody and Stearns in 1886, the cottage was the first of several changes Cornelius Vanderbilt made to the property after he purchased it in 1885. While the main house (designed by Richard Morris Hunt after the first Breakers burned in 1892) has long been interpreted as the architectural reflection of the Vanderbilts’ class status, the cottage has been ignored. Bringing together the methodologies of cultural landscape studies, performance theory, and the history of childhood, Abigail A. Van Slyck argues that the estate played an active role in establishing, maintaining, and enhancing the family’s class status, and that children—and their spatial management—were integral to the process. In its form and content, the cottage evoked middle-class domesticity, but did so in the service of an upper-class identity that sought to distinguish itself from the middle class. Ostensibly a site of play, it was also a place of work, both for the Vanderbilts’ servants as well as for the Vanderbilt offspring. Modeled on an almshouse and devoted to the homely skills of cooking and sewing, the building made claims to humbleness that were refuted by its size, expense, and its spatial arrangements that supported the Vanderbilt children and their parents in the performance of their privileged status.