THE POLITICS OF STYLE:
MEYER SCHAPIRO AND THE CRISIS OF MEANING IN ART HISTORY

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This dissertation focuses on the art historical praxis of one of the most significant Euro-American art historians of the 20th century, Meyer Schapiro (1904 – 1996). While Schapiro has most often been celebrated for his Marxist art history of the 1930s, his art historical explorations over the course of his career were part of an extended dialogue with his German-speaking colleagues regarding the crisis of meaning in art history.

In chapter one, I propose that Schapiro is concerned with what I have called the politics of style, the ways in which the definition of style has been implicated in racial and national politics since the discipline's institutionalization in the 19th century. In chapter two, I consider Schapiro's earliest publications and establish his indebtedness to the German art historical tradition, particularly the work of Emanuel Löwy, Wilhelm Vöge and Heinrich Wölfflin. With the rise of fascism in the 1920s and 30s, racial and national characterizations of style became increasingly pernicious.

In chapters three and four, I explore Schapiro's concern with fascism as it affects his art history and arises in his publications and personal correspondence including his discussions with Erwin Panofsky regarding iconology and with Otto Pächt of the New Vienna School regarding structural analysis (*Strukturanalyse*) and the belief in "national constants." In chapter five I establish how Schapiro's theorization of style as heterogeneous in his 1953 essay "Style" corresponds with reactions to racial and national essentialism by social scientists like cultural

anthropologist Ruth Benedict and modern artists. In chapter six, I consider Schapiro's semiotics in relation to linguist Roman Jakobson's poetics and Panofsky's iconology.

My reading emphasizes both the social historical situation from which Schapiro interprets art and how his personal background as a Jewish immigrant who grew up in the working-class neighborhood of Brownsville, Brooklyn affects his interpretation. I contend that Schapiro's experimentation was motivated by his desire to maintain a definition of style that recognized the unity of form and content without resorting to racial or national determinism. I conclude that Schapiro's art historical struggle provides an important lesson for the contemporary interpreter of images.

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PREFACE

My interest in Meyer Schapiro was sparked in a graduate seminar I took with John Williams during my first semester at the University of Pittsburgh. I am grateful to John for his encouragement and willingness to mentor me in the early stages of my work. Barbara McCloskey graciously agreed to chair my dissertation committee when John retired. She has provided me with unflagging support ever since. Her seminar on Erwin Panofsky was particularly helpful in spurring my interest in the relationship between the ideas of Schapiro and Panofsky. In his seminar on art historical methodology, Kirk Savage provided me with a strong foundation on which to build my detailed consideration of Schapiro's art historical praxis. In a seminar I took with Jonathan Arac in the Department of English, I became aware of studies of national character and the ways in which scholars attempted to bypass racial and national language in the postwar years. I am greatly appreciative of Terry Smith's efforts to push me to think more critically about both Schapiro and Panofsky. The final shape of this dissertation is thus owed in part to the invaluable support of each of my committee members.

I gratefully acknowledge the financial support provided for me by the Department of the History of Art and Architecture at the University of Pittsburgh, the Andrew Mellon Pre-Doctoral Fellowship, the Foreign Language and Area Studies Fellowship, the Walter Read Hovey Memorial Foundation Scholarship and the University of Pittsburgh's Dean's Tuition Scholarship. Financial support made research in London, New York, New Haven and Washington D.C. possible.

Many fine individuals aided me at a variety of archives and libraries, including the Archives of American Art and the Library of Congress in Washington D.C., the Museum of Modern Art archives and the Rare Book & Manuscript Library at Columbia University in New

York City, the Warburg Institute Archives and Victoria and Albert Museum Library in London and the Frick Fine Arts Library at the University of Pittsburgh. I am particularly grateful for the help of archivists Dorothea McEwan and Claudia Wedepohl at the Warburg Institute Archives. Dorothea's graciousness under difficult circumstances is impossible to repay.

The willingness of several scholars to share with me their thoughts on Schapiro as well as archival documents proved invaluable in my research. Jonathan Alexander at NYU provided me with copies of correspondence between Schapiro and Otto Pächt. Jack Jacobs at CUNY shared with me the contents of a box that Schapiro had left at the Political Science department when he was cleaning out his office. Terry Smith at the University of Pittsburgh provided me with copies of his lecture notes from Schapiro's course "Art History Theory and Methods" that he attended at Columbia in the spring of 1973. Others who provided me with useful documents and/or suggestions include David Craven at the University of New Mexico, Andrew Hemingway at University College London, Patricia Hills at Boston University, David Rosand at Columbia, Catherine Soussloff at UC-Santa Cruz and Christopher Wood at Yale.

Lastly, this project could never have been completed without the support of friends and family. Several friends deserve a special mention. These include Carolyn Butler Palmer, Kathy Johnston-Keane and Azar Rejaie. I am also thankful for the editorial help of my sister, Debby. Lastly, my husband, Tom, provided me with unfailing support that carried me through some difficult times to the end of this project. This dissertation is dedicated to Nate, Max, Sam and Tom.

1.   INTRODUCTION

> No one has ever devised a method for detaching the scholar from
> the circumstances of life, from the fact of his involvement . . . with
> a class, a set of beliefs, a social position.[1]
>
> Edward Said, 1978

This dissertation focuses on the art historical praxis of one of the most significant Euro-American art historian's of the 20th century, Meyer Schapiro (1904 – 96). In his efforts to establish art history as a respected scholarly discipline in the U.S., Schapiro turned to the German art historical tradition. The concept of style was key to the discipline's German-speaking founders who were committed to the exploration of formal qualities as the expression of a distinct historic moment. These men understood style not only as the forms of art, but also as their historical meanings. In so doing, they often attributed stylistic variations to racial or national differences. Though the young Schapiro had gravitated towards German-speaking scholars such as Emanuel Löwy (1857 – 1938), Alois Riegl (1858 – 1905), Wilhelm Vöge (1868 – 1952) and Heinrich Wölfflin (1864 – 1945) out of his concern for establishing a solid methodological basis for art history, the contemporary political situation made his task increasingly complex. His early engagement with the German art historical tradition in the 1920s and 30s coincided with the rise of fascism in Germany and an art history that was increasingly occupied with the assertion of racial and national superiority. Schapiro expressed growing concern with art historians who attributed formal characteristics to particular races or nations.

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[1] Edward Said, <u>Orientalism</u> (New York: Vintage, 1979) 10.

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His personal views led him to explore definitions of the term that were free of racial and national biases.

My dissertation thus addresses what I have chosen to call the politics of style: the ways in which art history in general and the concept of style in particular have been implicated in racial and national politics since the discipline's institutionalization in the 19th century and how these implications have continued to complicate an understanding of art historical meaning throughout the 20th century. Racial and national characterizations of style have been a part of art historical praxis ever since the 19th century. Since the institutionalization of the discipline in German-speaking countries in the 19th century corresponded with an increasing nationalism, art historians aided in the construction of national identity through the building of national cultural heritages. But in the years between World War I and II, the attribution of particular styles to different races or nations became increasingly pernicious, thereby creating a crisis in the discipline. Both political and personal motivations forced art historians like Schapiro and Erwin Panofsky (1892 – 1968) to reassess their understanding of the link between formal characteristics and historical meaning. In an effort to avoid an art history that could be accused of being racist, the ties that had bound form to content (or the discussion of meaning) in the early years of the discipline were largely severed. In the postwar years, considerations of meaning in Panofsky's art history were largely limited to iconographical studies with a focus on subject matter. Iconography's concern with matching subject matter to literary texts gave the method a seemingly objective air that helped it to gain in popularity. Likewise, formalism or the notion of art-for-art's-sake evaded discussions of meaning by considering formal characteristics as outside of social historical context. The distinctive practices of formalism and iconography allowed art historians and critics with the means to attempt to bypass the racial and national characterizations that had tainted

considerations of style. These practices soon became conventional. Art historians were trained as iconographers and practiced iconography irrespective of their concern for racial and national characterizations. Style came to be understood as form alone and was no longer linked to historical meaning. The historiography of these practices was largely lost.

Unlike Panofsky and other art historians practicing in the U.S. in the postwar years, Schapiro played a singular role in confronting style's complicated history by refusing to relinquish the bond that tied form to content while at the same time explicitly rejecting the role of racial and national determinants in discussions of style. At times over the course of his career Schapiro made his concern with style explicit, most notably in the essay "Style" (1953). At other times his concerns with style are less obvious, such as in his iconological publications of the 1940s. By reading his art history through the lens of racism and nationalism, I hope to provide a better understanding of the long-lasting effects of racial and national essentialism on art historical practice. I intend to make clear the ways in which Schapiro struggled to achieve a historically based, systematic analysis of style that did not rely on racial or national determinants. In so doing, I argue that Schapiro remained committed to understanding stylistic changes in relationship to social and economic changes over the course of his career. Schapiro's reaction to racialist and nationalist art historical narratives, while certainly not the sole motivator, is a significant contributing factor to his art history that has been only cursorily acknowledged.

Given style's entanglements with racial and national politics, it is not surprising that it has been one of art history's most embattled terms. In recent years, certain scholars have categorically rejected style's place within the discipline by pointing to its unstable meaning, even

questioning its status as a concept.[2] It is true that those who have accepted style as a valid analytical tool have been unable to come to a consensus as to its definition. Schapiro's description of style as "a system of forms with a quality and a meaningful expression through which the personality of the artist and the broad outlook of a group are visible" is only one of a few key definitions of the term in the 20th century.[3] In 1968, E. H. Gombrich defined style as "any distinctive way . . . in which an act is performed."[4] James Elkins' somewhat pessimistic entry on the term in the Grove Dictionary of Art is a testament to the term's difficult nature. Elkins remarks that "The further the concept of style is investigated, the more it appears as an inherently partly incoherent concept, opaque to analysis."[5] I take Elkins' gloomy calculation as a challenge. My intent is to help elucidate the concept of style by exploring Schapiro's commitment to and concerns with it.

1.1. REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

Scholarship on Schapiro has tended to focus around his Marxist art history of the 1930s, his application of semiotics to art and his treatment of style. For example, in 1978, the journal Social Research dedicated its spring issue to Schapiro. The issue contained eight essays on Schapiro, four of which dealt with either his Marxism or his semiotics.[6] The contemporary fascination with

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[2] See for example, Svetlana Alpers, "Style is What You Make It," Concept of Style, ed. Berel Lang (U of Pennsylvania P, 1979) 137; Philip Sohm, Style in the Art Theory of Early Modern Italy (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2001) 10.

[3] Meyer Schapiro, "Style," Theory and Philosophy of Art: Style, Artist, and Society (New York: Braziller, 1994) 51. Originally published as Meyer Schapiro, "Style." Anthropology Today: An Encyclopedic Inventory, ed. by A. K. Krober. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1953. Subsequent references will refer to the reprint.

[4] E. H. Gombrich, "Style," International Encyclopedia of the Social Sciences, ed. D. L. Sills, vol. 15 (New York: 1968) 352.

[5] James Elkins, Style, 2007, Oxford University Press, Available: http://www.groveart.com/, 12 March 2007.

[6] James Ackerman, "On Rereading 'Style'," Social Research 45.1 (1978); Wayne Andersen, "Schapiro, Marx, and the Reacting Sensibility of Artists," Social Research 45.1 (1978); Moshe Barasch, "Mode and Expression in Meyer Schapiro's Writings on Art," Social Research 45.1 (1978); Hubert Damisch, "Six Notes in the Margin of Meyer

semiotics as well as the growing popularity of the social history of art clearly motivated the authors' interests in Schapiro.[7] In contrast to the varied focus of the 1978 articles, the March 1994 issue of the Oxford Art Journal dedicated to Schapiro and guest-edited by David Craven is dominated by articles that explore Schapiro's Marxism. Of the nine articles in this issue, six focus on his Marxist art history of the 1930s.[8] Though the editorial policies of the journal surely influenced the selection, the focus seems to indicate that scholars today, or at least in the mid-90s, valued Schapiro's work largely for its contribution to a Marxist art history.

A third area of focus in Schapiro studies encompasses the broader topic of his theory of art in general and his treatment of style in particular. Scholarly interest in style is evident in the articles in the 1978 issue of Social Research. For instance, John Plummer attempted to summarize Schapiro's contribution to art history in a short essay entitled "Insight and Outlook." Plummer's most notable contribution to the consideration of style in this essay is his observation

Schapiro's *Words and Pictures*," Social Research 45.1 (1978); Thomas B. Hess, "Sketch for a Portrait of the Art Historian among Artists," Social Research 45.1 (1978); Donald B. Kuspit, "Dialectical Reasoning in Meyer Schapiro," Social Research 45.1 (1978); John Plummer, "Insight and Outlook," Social Research 45.1 (1978); David Rosand, "Semiotics and the Critical Sensibility: Observations on the Lessons of Meyer Schapiro," Social Research 45.1 (1978). A ninth essay by David H. Wright was also included in this issue of Social Research. Rather than focus on Schapiro's art history, Wright takes Schapiro as a point of departure considering two test cases for how one might understand style in relationship to social life. David H. Wright, "Style in the Visual Arts as Material for Social Research," Social Research 45.1 (1978).

[7] Semiotics are dealt with in: Damisch, "Six Notes in the Margin of Meyer Schapiro's Words and Pictures."; Rosand, "Semiotics and the Critical Sensibility: Observations on the Lessons of Meyer Schapiro." Schapiro's Marxist art history is the focus of: Andersen, "Schapiro, Marx, and the Reacting Sensibility of Artists."; Kuspit, "Dialectical Reasoning."

[8] The following essays focus on Schapiro's Marxist writings of the 1930s: Alicia Azuela, "Public Art, Meyer Schapiro and Mexican Muralism," Oxford Art Journal 17:1 (1994); David Craven, "Meyer Schapiro, Karl Korsch, and the Emergence of Critical Theory," Oxford Art Journal 17:1 (1994); Andrew Hemingway, "Meyer Schapiro and Marxism in the 1930s," Oxford Art Journal 17:1 (1994); Patricia Hills, "1936: Meyer Schapiro, Art Front, and the Popular Front," Oxford Art Journal 17:1 (1994); Gerardo Mosquera, "Meyer Schapiro, Marxist Aesthetics, and Abstract Art," Oxford Art Journal 17.1 (1994); Otto Karl Werckmeister, "Jugglers in a Monastery," Oxford Art Journal 17:1 (1994). The notable exceptions are Michael Camille, "'How New York Stole the Idea of Romanesque Art': Medieval, Modern and Postmodern in Meyer Schapiro," Oxford Art Journal 17:1 (1994); Patricia Mathews, "Gender Analysis and the Work of Meyer Schapiro," Oxford Art Journal 17.1 (1994); James and Susan Raines Thompson, "A Vermont Visit with Meyer Schapiro," *Oxford Art Journal* 17.1 (1994). The last of these is the transcript of an interview with Schapiro from 1991.

that Schapiro views form and content as indivisible.[9] In his essay "On Rereading Style," James Ackerman argues that Schapiro understands style as a means of classification that is both inductive and structural.[10] Ackerman emphasizes the analogy that Schapiro makes between language and style, hypothesizing that Schapiro must have viewed the style-vehicle and the work of art as parallels to the linguist Ferdinand de Saussure's *langue* and *parole*.[11] Lastly, Moshe Barasch contributed his "Mode and Expression in Meyer Schapiro's Writings on Art." His focus on Schapiro's discussions of the expressive nature of style comes closest to issues at the heart of my dissertation. Barasch emphasizes that Schapiro understands expression to include both the formal expression and the content that is expressed.[12]

More recent considerations of the "Style" essay have appeared in a number of review essays following the 1994 re-publication of the essay in the Braziller volume of Schapiro's writings entitled Theory and Philosophy of Art: Style, Artist and Society. For instance, the philosopher Paul Mattick considers the importance that Schapiro ascribes to the meaning of forms in his "Style" essay and elsewhere.[13] Art historian Allan Wallach maintains that Schapiro argued for an expanded definition of style in his essay of the same name.[14] Yet "Style" itself was not the topic that caught the attention of most of its reviewers. Instead, they took the opportunity to celebrate Schapiro's life-long accomplishments.[15] (He was 90 when he published this book.)

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[9] Plummer, "Insight and Outlook."

[10] Ackerman, "On Rereading 'Style'," 154.

[11] Ackerman, "On Rereading 'Style'," 158.

[12] Barasch, "Mode and Expression," 55-56.

[13] Paul Mattick, "Form and Theory: Meyer Schapiro's Theory and Philosophy of Art," Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism 55.1 (1997).

[14] Alan Wallach, "Meyer Schapiro's Essay on Style: Falling into the Void," Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism 55.1 (1997).

[15] Several reviewers made only passing remarks on "Style." See for example: Michael Ann Holly, "Schapiro Style," Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism 55.1 (1997): 6; Joseph Leo Koerner, "The Seer," Rev. of Theory and Philosophy of Art: Style, Artists, and Society (Selected Papers Vol. IV), by Meyer Schapiro. New Republic 212.2-3

While Joseph Leo Koerner published just such a laudatory review of Schapiro in <u>The New Republic</u>, W.J.T. Mitchell responded in <u>ARTForum</u> with his accusation that Schapiro's essays in <u>Theory and Philosophy of Art</u> betrayed his "resistance to theory."[16] Much of the subsequent commentary revolved around this accusation as well as Schapiro's "Note on Heidegger and van Gogh" (1968), the short essay that Mitchell identified as marking "the clearest moment of Schapiro's resistance to theory."[17] In this notorious essay, Schapiro argued that Martin Heidegger in his essay "The Origin of the Work of Art" (1935) had incorrectly identified the shoes in Vincent van Gogh's painting <u>Shoes</u> (1886) as those of a peasant woman. Schapiro proposed an alternative reading of the shoes as being those of the artist, a man of the city. Undoubtedly, Jacques Derrida's contribution to the debate further strengthened the notoriety of this exchange, which came to be understood by many as being about the differences between art history and philosophy.[18] Koerner and Mitchell alike cast Schapiro as both a rationalist and an

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(1995): 35, 37. W. J. T. Mitchell, "Schapiro's Legacy," Rev. of <u>Theory and Philosophy of Art,</u> by Meyer Schapiro. <u>Art in America</u> 83 (1995): 29; Barry Schwabsky, "Resistances: Meyer Schapiro's <u>Theory and Philosophy of Art</u>," <u>Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism</u> 55.1 (1997): 1.

Michael Kimmelman recognizes Schapiro as being "among the century's most inspired thinkers." Michael Kimmelman, "Detailing a Masterly Point of View," <u>New York Times</u> 1994: C28. Likewise, Jospeh Leo Koerner called him "America's greatest art historian." Koerner, "The Seer," 34.

[16] Koerner, "The Seer."; Mitchell, "Schapiro's Legacy," 29. Mitchell's attack is harsh, and in some instances, just plain incorrect. For example, Mitchell states that in Schapiro's "On Some Problems in the Semiotics of Visual Art: Field and Vehicle in Image-Signs," he "betrays no awareness of any other work on semiotics. There are no references to C.S. Peirce, or Saussure, no engagement with the philosophical study of language, signs mimesis or representation." Mitchell, "Schapiro's Legacy," 29. As I discuss at length in chapter six of this dissertation, this is simply not true.

Schapiro's "Note on Heidegger and van Gogh" had inspired commentary following its initial appearance in 1968. Most notable in this regard is: Jacques Derrida, "Restitutions of the Truth in Pointing [*pointure*]," trans. Geoff Bennington and Ian McLeod, <u>Truth in Painting</u> (Chicago: U of Chicago P, 1987).

[17] Mitchell, "Schapiro's Legacy," 29. Subsequent reviews that countered Mitchell's accusation and/or addressed Schapiro's "Note on Heidegger and van Gogh" include: Mattick, "Form and Theory: Meyer Schapiro's <u>Theory and Philosophy of Art</u>."; Schwabsky, "Resistances: Meyer Schapiro's <u>Theory and Philosophy of Art</u>." Wallach, "Falling into the Void."

[18] In discussing Schapiro's debate with Heidegger over van Gogh's painting of shoes, a number of scholars, beginning with Derrida, have pointed to Schapiro's implicit critique of Heidegger's Nazism. See for example: Suzanne Bloom and Ed Hill, "Borrowed Shoes," <u>Artforum</u> April 1988: 116; Derrida, "Restitutions," 258-60, 364-68;

art historian (as opposed to a philosopher).[19] This characterization is perhaps most revealing in terms of its simplification of Schapiro's work.[20]

One way in which scholars have begun to recognize the complexity of Schapiro's approach is by considering the significance of his Jewish ethnicity to his art historical work. Donald Kuspit has argued in the most convincing treatment that Schapiro's Jewishness is revealed unconsciously in his art history.[21] Linda Seidel has compared Schapiro's particular mode of thinking and writing to the Talmudic method of study, a dialectical system of logical reasoning applied to both divine and secular texts in the Jewish tradition.[22] In order to establish the significance of Schapiro's Jewishness to his art history, Margaret Olin along with Kuspit and Seidel have focused on Schapiro's attack of art critic and connoisseur Bernard Berenson (1961).[23] Their selection of this text, in which Schapiro repudiates Berenson's disavowal of his own Jewishness, reflects what Kuspit has referred to in Schapiro's writing as an "absence of

Koerner, "The Seer," 38-39. Derrida emphasizes that rather than the shoes of a peasant, Schapiro stated that: "They are the shoes of the artist, by that time a man of the town and city." Meyer Schapiro, "The Still Life as Personal Object - A Note on Heidegger and van Gogh," Theory and Philosophy of Art: Style, Artist, and Society (New York: Braziller, 1994) 138.

[19] In discussing Schapiro's "Note on Heidegger and van Gogh, Koerner stated that: "Nowhere is Schapiro's commitment to reason and rational analysis more apparent (and more appealing) . . ." Koerner, "The Seer," 38. Likewise, Mitchell refers to "Schapiro's rationality, common sense and wide learning . . ." Mitchell, "Schapiro's Legacy," 31.

[20] Barry Schwabsky maintains that Mitchell's accusation that Schapiro represents a "resistance to theory" does not take into account the meaning of his phrase "resistance to theory" in its source, the work of Paul de Man. Schwabsky thus points to a further simplification in Mitchell's attack on Schapiro. Schwabsky, "Resistances: Meyer Schapiro's Theory and Philosophy of Art," 3.

[21] Donald B. Kuspit, "Meyer Schapiro's Jewish Unconscious," Jewish Identity in Modern Art History, ed. Catherine M. Soussloff (Berkley: U of California P, 1999).

[22] Linda Seidel, "'Shalom Yehudin!' Meyer Schapiro's Early Years in Art History," Journal of Medieval and Early Modern Studies 27.3 (1997).

[23] Margaret Olin, "Violating the Second Commandment's Taboo: Why Art Historian Meyer Schapiro Took on Bernard Berenson," Forward 98 (1994): 23; Meyer Schapiro, "Mr. Berenson's Values," Theory and Philosophy of Art (New York: Braziller, 1994).

sustained, explicit engagement with the question of Jewish identity."[24] Schapiro's treatment of Berenson is an exception to what can easily be understood as Schapiro's usual reticence on his Jewish identity. Kuspit, Olin and Seidel have focused rather narrowly on Schapiro's Jewishness, not considering that it operates in combination with a variety of other factors in contributing to his personal values and only Kuspit has adequately addressed how he defines Schapiro's Jewishness.

1.2.   METHODOLOGY

Though Schapiro is the protagonist of this dissertation, it is *not* an intellectual biography in the traditional sense. In presenting his disciplinary, intellectual, artistic and political investments as essential to understanding his theorization of style, I argue that Schapiro's subject position is significant to his art historical writings. In contrast to traditional intellectual histories, which highlight the individual as the sole initiator of insight, my work emphasizes the social historical situation from which Schapiro interprets art. I am thus contributing to the trend in scholarship, exemplified by Keith Moxey's The Practice of Persuasion (2001), which seeks to situate the work of art historians as interpretations from particular cultural locations.[25] As opposed to more traditional approaches, which view knowledge as universal, my approach – like Moxey's – views knowledge as situated, specific to the particular interpreter, time and place. Thus, I seek to practice a culturally and politically informed approach that may in turn act on the cultural and political circumstances in which I find myself.

Though his leftist politics have received the lion's share of the attention, various aspects of Schapiro's particular situation proved pivotal to his methodological interests. I argue for a

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[24] Kuspit, "Jewish," 202. While Schapiro does not explicitly engage in discussions of Jewish identity, he does treat topics of Jewish significance.

[25] Keith P. F. Moxey, The Practice of Persuasion: Paradox and Power in Art History (Ithaca: Cornell UP, 2001).

complex view of Schapiro's identity through a brief biographical sketch in which I highlight his status as a Jewish immigrant, his upbringing in the Jewish working-class immigrant neighborhood of Brownsville, Brooklyn, the high value placed on education in his family and his early involvement with socialism. Though not a part of the generation of Jewish scholars who came to the United States in the 1930s to escape Hitler, Schapiro identified himself and was likewise identified by others with it.[26] Schapiro's interest in the German art historical tradition, his reaction to the rise of fascism, his involvement with the community of exiled intellectuals, his interest in iconology and his interdisciplinary interests in the social sciences and linguistics are all related to his particular reactions to his social historical circumstances – the time and place of his existence.

My work depends on Schapiro's numerous publications, letters scattered in a variety of archival collections and many significant secondary works. Though the material available to me was enormous, my understanding of Schapiro is limited on several counts. I researched and wrote this dissertation without access to the collection of Meyer Schapiro's papers, which have only recently been deposited in the Rare Book and Manuscript Collection in Butler Library at Columbia University. A fuller view of Schapiro's life and work will be possible once these papers have been processed and are accessible.[27] Also, I began my project after Schapiro's death and never had the opportunity to meet him or hear him speak. Many have described his invigorating lecture style to me, and more recent posthumous publications have allowed me a

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[26] John Russell has called Schapiro "an archetypal Jewish immigrant." John Russell, "Meyer Schapiro, 91, is Dead: His Work Wove Art and Life," <u>The New York Times</u> 4 March 1996: sec. A, 1.

[27] My most recent correspondence with the archivist at Columbia indicates that though the papers have now been deposited, they will not be available for full consultation for at least two years. Personal email communication with Michael Ryan, 6 August 2007.

glimpse of his mind at work, yet I acknowledge that my point of view is achieved primarily through a familiarity with his written work.[28]

1.3.   ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURE

This dissertation is divided into seven chapters, including an introduction and conclusion. I have organized the dissertation both chronologically and thematically; each of the five main chapters is aligned approximately with a decade of Schapiro's career and delves, more or less, into a particular methodological concern. After initially establishing the historical backdrop for Schapiro's emergence into the discipline and his early alignment with the art historical tradition of German-speaking scholars in chapter two, I address Marxism in chapter three, iconology in chapter four, style in chapter five and semiotics in chapter six. The organizational structure allows for some flexibility and I occasionally consider publications that are thematically related but fall outside of the chronological framework. The chronological structure is essential in order to consider how Schapiro's methodological approach shifted with the social historical situation. He took seriously the emergence of different theoretical concerns, particularly if he found them to be sympathetic to his agenda. I do not claim to address all of Schapiro's interests and influences in this dissertation. Nor do I address all of his many publications. Rather, I focus on how Schapiro negotiated the theorization of meaning of art in select publications from the 1920s through the 70s.

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[28] Irving Sandler has described him as: "the most inspiring lecturer in the entire teaching profession. When he talks, he levitates; he's about six inches off the ground." As cited in Koerner, "The Seer," 34. His lecture style has perhaps been best preserved in Meyer Schapiro, Romanesque Architectural Sculpture: The Charles Eliot Norton Lectures (Chicago: U of Chicago P, 2006).

2.   SCHAPIRO AND THE NATIONALISM OF THE "GERMAN" ART HISTORICAL TRADITION

2.1.   INTRODUCTION

> It is twenty-five years since Professor Emanuel Loewy published his remarkably clear analysis of the steps from Greek archaism to Greek realistic sculpture. Rereading it, we become aware how much the modern arts have changed our view of the archaic and primitive. Formerly we found a justification of the academic standards of accuracy in a Hellenistic precedent, which Loewy showed was the goal of a long development, attained step by step, through crudity, error and a restraining tendency towards abstraction. Today this same account seems to us a history of decay rather than of progress. The word "archaic" had then an invidious suggestion; however dispassionate its user, there was attached to it the stigma of incompetence and childishness.[29]

Meyer Schapiro, 1925

From the beginning of his career as a young Ph.D. student studying medieval art history at Columbia in the 1920s, Schapiro sought to establish a critical dialogue with the ideas of German-speaking art historians. Dissatisfied with the studies in connoisseurship and courses in art appreciation that were common in the U.S., Schapiro found a rigorous alternative in the work of scholars who combined a close analysis of the formal qualities of the work of art with a discussion of its historical meaning.[30] Schapiro defined his art historical praxis through its relationship with the German art historical tradition and its emphasis on the explanation of stylistic change.[31] Most notably, Schapiro's early work is marked by his critical engagement

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[29] Meyer Schapiro, "On Emanuel Löwy's Rendering of Nature in Early Greek Art," Rev. of Die Naturwiedergabe in der älteren Griechischen Kunst, by Emanuel Löwy. The Arts 8 (1925): 170.

[30] For example, Harvard University was well known as a center for connoisseurship studies. For an account of the early history of the discipline in the United States, see Craig Hugh Smyth and Peter M. Lukehart, eds., The Early Years of Art History in the United States (Princeton: Princeton UP, 1993).

[31] Though Epstein notes this, she does not endeavor to uncover Schapiro's affinities with German-speaking scholars. See Helen Epstein, "Meyer Schapiro: 'A Passion to Know and Make Known'," ARTNews May 1983: 78.

with the work of German-speaking art historians active in the late 19th and early 20th centuries, including Emanuel Löwy (1857-1938), Alois Riegl (1858-1905), Wilhelm Vöge (1868-1952) and Heinrich Wölfflin (1864-1945).

Schapiro's first publication appeared in 1925 and was a review of Löwy's <u>The Rendering of Nature in Early Greek Art</u>, the 1907 English translation of Löwy's 1900 publication <u>Die Naturewiedergabe in der Alteren Grieschischen Kunst</u>. A detailed analysis of the change in style from archaism to naturalism in Greek sculpture, Löwy's book had escaped critical attention in the U.S. for twenty-five years. His focus on stylistic change, a key concern of the German art historical tradition in its formative years, and his serious treatment of so-called archaic art were significant to Schapiro. Yet, while Löwy saw stylistic evolution towards naturalism as progressive, Schapiro maintained that the same shift could be characterized as decline. He clearly stated this in the opening lines of his review cited above. Even at the age of twenty-one when he wrote this review, Schapiro recognized that his contemporary experience of modern art with its abstracted forms played a crucial role in shaping his view of so-called archaic art. Schapiro's comments on Löwy's book are noteworthy as they foreshadow Schapiro's lifelong interest in both medieval and modern art and his understanding of the connection between the two.

Though Schapiro was attracted to discussions of stylistic change in foundational texts such as Löwy's, his relationship with them is not as simple as it might first appear. While Schapiro aspired to address historical meaning through the systematic analysis of style, he expressed increasing concern with the underlying reliance on racial and national essences that characterized the work of many pioneering art historians in their attempts to explain certain expressive qualities in art. The institutionalization of the discipline of art history in late 19th and

early 20th century Germany, Austria and Switzerland corresponded with a period of increased

nationalism during which pioneering art historians participated in the construction of national

identities. In this chapter, I aim to situate Schapiro's earliest encounters with this tradition at a

point of crisis in its history, when art's connection to racial and national essentialism was

becoming more troubling as nationalism increased in the years between World War I and II.

In the first section of chapter two, "Nationalism in the 'German' Art Historical

Tradition," I stress the role that the concepts of nation and race played in art historical theory

from the institutionalization of the discipline in the late 19th century through the 1920s. The

German art historical tradition is not, as the term might imply, the work of a cohesive group.

Generally the term is used in reference to the scholarship of German-speaking art historians who

brought a new scientific emphasis on form to the study of art. The phrase does not take into

account the fact that German-speakers had different national affiliations as well as personal

attachments that emerged in their scholarship.[32]

To give a sense of the varying degrees to which concepts of racial and national character

colored the art history of the day, I discuss the work of Riegl and Wölfflin alongside that of Josef

Strzygowski (1862-1941). While all three made valuable contributions to the study of art, only

Riegl and Wölfflin have been recognized for their significant roles in the establishment of art

history as a scholarly discipline. Though Strzygowski's work was groundbreaking in its

emphasis on previously ignored arts of the Middle East, a deep-seated racism was at the heart of

his approach. Furthermore, Schapiro recognized that Riegl and Wölfflin's work had influenced

his own. In short, this section gives a sense of the complicated art historical scene onto which

Schapiro emerged in the 1920s.

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[32] In her dissertation, Diana Graham Reynolds has pointed to the erroneous assumption that all German-speaking scholars shared an intellectual unity. See Diana Graham Reynolds, "Alois Riegl and the Politics of Art History: Intellectual Traditions and Austrian Identity in <u>Fin-de-Siècle</u> Vienna," diss., UC, San Diego, 1997, 7-9.

In the second section of chapter two, "Schapiro's Path to the Discipline," I follow Schapiro's development until the completion of his dissertation in 1929. I establish his debt to the German art historical tradition primarily through the careful analysis of his 1925 review of Löwy's Rendering of Nature in Early Greek Art and his 1929 dissertation on the Romanesque sculpture of the cathedral at Moissac.[33] I further argue that the tendencies he developed in his publications of the 1920s led to his interest in bringing German art history to a U.S. audience, in explaining stylistic change and in establishing modern and medieval art on the same level as Renaissance art.

2.2.   NATIONALISM IN THE "GERMAN" ART HISTORICAL TRADITION

> The artist quite naturally places the general canon of art in the foreground, but we must not carp at the historical observer with his interest in the variety of forms in which art appears, and it remains no mean problem to discover the conditions which, as material element – call it temperament, *zeitgeist*, or racial character – determine the style of individuals, periods, and peoples.[34]
>
> Heinrich Wölfflin, 1915

> In spite of all deviations and individual movements, the development of style in later occidental art was homogeneous, just as European culture as a whole can be taken as homogeneous. But within this homogeneity, we must reckon with the permanent differences of national types. From the beginning [of this book] we have made reference to the way in which the modes of vision are refracted by nationality. There is a definite type of Italian or German imagination which asserts itself, always the same in all centuries. Naturally they are not constants in the mathematical sense, but to set up a scheme of a national type of imagination is a necessary aid to the historian. The time will soon come when the

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[33] Schapiro showed a penchant for writing reviews from the very start of his career, over the course of which he published seventy-seven. His first published review is exemplary as it initiates a pattern common to his work, in which Schapiro greatly admires certain aspects of a scholarly argument while severely criticizing others. This act of critical engagement allowed Schapiro to place himself actively within the art historical debates of the day.

[34] Heinrich Wölfflin, Principles of Art History: the Problem of the Development of Style in Later Art (New York: Dover, 1950) 11.

historical record of European architecture will no longer be merely subdivided into Gothic, Renaissance, and so on, but will trace out the national physiognomies which cannot quite be effaced even by imported styles. Italian Gothic is an Italian style, just as the German Renaissance can only be understood on the basis of the whole tradition of Nordic-Germanic creation.[35]

Wölfflin, 1915

Many of the so-called founding fathers of the discipline of art history like Riegl and Wölfflin are frequently characterized as formalists, concerned solely with the categorization of formal qualities.[36] Yet the establishment of art history as an academic discipline in German, Austrian and Swiss universities in the 1880s and 1890s coincided with a growing sense of nationalism, and thus art historians quite often participated in the construction of national histories.[37] Significantly, debates regarding the "national question" became increasingly intense during the period that art history was experiencing its greatest period of development in German-speaking nations.[38] Even for art historians like Riegl and Wölfflin, who did not participate in an overtly nationalistic discourse, their writings were still implicated in this nationalistic movement. Since their work has had a lasting impact on the discipline, its implicit reliance on essentializing notions of race and nation has continued to complicate the praxis of art history.

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[35] Wölfflin, Principles of Art History 235.

[36] Kathryn Brush, The Shaping of Art History: Wilhelm Vöge, Adolph Goldschmidt, and the Study of Medieval Art (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1996). Brush argues this point, citing as a particularly salient example of this trend, A. L. Rees and Frances Borzello, eds., The New Art History (London: Camden, 1986).

[37] On the topic of the institutionalization of the discipline, see for example, Heinrich Dilly, Kunstgeschichte als Institution. Studien zur Geschicte einer Disziplin (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1979); Elizabeth Mansfield, ed., Art History and its Institutions (London: Routledge, 2002). For a critique of Dilly's treatment, see Wolfgang Beyrodt, "Kunstgeschichte als Universitätsfach," Kunst und Kunsttheorie 1400-1900, ed. Peter Ganz, Martin Gosebruch, Nikolaus Meier, Martin Warnke, vol. 48, Wolfenbütteler Forschungen (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 1991).

[38] Eric Hobsbawm, Nations and Nationalism since 1780. Programme, Myth, Reality (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1990) 43.

In Germany, the development of the discipline was profoundly marked by the unification of the nation under Otto von Bismarck in 1871, as medievalist Kathryn Brush has pointed out in her study of the pioneering scholarship of medievalists Vöge and Adolph Goldschmidt (1863-1944). The newly formed German Empire was "a powerful catalyst for German scholars," whose art history began to reflect an increasing sense of German nationalism.[39] She argues that the monuments of the medieval period were particularly vital to the imagining of a long-standing German history. The debates in France and Germany over the Gothic style's country of origin were a part of this push to construct significant national cultures.[40] Brush states: "Nationalist sentiment sparked interest in Germany's own history, and not surprisingly, much post-1871 research on the Middle Ages (including art historical writings) focused on the medieval empires of the Carolingian, Ottonian, Salian and Hohenstaufen eras."[41]

Relatively few scholars have dealt in any depth with this question of the racial and national emphases in art history. Art historians Claire Farago and Margaret Olin are two notable exceptions.[42] Like Brush, Farago and Olin have pointed out that the art historical writings of the 19th and early 20th centuries were largely affected by a growing nationalism. Though Farago's

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[39] Brush, Shaping of Art History 4.

[40] For more on this debate, see Margaret Olin, "C[lement] Hardesh [Greenberg] and Company: Formal Criticism and Jewish Identity," Too Jewish?: Challenging Traditional Identities, ed. Norman L. Kleebatt (New York: Jewish Museum, 1996) 41; Paul Frankl, The Gothic: Literary Sources and Interpretations through Eight Centuries (Princeton: Princeton UP, 1960) 417; Mitchell Schwarzer, German Architectural Theory and the Search for Modern Identity (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1995) 128-66.

[41] Brush, Shaping of Art History 4.

[42] Claire Farago and Margaret Olin have both explored the close ties between the production of national histories and art historical scholarship. See for example, Claire Farago, "'Vision Itself has its History': 'Race,' Nation, and Renaissance Art History," Reframing the Renaissance: Visual Culture in Europe and Latin America, 1450-1650, ed. Claire Farago (New Haven: Yale UP, 1995); Margaret Olin, "Nationalism, the Jews, and Art History," Judaism 45.4 (1996). In addition to her work on early Viennese art historians, Olin has also addressed the role of Jewish identity in Clement Greenberg's art criticism and Schapiro's art history. See for example, Olin, "C[lement] Hardesh [Greenberg]."; Olin, "Violating the Second Commandment's Taboo: Why Art Historian Meyer Schapiro Took on Bernard Berenson."; Margaret Olin, Nation without Art: Examining Modern Discourses on Jewish Art (Lincoln: U of Nebraska P, 2001).

interest is primarily 19th century studies of the Italian Renaissance, she recognizes the broader implication of contextualizing these studies: "Nineteenth-century studies of Italian culture deserve to be contextualized in the setting of nationalist politics, not just for the specialist in their writings or in Italian history, but for everyone interested in the status of modern disciplinary practices."[43] Farago questions her reader: "is it not curious that no one has ever pursued the obvious connections between racial character and 'mode of representation' in these texts [on formalist analysis]?"[44] Olin's publications on these very questions began to appear shortly after Farago's appeal.[45]

Olin has focused on the role that anti-Semitism and nationalism played in Vienna in the early years of the discipline. She has uncovered a fascinating dichotomy within Viennese art history between the work of Riegl and Strzygowski. Contrasting what she has described as Riegl's Imperial art history with Strzygowski's nationalist art history, she illustrates how their scholarship was intertwined with political ideology.[46] While both Riegl and Strzygowski lived and worked in turn-of-the-century Vienna, each had a unique relationship with the Habsburg Empire that was based in part on their individual backgrounds and personal commitments.[47] With personal ties to the "German-speaking officialdom" of the Austro-Hungarian Empire, Riegl supported the international aspect of the Empire, which was partly evident through his refusal to identify imperial art with Roman nationality.[48] Strzygowski, on the other hand, had more humble

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[43] Farago, "Vision," 71-72.

[44] Farago, "Vision," 78.

[45] Farago's essay appeared in 1995; Olin's earliest essays on anti-Semitism and nationalism in art history appeared in 1996. See for example Olin, "Nationalism."; Olin, "C[lement] Hardesh [Greenberg]."; Margaret Olin, "Art History and Ideology: Alois Riegl and Josef Strzygowski," Cultural Visions: Essays in the History of Culture, eds. Penny Schine Gold and Benjamin C. Sax (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2000); Olin, Nation without Art.

[46] Olin, "Art History and Ideology."

[47] Olin, "Art History and Ideology," 155-56, 162-63.

[48] Olin, "Art History and Ideology," 155.

beginnings in a Polish-speaking, peripheral region of the Empire.[49] Olin has argued that Strzygowski's art history, which consistently supported the superiority of the German culture, was motivated by "pan-Germanic ideological concerns" that were connected to his desire to identify with the Germans and hide his Polish background.[50]

Like Brush, medievalist Jonathan Alexander has pointed out that much of 19th and early 20th century medieval scholarship rests upon the belief that races and nations possess certain essential and unchanging qualities.[51] He also recognized that this belief could not be entirely separated from the political context in which it emerged. His essay primarily explores how visual evidence from the Middle Ages might add to our understanding of medieval political allegiances, as distinct from those of the 19th and 20th centuries. In doing so, Alexander helps to undermine the practice of anachronistically applying modern conceptions of race and nation to the Middle Ages. He bookends his discussion with comments on the historiography of medieval art. He dwells on a question of great concern for Schapiro and his peers: "Is there justification for describing styles as 'English', 'French', 'Flemish', and so on, and beyond that, is it possible to see the qualities of these styles as continuous or constant over centuries?"[52]

More broadly speaking, a number of scholars have recently addressed the phenomenon of nationalism.[53] Benedict Anderson's notion of the nation as an imagined political community is relevant to my understanding of how art historians have participated and continue to participate in the construction of national identities. For my purposes, it is significant to distinguish between

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[49] Olin, "Art History and Ideology," 162-63.

[50] Olin, "Art History and Ideology," 167.

[51] Jonathan J. G. Alexander, "Medieval Art and Modern Nationalism," Medieval Art: Recent Perspectives, eds. Gale R. Owen-Crocker and Timothy Graham (Manchester: Manchester UP, 1998) 206-07.

[52] Alexander, "Medieval Art," 216.

[53] Benedict Anderson, Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism (London: Verso, 1983); Ernest Gellner, Nations and Nationalism (Ithaca: Cornell UP, 1983); Hobsbawm, Nations and Nationalism; Kathryn A. Manzo, Creating Boundaries: The Politics of Race and Nation (Boulder: Rienner, 1996).

what E. J. Hobsbawm has described as the French method of inclusion, in which anyone who pledged allegiance to the French state was French and the German method, in which the nation-state was defined in ethnic terms. Hobsbawm argues that initially nationality was seen, as the French saw it, in terms of inclusion, whereas later, (Hobsbawm specifies the years between 1870 and 1918,) nationalism developed into an exclusionary ethno-linguistic nationalism.[54] During the later 19th century, the terms "nation" and "race" were often used interchangeably.[55] Hobsbawm points out that writers generalized about both racial and national character, leaving room for confusion between the two. This imprecision is apparent in the art historical writings of the period, where writers such as Wölfflin use the terms "race" and "nation" seemingly interchangeably.

In 1915, Wölfflin published his now legendary Kunstgeschichtliche Grundbegriffe: das Problem der Stilentwicklung in der neueren Kunst, which was translated into English in 1932 as Principles of Art History: The Problem of the Development of Style in Later Art. Here he offered a systematized art history through the theorization of five binary pairs of formal qualities that characterized stylistic change in art from the Renaissance to the Baroque. Wölfflin argued that the formal concepts of art shift from the linear to the painterly, from the plane to recession, from closed to open form, from multiplicity to unity, and from absolute to relative clarity.[56] Rather than see the history of style as linear and progressive, Wölfflin proposed a cyclical development based on a particular systemic logic. For Wölfflin, this schema of stylistic change (from Renaissance to Baroque) is applicable to various stylistic periods and thus repeats itself

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[54] Hobsbawm, Nations and Nationalism 101-30.

[55] Hobsbawm, Nations and Nationalism 108.

[56] Wölfflin first presents the pairs in the introduction to his Principles of Art History. The book is devoted to describing the development of style through five chapters, each devoted to one of the pairs of concepts.

throughout history. Though Wölfflin emphasized the visual component of art, he believed in the underlying importance of racial and national factors to style.

The citations with which I began this section, and which are taken from the introduction and conclusion to his <u>Principles of Art History</u> respectively, challenge the common perception of Wölfflin as a proponent of a purely positivistic formalism.[57] Wölfflin's inductive method, his practice of drawing conclusions from his observations, and his focus on "the visual root of style" were widely adopted well into the 20th century and thus provided the lens through which many have perceived Wölfflin. In fact, Wölfflin understood art and its formal characteristics to be at least partially based on racial and national character. Some scholars, such as Farago, have acknowledged this basis underlying Wölfflin's theory of stylistic change.[58] She states that: "What Wölfflin called *Rassencharakter* was something held to be the source of all structures of feeling and thought, *naturally* determined by blood and intellect, a shared assumption over and above the individual. The formal vocabulary of art history . . . rendered these assumptions implicit."[59] Wölfflin's art history depended on these beliefs in the determining nature of racial and national character. Yet while racial difference was a key factor for some German-speaking art historians of the time, Wölfflin chose not to foreground these in his 1915 publication.

Wölfflin's emphasis on the formal characteristics of art in his <u>Principles of Art History</u> stands out against the increasingly nationalistic art history being published in German-speaking academia at the beginning of World War I. The German art historian Martin Warnke has linked the exceptional nature of Wölfflin's focus on the visual elements of art to his concern with

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[57] This understanding of Wölfflin corresponds with his role as the father of formalism, as we have come to understand it through art critic Clement Greenberg.

[58] In addition to Farago, see the following treatments of Wölfflin, which point to his reliance on the concepts of racial and national character: Joan Hart Goldhammer, "Heinrich Wölfflin: An Intellectual Biography," diss., UC, Berkeley, 1981; David Summers, "'Form,' Nineteenth-Century Metaphysics and the Problem of Art Historical Description," <u>The Art of Art History: A Critical Anthology</u> (Oxford: Oxford UP, 1998) 128.

[59] Farago, "Vision," 77.

contemporary political events. [60] Wölfflin's contemporaries commonly discussed art in terms of its relationship to its cultural history; Warnke understands Wölfflin's formalism as a conscious rejection of these practices and the use of art history for national propaganda. [61] Warnke argues that:

> Amid a total appropriation of culture by politics, Wölfflin insisted in the <u>Principles of Art History</u> on the autonomy and discrete organizational integrity of optical culture, for whose existence no power should be able to declare itself responsible. If the whole world around him was prepared to cede all scholarly and moral norms to the political battles of the day, the <u>Principles of Art History</u> would not do so. [62]

Yet Wölfflin clearly relied on racial factors. How does Warnke account for this?

Warnke acknowledges Wölfflin's lifelong belief in a "national psychology of form" and describes his acceptance of the determining role of racial and national essences in art as "the most precarious concession that [Wölfflin] was ever willing to offer to the general spirit of the times." [63] Warnke is surely right in pointing out that Wölfflin's focus on form can be understood as an attempt to avoid the problems of understanding art in relation to national culture, but Wölfflin's inability to relinquish the belief in a racial basis of art deserves further consideration. When compared with the more racist art history of the day, Wölfflin's reliance on racial and national factors may seem insignificant, but given the central role of Wölfflin's art history in the development of the discipline, his racial understanding of art must not be ignored.

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[60] Martin Warnke, "On Heinrich Wölfflin," <u>Representations</u> 27 (1989): 173, 175. Warnke's interest in nationalistic art history has extended to the contemporary moment. See Martin Warnke, as interviewed by Andreas Beyer, "'I Believe that We are Experiencing a 'Renationalisation' of Art History'," <u>The Art Newspaper</u> June 1992.

[61] Warnke, "On Heinrich Wölfflin," 177.

[62] Warnke, "On Heinrich Wölfflin," 177.

[63] Warnke, "On Heinrich Wölfflin," 181.

Riegl similarly relied on racial characterizations though his formalist approach went beyond the singular study of form. In addressing both the will to form and the expressive features of the work of art as part of the *Kunstwollen*, Riegl does not readily separate form from content.[64] Furthermore, while Wölfflin viewed stylistic development as cyclical, Riegl rejected the notion that styles grow and decay, arguing instead that styles develop from the tactile (or haptic) to the impressionistic (or optical).[65] Thus, rather than view any one style as superior to another, he believed that each style should be assessed by its own standards of beauty and not by contemporary taste. For example, in his Spätrömische Kunstindustrie (1901), Riegl attempted a complete reevaluation of Late Roman art, which had long been viewed as a decadent art of poor quality. Through his work, Riegl was able to establish Late Roman art as worthy of art historical enquiry. Likewise, Riegl's focus on ornament also helped to broaden the concept of art.

While Wölfflin's formalism rose to prominence during the 20th century, Riegl's formalism has only recently gained in reputation. Riegl was long overshadowed by art historians like Wölfflin and Panofsky, whose art history was more easily adapted to suit the objective tendencies of post-World War II academia. Riegl's marginalized position can be attributed in part to concerns that were raised regarding his reliance on racial character for explaining period styles. For example, as Margaret Iversen has pointed out, art historian Ernst Gombrich began Art and Illusion (1960) with an attack on art historians like Riegl who understood style as the expression of "'mankind,' 'races,' or 'ages.'" Gombrich stated that such an understanding of

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[64] See for example, Margaret Iversen, Alois Riegl: Art History and Theory (Cambridge: MIT, 1993) 8-9; Karen Lang, Chaos and Cosmos: On the Image in Aesthetics and Art History (Ithaca: Cornell UP, 2006) 26. Lang points out that Panofsky recognized Riegl's *Kunstwollen* to incorporate both form and content. See Erwin Panofsky, "The Concept of Artistic Volition," Critical Inquiry 8.1 (1981).

[65] For example, see Alois Riegl, Late Roman Art Industry, trans. Rolf Winkes (Rome: Giorgio Bretschneider 1985) 5-17.

style "weakens resistance to totalitarian habits of mind."[66] Though Schapiro and Gombrich's theories of art were often at odds, the two agreed that a reliance on racial constants in descriptions of styles was insupportable.[67] In 1953, Schapiro wrote an admiring description of Riegl's theory of style, praising him as "the most constructive and imaginative of the historians who tried to embrace the whole of artistic development as a single continuous process."[68] Yet Schapiro was also careful to distance himself from Riegl's "racial theories" and his idea that "Each great phase corresponds to a racial disposition."[69]

Other scholars have also pointed to Riegl's reliance on racial characterizations. For example, while Olin has argued that internationalism pervaded Riegl's work, she also acknowledges that he continued to hold to racial characterizations. She has pointed out that: "Although, like others, Riegl often traced tendencies to different 'races' or nationalities, he thought stylistic purity would spell the death of art."[70] Historian Diana Reynolds has also considered the nationalistic underpinnings of Riegl's scholarship in her unpublished dissertation. She has argued that as the director of the Austrian Museum for Art and Industry in *fin-de-siècle* Vienna, Riegl participated in political debates regarding "national style" and the definition of a cultural heritage of the Austro-Hungarian Empire that was distinct from that of the German Reich.

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[66] E. H. Gombrich, <u>Art and Illusion: A Study in the Psychology of Pictorial Representation</u> (Princeton: Princeton UP, 1961) 19-20.

[67] A consideration of the differences between Schapiro and Gombrich's thoughts on art would take us far from the topic at hand. It is sufficient to note that the two had little in common to sustain a correspondence. Schapiro and Gombrich exchanged a handful of letters while Gombrich was director of the Warburg Institute in London (1959-76). Schapiro wrote to Gombrich that: "I have still not found time to read your book carefully. I can at this moment only transmit the enthusiastic response of some of my graduate students who are very much taken with it." WIA GC, Meyer Schapiro to Ernst Gombrich, 10 March 1960.

[68] Schapiro, "Style," 78.

[69] Schapiro, "Style," 79-80.

[70] Olin, "Art History and Ideology," 160.

In contrast to the more subtle use of race and nation in Riegl and Wölfflin's work stands Strzygowski's explicitly anti-Semitic art history. Olin has recently examined Strzygowski's art history, which is one of the most extreme examples of racism in the discipline in the early years of the 20th century.[71] Strzygowski was affiliated with the Vienna School of art history, though he clearly had his differences with many of its members.[72] When, following the death of Franz Wickhoff in 1909, Max Dvorák was appointed the new chair of the Vienna School, controversy surrounded the appointment and Strzygowski was named the second chair.[73] Strzygowski's reliance on characterizations of racial groups and national character went well beyond Wölfflin and Riegl's mere recognition of their existence.[74] For Strzygowski, German racial character accounted for the assured success of German art. Olin has remarked that while some scholars have tried to distance Strzygowski's earlier scholarship from his later outright racist work, "[Strzygowski's] early study trips to the Middle East were conditioned by pan-Germanic ideological concerns just as were his later speculative works."[75]

The racism and anti-Semitism of Strzygowski's scholarship has long been recognized. In 1948, art critic Bernard Berenson referred to Strzygowski as the "Attila of art history" and argued that Strzygowski had "for the last thirty years of his life bitterly and hatefully campaigned against everything that Mediterranean culture stood for . . . like the invading Hun who was called

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[71] My understanding of the racism and nationalism in Strzygowski's art history is mostly based on Olin's accounts. Olin, "Art History and Ideology."; Olin, Nation without Art 18-24.

[72] For a history of the Vienna School written by one of its members, see Julius Ritter von Schlosser, Die Wiener Schule der Kunstgeschichte (Innsbruck: Wagner, 1934). For a recent discussion of the Vienna School along with translated texts from members of the New Vienna School, see Christopher S. Wood, The Vienna School Reader: Politics and Art Historical Method in the 1930s (New York: Zone, 2000).

[73] Udo Kultermann, History of Art History (n.p.: Abaris, 1993) 164.

[74] See for example, Josef Strzygowski, Orient oder Rom: Beiträge zur Geschichte der spätantiken und frühchristlichen Kunst (Leipzig: J. C. Hinrichs'sche, 1901). Josef Strzygowski, "Hellas in des Orients Umarmung," Münchener Allgeminen Zeitung, Beilage 18 February 1902.

[75] Olin, "Art History and Ideology," 167.

'the scourge of God' by the Christians of his day."[76] Olin has argued that in his art historical writings, Strzygowski, an ardent supporter of German nationalism, expressed fears of miscegenation and the subsequent loss of German purity through the intermingling of Germanic and Jewish blood.[77] According to Olin, the late work of Strzygowski, written just before his death in 1941, includes "verbose ranting about émigré art historians who led international conspiracies from New York."[78] The so-called "international conspiracies" to which Strzygowski had such aversions are what largely comprise the art historical canon today. Schapiro was aware of Strzygowski's scholarship in the 1920s; in his notebooks from a research trip abroad that he took in 1926-27, Schapiro commented on the theories of various art historians including, Strzygowski.[79] Without access to further archival sources, I can only guess at the impact that Strzygowski had on the young Schapiro as he was just finding his way into the discipline of art history.

2.3.   SCHAPIRO'S PATH TO ART HISTORY

In the 1920s, Princeton was considered by many to be the premiere American institution for the education of academics in the field of art history. As a young scholar who had just graduated from Columbia with honors, Schapiro decided that Princeton had the best facilities and scholars, and thus applied there for graduate study in 1924. Schapiro recalled that Andrew F. West, the dean of the graduate school at Princeton, had accused him of not having yet decided on a central focus in his studies. Though Schapiro had assured him that he was in fact committed to the study

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[76] Bernard Berenson, Aesthetics and History in the Visual Arts (New York: Pantheon, 1948) 26.

[77] Olin points out that even in his 1901 response to Wickhoff and Riegl, Strzygowski expressed fears of miscegenation. See Strzygowski, "Hellas in des Orients Umarmung," 313; Olin, "Art History and Ideology," 164-65.

[78] Olin, Nation without Art 22.

[79] I have not been able to view these notebooks, as they are a part of the Schapiro papers still in the process of being transferred to Columbia University. My understanding of them comes from Seidel, "'Shalom Yehudin!'": 575.

of art history, Princeton's art history department rejected his application.[80] Instead, he continued

his education at Columbia, where he was awarded the university's first Ph.D. in art history in

1929 and where he remained for the entirety of his career. Schapiro's college friend, Whitaker

Chambers, wrote to Schapiro in the summer of 1924, presumably addressing the traumatic

experience of Schapiro's rejection from Princeton.

> You have had to undergo a great deal in a little while; and you
> have carried it as few of us could. Meyer, I love you for your
> forebearance [sic] and your reticence as some others love you for
> other things. And that is all, I suppose that there is to be said: these
> feelings do not well go in words. I do not understand Dean West's
> action, tho [sic] I can hazard guesses; and I cannot feel, with my
> rather chilling philosophy that it much matters. Certainly it is not
> worth the spiritual effort of regret. This thing has happened and it
> is necessary to go on from it as a beginning in whatever fool's
> parade the jokers are preparing for the next two years . . . The
> name Princeton, must had [sic] had a splendid connotation;
> Columbia is so prosaic. And there must have been many
> implications for me not to touch. Poor fellow, My [sic] family
> troubles seem mighty small besides your [sic]. – I have not said
> anything of this to anyone. And I can go on keeping silent or I can,
> if you like, tell the facts I know so that by the time you are ready to
> return to Columbia people will have accustomed themselves to the
> altered circumstances. Perhaps this aspect does not bother you at
> all. Just as you like.[81]

It is difficult to determine how devastated Schapiro was by his rejection from Princeton or how

he considered it at the time. What is clear is that almost sixty years after his rejection from

Princeton he continued to hypothesize that Princeton's decision was due to a "Jewish factor."[82]

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[80] Epstein, "Passion," 75.

[81] Whitaker Chambers. Letter to Meyer Schapiro. Undated letter from Summer 1924. Meyer Schapiro Papers, Box 1, Columbia University.

[82] In his interview with Epstein, Schapiro recounted that: "Some years later . . . I was invited to Princeton to give a lecture to the graduate students. I told the professor who had invited me that I had been turned down there as a graduate student. He asked me why, and I told him to ask the dean. He did and learned that the dean had thought that I wouldn't fit in, that I was too young, that I hadn't made up my mind what I wanted. But I suspect there was a Jewish factor." Epstein, "Passion," 78. Others have focused more significantly on the anti-Semitism in the New

In an interview with Helen Epstein, he recalled that: "[I] grew up in a world – Brownsville – that was 95 percent Jewish and I lived in an intellectual world where anti-Semitism existed but was secondary to achievement."[83] While Schapiro may have trivialized the import of anti-Semitism to the intellectual world of art history in his recollection, I contend that the uneasy intersection of his personal background with his intellectual identity is a significant feature of his art historical inquiry.

Anti-Semitism had raged in Lithuania in 1906, at that time part of the Russian Empire, when Schapiro's father had decided to emigrate from Lithuania to the United States with his family.[84] Schapiro had been born in Shavly (Siauliai), Lithuania on September 23, 1904. His parents, Fanny Adelman Schapiro and Nathan Menachem Schapiro, were both from Jewish orthodox families. Schapiro's father had received an orthodox education in the yeshiva tradition and was a descendent of Talmudic scholars and his mother, as was customary for orthodox women at the time, had received little formal education. Though Schapiro's father had worked as a bookkeeper in Shavly before emigrating to the U.S., he taught Hebrew for a year at the Yitzchak Elchanan Yeshiva on New York's Lower East Side, in order to save enough money to send for the rest of his family. Schapiro, along with his mother, brother and sister, joined his father in the United States in 1907.

Schapiro's associative manner of writing and thinking has been associated with Talmudic scholarship, in which Schapiro's father would have been schooled.[85] Yet, in his late teens,

York of the 1920s. See, for example, Alan Bloom, <u>Prodigal Sons: The New York Intellectuals and their World</u> (New York: Oxford UP, 1986) 29-31.

[83] Epstein, "Passion," 78.

[84] Masha Greenbaum, in describing the early part of the 20th century prior to the Russian revolution in Lithuania, has stated that: "Antisemitism pervaded every aspect of life and all walks of society." Masha Greenbaum, <u>Jews of Lithuania: A History of a Remarkable Community 1316 - 1945</u> (Jerusalem, Isr.: Gefen, 1995) 204.

[85] See for example, Seidel, "'Shalom Yehudin!'".

Schapiro's father had embraced the Jewish enlightenment, or Haskala – an Eastern European movement that was based on rationalism, the inclusion of secular subject matter in Jewish education and a turning away from Talmudic studies.[86] The Schapiro family's educational ambitions for their children corresponded with Nathan Schapiro's embrace of the Haskala; both Meyer and his brother Morris excelled academically.[87] Both had skipped grades and Meyer had entered high school – Brooklyn's Boys High School, a school known for its high academic standards – at the age of eleven. His father's pursuit of secular knowledge clearly impressed the young Schapiro as the following description of his father's activities in New York before the rest of the family's arrival from Lithuania makes evident:

> . . . my father spent his free time in the New York Public Library, reading the books he couldn't get while in Shavly – he had taught himself to read English while still in Lithuania. They were for the most part books about science or the philosophy of science – subjects that were of no practical use to him at all. Although he was no longer religious, he retained an interest in Hebrew poetry and in the Bible as history and literature. He had a number of books on the Bible by scholars like Ernest Renan and Heinrich Graetz, who presented it from a secular point of view, and also works on evolution and languages. He subscribed to the Hebrew magazines – he approved of Hebrew, as long as you didn't believe it would ever become a spoken language again.[88]

Schapiro's proclivities towards the scientific, his secular interest in religious art and his commitment to learning corresponded with the interests of his father as Schapiro described them.

Schapiro's unsatisfactory experiences at Columbia in the art history department led him to apply for graduate study at Princeton in 1924. Though he considered graduate study in architecture, he ended up continuing his graduate studies in art history at Columbia under the

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[86] For a description of the Lithuanian Haskala, see Greenbaum, Jews of Lithuania 115-27.

[87] Expectations for Schapiro's sister were much less stringent. She was expected to complete her high school education.

[88] Epstein, "Passion," 68.

tutelage of Ernest Dewald (1891-1968), a medieval scholar who had studied at Princeton under medievalist Charles Rufus Morey.[89] Schapiro pursued many of his own theoretical interests during his graduate school years, for example, reading widely in both German and French scholarship, thus taking advantage of the nascent state of the department at Columbia. He sensed the significance of his self-motivated study during those years when he reflected on his graduate school training almost thirty years later. In a letter that art historian Erwin Panofsky wrote to Schapiro in 1953, Panofsky stated that: "From what you told me about your student days, it really would seem that, owing to the odd behaviour [sic] of Princeton, your own education was really European rather than American style -- in other words, that you were much more 'on your own' than is normal. And it is evident that the result speaks for itself."[90] After having received Panofsky's offprint of his "Three Decades of Art History in the United States: Impressions of a Transplanted European," Schapiro must have written to Panofsky describing his own experiences.[91] Both Schapiro and Panofsky valued a European education above that of an American one. Schapiro's interest in European, particularly German, scholarship can be best understood within this context.

Early on, Schapiro recognized the importance of 'German' scholarship in his study of the German language, which allowed him to read both foundational texts and current scholarship in the original at a time when very little art history was being translated from German into English. With his background in Yiddish, which was spoken at home while he was growing up, he learned German by reading the art historical writings of Riegl, Dvoràk, Wölfflin and Vöge in the

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[89] Dewald taught at Columbia from 1923 until he was hired by Princeton in 1925. For more on Dewald, see: Richard Krautheimer and Kurt Weitzmann, "Ernest Dewald," Speculum 44.3 (1969).

[90] Erwin Panofsky. Letter to Meyer Schapiro. 13 April 1953. Microfilm roll 2121. Erwin Panofsky Papers. Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution, Washington, D.C. Referred to hereafter as PP.

[91] Erwin Panofsky, "Three Decades of Art History in the United States: Impressions of a Transplanted European," Meaning in the Visual Arts (New York: Anchor, 1955).

original German. He recounted that it took him a full day to read the first page of Vöge's book on monumental style in medieval sculpture.[92] Thirty years later in a letter to Panofsky, Schapiro reflected that he had found Vöge's Die Anfänge des monumentalen Stiles im Mittelalter "thrilling from first to last." Further, he stated that "After that I could read almost any book on art in German, but I measured it by the quality of Vöge's and I felt then that the historical study of art had some dignity."[93] Not surprisingly, the approach that Schapiro took in his dissertation on the Romanesque sculpture at Moissac was in part indebted to Vöge's tome. Furthermore, Schapiro's interest in both medieval and modern art paralleled the interests of several German medievalists from the 1880s and 1890s, such as Vöge, who – like Schapiro – saw a connection between contemporary artistic practice and medieval art.[94]

Reflecting back on the formative years of his career in 1983, Schapiro viewed his interest in the theories advanced by the German-speaking art historians as being distinct from those of his fellow American scholars:

> A number of American scholars went to Vienna and Germany to study before 1920, but if they absorbed certain of the new ideas, they themselves did not risk a similar effort in their research and teaching. Those ideas were secondary to the achievement of rigorous expertness in connoisseurship or iconographic studies. Berenson was the model at Harvard, where students were trained to identify and classify works of art and to become alert museum curators and collectors. And that didn't interest me as a goal of my studies.[95]

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[92] Epstein, "Passion," 78.

[93] Meyer Schapiro. Letter to Erwin Panofsky. 16 September 1958. Microfilm roll 2121. PP

[94] Brush points out that: "Many of the pioneering medievalists in Germany as well as in France were in close contact with contemporary artists and wrote frequently, even interchangeably, on modern art and on monuments from the Middle Ages."Brush, Shaping of Art History 83. Also see Brush, Shaping of Art History 195 n. 113. Schapiro was apparently uncertain of Vöge's interests in contemporary art. In his letter to Panofsky, Schapiro questioned him: "Was Vöge at all interested in the new art of his own generation? I remember that he recommended the sculptor Adolf Hildebrand's Das Problem der Form, in a note towards the end of the Chartres book, and there are passages which show that he sympathized with the more advanced tendencies in aesthetic theory in his youth." Meyer Schapiro. Letter to Erwin Panofsky. 16 September 1958. Microfilm roll 2121. PP.

[95] Epstein, "Passion," 78.

Unlike those whom he criticized here, Schapiro sought out Löwy when he went to Vienna during the winter of 1930-31.[96] Schapiro's distaste for connoisseurship and art appreciation combined with his interest in scientific research, led him to appreciate the work of certain German-speaking art historians during the 1920s. His 1925 review of Löwy's Rendering of Nature in Early Greek Art, his dissertation The Romanesque Sculpture of Moissac (1929) and various other reviews illustrate his intense interrogation of a nascent art historical canon.

Schapiro had first written a paper on Löwy's book in a course on Greek archeology. According to Epstein, the book "impressed [Schapiro] immensely."[97] As quoted by Epstein, Schapiro stated that:

> Löwy investigated the common features in archaic and primitive representations. Why are Greek archaic, Chinese archaic, Central American Indian art and the works of 'self-taught' artists similar? Why do they all make the eyes the same way? Why do the works have flat backgrounds? Why do the shadows not cross the contours? It was a scientific study of the artist's imagination in the early stages of a culture and its transformation into realistic forms. In 1931 the first scholar I went to see in Vienna was Löwy. He was an old friend of Freud's; he had guided Freud in selecting classical objects. I told him how significant his book had been for me.[98]

Löwy's work was attractive to Schapiro for several reasons. He found Löwy's description of stylistic change from the archaism associated with a culture's early stages to the realism evident in its later stages appealing. Löwy argued that parallels existed between cultural and stylistic shifts that could be generalized into a shift from archaism to realism. This parallelism

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[96] Jonathan J. G. Alexander, "Otto Pächt: 1902-1988," Proceedings of the British Academy 80 (1993): 456; Epstein, "Passion," 78.

[97] Epstein, "Passion," 78.

[98] Epstein, "Passion," 78.

suggests an interest in the content of art that Schapiro saw as missing in art critic Roger Fry's unique focus on form.[99] Löwy combined a careful analysis of form and how those forms change with a consideration of societal changes. Löwy sought to understand style in relation to society and the psychology of the creator rather than focusing on form alone. Thus, Schapiro was drawn to Löwy's work for its precise analysis of form and its concern for describing stylistic change.

Schapiro's attraction to Löwy's detailed analysis of the qualities of archaic style, which is also evident in his dissertation, points to Schapiro's burgeoning interests in less naturalistic styles – such as Romanesque and modern art. Not only did his dissertation on the Romanesque sculpture of Moissac establish his reputation as a medievalist, but he had also been one of the first art historians in the U.S. to publish regularly on modern art, discussing it in positive terms well before it had become "appropriate" to do so. Furthermore, Schapiro critiqued Löwy's praise of the progression from archaic to naturalistic Greek art, arguing that: "[Löwy] overlooks entirely, in his zeal for a scrupulous record, that the change from arbitrary conceptions, from observed facts, generalized and treated abstractly, to literal representation and merely imitative forms, corresponds to a loss of artistic power."[100] His word choice here is significant. Throughout his career, Schapiro repeatedly discovers artistic power in examples of both medieval and modern art.[101]

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[99] Schapiro pointed out in his interview with Epstein that: "I was much influenced by [Fry] though I doubted his exclusion of the content and meaning of representation as values in art. But I felt a rapport with his insistence on form and his sensitivity to forms of primitive, archaic, and exotic works." Epstein, "Passion," 78.

[100] Schapiro, "Löwy," 170.

[101] Schapiro's positive regard for modern art, even here in his first publication, is notable, as it has been argued that he did not acquire a positive view of modern art until 1937. A change in Schapiro's regard for modern art is often posited as occurring between his 1936 and 1937 publications: Meyer Schapiro, "Social Bases of Art," First American Artists' Congress (New York: American Artists' Congress Against War and Fascism, 1936); Meyer Schapiro, "Nature of Abstract Art," Marxist Quarterly 1.1 (1937). Subsequent references to these essays will refer to the following reprints: Meyer Schapiro, "Social Bases of Art," Worldview in Painting - Art and Society (New York: Braziller, 1999); Meyer Schapiro, "Nature of Abstract Art," Modern Art: 19th and 20th Centuries (New York: Braziller, 1978). For two examples of the opinion that Schapiro only began to view modern art positively in 1937, see Thomas Crow, "Modernism and Mass Culture in the Visual Arts," Modernism and Modernity: The Vancouver

Schapiro's perspective on "archaic art," specifically as he describes it in his review of Löwy's article, is informed by an understanding of the situated nature of knowledge, as he recognized here that one's relation to the facts is related to one's place in time and space. Schapiro argued that because of modern art's strong effect on the discipline of art history in 1925 this development towards naturalism could be viewed as regressive, though Löwy would have understandably viewed it as progressive in 1900.[102] The fact that Schapiro applied his knowledge of contemporary artwork to a discussion of early Greek art confirms an early interest in relating his scholarly work to the current social-historical situation. In his review, Schapiro stated that:

> Overlooking aesthetic considerations, Loewy's method leads to a *reductio ad absurdum*, to a higher valuation of decadent art because it is the last term in a technical series. Since Greek art develops from memory concepts towards a closer imitation of nature, ergo, such imitation is the specific excellence of art.[103]

Schapiro sharply criticized an understanding of artistic development towards naturalism as progress. The artistic power that Schapiro finds in "archaic art" also exemplifies his early attraction to what Donald Kuspit has called the "Jewish Paradox."[104] An artist who simply

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Conference Papers (Halifax, Nova Scotia: P of Nova Scotia College of Art and Design, 1983). Serge Guilbaut, How New York Stole the Idea of Modern Art: Abstract Expressionism, Freedom and the Cold War, trans. A. Goldhammer (Chicago: U of Chicago P, 1983). I argue here for a more nuanced understanding of his opinions of modern art, more in line with Hemingway, "1930s."

[102] Wayne Anderson perceives in this review "[Schapiro's] resistance to a formal theory that fails to account for the specific social circumstances that would have conditioned the sensibility and motivated the style of the Greek artists." Andersen, "Schapiro, Marx, and the Reacting Sensibility of Artists," 81.

[103] Schapiro, "Löwy," 171.

[104] Kuspit has argued that Schapiro's Jewishness is revealed unconsciously in his art history. Kuspit argues convincingly that Schapiro's mode of inquiry relates to what Kuspit defines as the "Jewish Paradox." Kuspit states that: " . . . it is possible to infer, and to demonstrate, that for Schapiro the creative, paradoxical way the Jew . . . survives and establishes an identity in a world that barely tolerates his existence is the model for the way the artist achieves his creative identity. That is, the paradox that art becomes when it is most creative exemplifies what might be called the Jewish Paradox." He understands Schapiro's preoccupation with "authentically creative art" as a manifestation of his Jewish unconscious. For Kuspit, "while Schapiro does not use the word 'Jewish,' the negative social experience out of which the artist makes something aesthetically positive through his creative mastery is fundamental to Jewish activities in creating art." Kuspit, "Jewish," 204. Following Kuspit's logic, it does not matter whether the artists that Schapiro discusses are in fact ethnically Jewish or not, rather, what matters is that their experiences are Jewish in nature; that they are "heterodox in an orthodox world of conformity, be it Christian or capitalist." Kuspit, "Jewish," 206.

imitates forms from nature does not struggle to produce authentically creative art. Imitation is not, nor will it be, "the specific excellence of art" for Schapiro.[105] For this reason, Schapiro finds a loss of artistic power in naturalism.

In the closing lines of his review, Schapiro emphasized his interest in the formal properties of art:

> Since, as has often been noted, a growth in realism causes a diminution in design, or 'art forms' or *'presentata,'* there must be some intimate relation between the memory image and good composition . . . Exactly what this relation is, I do not know. Perhaps a comprehensive analysis of the 'forms' of art, both decorative and representative, and psychological analysis will some day tell us.[106]

Löwy had hypothesized that people created images that were similar to the Platonic idea of an object from their past visual experiences of specific objects. He called these memory images. While Löwy saw racial temperament as influencing an individual's psychology, and therefore the memory image that individual would form, his concept drew from work being done on memory in the field of psychology.[107] Schapiro's early interest in the use of psychology in understanding stylistic change signals his future preoccupations.[108]

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[105] Schapiro, "Löwy," 171.

[106] Schapiro, "Löwy," 171-72.

[107] Like his contemporaries, Löwy understood racial temperament as an underlying factor in the expressive nature of style. He stated: "In combination with the variety of impressions acting upon the memory (such as the different aspects of race, dress, and manner of living), and, further, with the endlessly varied intensity and quality of the conception of form according to the individual or racial temperament, these factors assuredly determine the appearance of a definite style, but no one of them is indispensable to the production of stylization itself." Emanuel Löwy, Rendering of Nature in Early Greek Art, trans. John Fothergill (London: Duckworth, 1907) 11.

As for his interest in psychological interpretations of art, Löwy cites Gustav Fechner, Vorschule der Asthetik, 2 vols. (Leipzig: Breitkopf & Härtel, 1897-98).

[108] The similarity to the final sentences of his essay "Style" is uncanny. There he states: "A theory of style adequate to the psychological and historical problems has yet to be created. It waits for a deeper knowledge of the principles of form construction and expression and for a unified theory of the processes of social life in which the practical means of life as well as emotional behavior are comprised." Schapiro, "Style," 100.

Schapiro developed his dissertation, "The Romanesque Sculpture of Moissac," out of a report that his dissertation advisor DeWald had assigned him. Substantial in both its treatment of its subject matter and in its sheer length, Schapiro's dissertation explores a moment of great historical and stylistic change as manifested in the Romanesque sculpture at Moissac.[109] While others had addressed the iconography, chronology and genealogy of the monuments, Schapiro explained that his contribution to the study of the Romanesque sculpture at Moissac was an analysis of its artistic style. Art historian John Williams has recently characterized Schapiro's dissertation as "exclusively formalist."[110] Art historian Linda Seidel has questioned Williams' characterization, arguing that Schapiro had no reason to view his dissertation in that way since he was already concerned with the historical grounding of the art object.[111] Seidel maintains that Williams' argument regarding the formalist nature of Schapiro's dissertation is "inaccurate."[112]

Williams' characterization of Schapiro's work as formalist is not so much "inaccurate" as it is misleading, since it could be understood to simplify the complexity of the art historical methodology of the day. The term "formalism" often conjures up a Greenbergian conception based on art critic Clement Greenberg's singular focus on form. In contrast, Schapiro's formalism could be compared with that of Riegl, who saw form as inseparable from historical meaning. Williams has rightly pointed out that in Schapiro's dissertation: "formal qualities were

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[109] Epstein comments that Schapiro's dissertation, which was approximately 400 pages, was much longer than the average dissertation of the time. Epstein, "Passion," 80. Rosand has indicated that the reason for the discrepancy between the completion date of Schapiro's dissertation (1929) and its 1935 date of deposit is due to the fact that the faculty did not consider Schapiro's Art Bulletin publication to be "sufficient to meet the formal requirements for the degree: 'printing and deposit with the Librarian of the University of seventy-five copies.'" Schapiro was finally awarded his PhD in 1935 with Dinsmoor's help. David Rosand, Making Art History at Columbia: Meyer Schapiro and Rudolf Wittkower, Fall 2003, Available: http://www.columbia.edu/cu/alumni/Magazine/Fall2003/witt.schapiro.html, 5 August 2007.

[110] John Williams, "Meyer Schapiro in Silos: Pursuing an Iconography of Style," Art Bulletin 85.3 (2003): 443.

[111] Linda Seidel, "Introduction," Romanesque Architectural Sculpture: The Charles Eliot Norton Lectures, ed. Linda Seidel (Chicago: U of Chicago P, 2006) xlvi-xlvii n. 25.

[112] Seidel, "Introduction," xlvii n. 25.

subjected by Schapiro to such unprecedented scrutiny that some communicative function of style was implied."[113] I contend that Schapiro did not "acknowledge the exclusively formalist nature of his dissertation," as Williams argues, because Schapiro did not see his careful description of the formal characteristics of the sculpture at Moissac as an end in itself. Instead, he saw the description as a starting point for an understanding of stylistic change.

Schapiro viewed the sculpture at Moissac as ideally suited to help further his understanding of the processes of stylistic change because of the co-existence of various styles produced there within a short span of time.[114] In his dissertation's introduction, he stated that: "The presence in Moissac of so many works carved within one generation, and manifesting such variety of style, permits inquiry into the nature of historical change in the light of observable material documents."[115] The material documents, which help illuminate the nature of historical change, are the sculptures themselves. The interest that Schapiro expressed in Vöge parallels his concern to better understand the relationship between stylistic and historical change.

Vöge's Die Anfänge des monumentalen Stiles im Mittelalter was a significant study that dealt with the sudden appearance of Gothic sculpture in France and explored what lay behind this swift stylistic change.[116] While Williams has pointed out that Schapiro criticized Vöge for "invoking broad cultural movements to explain the emergence of Romanesque sculpture in Languedoc," Schapiro's critique should be contextualized.[117] Tucked away in a footnote, Schapiro did briefly note his disapproval of "those who inferred the particular of history from

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[113] Williams, "Silos," 445.

[114] In his interview with Epstein, Schapiro said that a sudden change in history and/or style repeatedly drew his interest throughout his career and was what had attracted him to his dissertation topic. Epstein, "Passion," 79.

[115] Meyer Schapiro, "The Romanesque Sculpture of Moissac," Diss., Columbia U, 1929, I.

[116] Wilhelm Vöge, Die Anfänge des monumentalen Stiles im Mittelalter (Strasbourg: J. Heitz, 1894). For a detailed discussion of Vöge's work, see Brush, Shaping of Art History 57-87.

[117] Williams, "Silos," 445.

certain general notions."[118] While Vöge was among those Schapiro mentioned in this footnote, he simultaneously praised Vöge's Die Anfänge des monumentalen Stiles im Mittelalter as "his fine work on the beginnings of the monumental style of the Middle Ages."[119] Furthermore, in his interview with Epstein, Schapiro also made clear the significant role that the work of German-speaking scholars such as Vöge played in shaping his work.[120] Like Vöge, Schapiro understood stylistic and historical change to be intricately related. Yet Schapiro sought to make stylistic analysis more rigorous; his critique of Vöge's use of broad cultural generalizations should be viewed as part of this attempt.

The extent to which Schapiro dealt with the historical element of stylistic change in his dissertation has also emerged in a recent discussion of the format of Schapiro's dissertation. Williams has pointed to a seeming discrepancy between Schapiro's recollection of his dissertation and the actual dissertation as submitted.[121] In an interview with David Craven in the 1990s, Schapiro recalled his dissertation as having three parts:

> The third part of this dissertation, which has never been published, uses a Marxist concept of history. Originally, after the first part of the dissertation appeared in the 1931 Art Bulletin, I planned to revise the second part on iconography and then to publish the third part on the historical context for Moissac. For various reasons, I never found the time to complete the revision of the second part, so the last two parts have never appeared in print.[122]

While Williams has contended that only two parts of Schapiro's three-part study appear in the copy deposited in the Avery Library at Columbia University, Seidel has countered that while

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[118] Schapiro, "Moissac," 217 n. 32.

[119] Schapiro, "Moissac," 217 n. 32.

[120] See Epstein, "Passion," 78-79.

[121] Williams, "Silos," 443-45.

[122] Meyer Schapiro and Lillian Milgram Schapiro, "Series of Interviews (15 July 1992 - 22 January 1995)," Res 31 (1997): 164.

Schapiro's dissertation was formally organized into two parts, conceptually he perceived the dissertation as having three parts.[123] Her theory is supported by the fact that Schapiro reorganized his dissertation material into three parts – style, iconography and history – for publication in the <u>Art Bulletin</u> in 1931.[124] As Williams has pointed out, Schapiro began the <u>Art Bulletin</u> article by stating:

> The study here undertaken consists of three parts. In the first is described the style of the sculptures; in the second the iconography is analyzed and its details compared with other examples of the same themes; in the third I have investigated the history of the style and tried to throw further light on its origins and development.[125]

Only the first part on style, divided into two separate articles, was ever published in the pages of <u>The Art Bulletin</u>. While Schapiro's focus in his dissertation is undeniably on careful formal descriptions of the sculpture, he took iconography and historical context into consideration.

Significantly, Schapiro maintained that he used a Marxist historical framework in the contentious third part of his dissertation. Williams and Seidel agree that this is not readily apparent, though Seidel is more sympathetic to the idea than is Williams.[126] While Schapiro does not explicitly employ a Marxist approach that related stylistic change to social-historical change in his dissertation, the seeds of such an approach are evident, particularly when considered in relationship to his later 1939 publication, "From Mozarabic to Romanesque in Silos." At several points in his dissertation, Schapiro commented on the role that an increasingly powerful secular

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[123] See her lengthy footnote on the matter: Seidel, "Introduction," xlv-xlvii n. 25.

[124] Seidel, "Introduction," xlvi n. 25.

[125] Meyer Schapiro, "The Romanesque Sculpture of Moissac, Part I," <u>Art Bulletin</u> 13.3 (1931): 249 n. 1.

[126] Seidel pointed out that: " . . . in an examination of the elders in scenes of the Apocalypse, he suggested as one reason for the variations in type 'particular social and religious interests in the region where they are most cultivated' (pp. 304-5). While these remarks do not obviously amount to an endorsement of a Marxist concept of history, Schapiro's interest in the immediately expressive aspect of art and an understanding of it as grounded in part in historical circumstance is clearly already in play." Seidel, "Introduction," xlvi - xlvii.

realm had in shaping the Romanesque style. In "From Mozarabic to Romanesque in Silos,"
Schapiro argued that the freer Romanesque style, which emerged alongside the more traditional
Mozarabic style, was consistent with the increasing emphasis on the secular realm in the
emerging capitalist society. The new expressive freedom of the individual Romanesque artist
was related to the shift from feudalism to capitalism.[127]

While Schapiro made the connection between the emergence of capitalism and the
freedom of the individual artist explicit in his essay of 1939, the idea emerged only haltingly in
his dissertation. For example, he remarked that a new expressive freedom surfaces at the start of
the modern tradition of sculpture, which he pinpoints to the Romanesque period.[128] For
Schapiro, the artists of the Romanesque period possess a new powerful sense of expression. For
example:

> The exuberance of carving that attended the developed
> Romanesque style in architecture, if partly dictated by the abbots
> and bishops to give more meaning to the stones and to unite
> function with structure, is also an expression of the individual
> powers and fancies of the recently born Romanesque sculptors. By
> the 12th century the capital was no longer canonically determined;
> the richness of variety suggested further variation.[129]

Further, the shift from a hieratic representation of the elders to a more animated representation
with musical instruments "may be explained then as a Romanesque preference for a colorful,
musical, fantastic, and animated art."[130] Seidel has also pointed out that Schapiro suggested that
social and religious interests contributed to the differences in representation of the elders from

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[127] I address Schapiro's approach in "From Mozarabic to Romanesque in Silos" in greater detail in chapter three.

[128] Schapiro, "Moissac," 119.

[129] Many of the pages (260-69) that precede this concluding quote to his section "The Origin of the Historiated Capital" are largely illegible in the copy of the dissertation at Avery Library, Columbia University. Schapiro, "Moissac," 270.

[130] Schapiro, "Moissac," 306.

scenes of the Apocalypse.[131] Though Schapiro's approach in his 1939 article on Silos differed from that of his 1929 dissertation, looking back Schapiro did not see his Silos article as representing a shift in his thinking. In the early 1990s Schapiro stated: "In 1927, I was a guest of the monks at Santo Domingo de Silos. Much of my article was conceived then and it was written long before it was published in 1939."[132] Though the inferences to a Marxist framework in Schapiro's dissertation are few and far between, in retrospect Schapiro seemingly understood his conceptual framework to be consistent with later works.

Schapiro's choice of subject matter for his dissertation reveals his interest in an innovative art that appeared at a historical moment when secular institutions were gaining in influence. According to Schapiro, he was enamored by the sculptures of Moissac when he first came across them in Arthur Kingsley Porter's ten-volume work, Romanesque Sculpture of the Pilgrimage Roads.[133] Schapiro reflected on this experience in his 1983 interview with Epstein:

> The vigor! The inventiveness! The interplay between folk art and high art. Wild fantasy, obscenity, parody, jokes. It was an artificially rich and fertile style. Secondly, in the forms there was a primitive element. The largeness, the starkness, the solemnity. I found parallels in 20th-century art. There is a great strength in the simple forms; it's like plainsong – voluminous, sonorous, clear and strong.[134]

In retrospect, Schapiro focused on his attraction to the sculpture's creativity and its similarities to modern art. These reflections on his dissertation topic echo his conception of a "loss of power" in naturalism that he made in his review of Löwy.

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[131] Seidel, "Introduction," xlvi.

[132] Schapiro and Schapiro, "Series of Interviews," 164.

[133] Arthur Kingsley Porter, Romanesque Sculpture of the Pilgrimage Roads, 10 vols. (Boston: Marshall Jones, 1923).

[134] Epstein, "Passion," 79.

Despite Schapiro's difference of opinion with Löwy on the power of naturalism, Schapiro adapted Löwy's theorization of the archaic to support the quality of the Romanesque style in his dissertation. Schapiro stated that: "'Archaic' is [in my dissertation] employed in the more precise sense defined by Emanuel Loewy in his excellent work, 'The rendering of nature in Greek art' [sic], . . . as well as with the common meaning of 'early', 'primitive', or 'antecedent'."[135] As Schapiro had already established in his 1925 review, he was primarily interested in Löwy's careful analysis of archaic art, not in Löwy's understanding of a progressive development from archaism to naturalism. On the contrary, Schapiro repeatedly upheld the quality of the Romanesque art at Moissac in his dissertation, remarking, for example, that:

> . . . abstract form and intricate orderliness are as essential characters of Romanesque sculpture as of architecture. It is wrong to suppose as some have done that archaic art is occupied solely by the struggle with an unconquered material, and that its symmetry is timidity, and hence negative. We will show presently that great unity of design may coexist with distortion, illogicality of natural relations and a limited interest in realistic appearances.[136]

Throughout his dissertation, he continually applied Löwy's conception of archaic art and often compared the formal characteristics of the sculpture at Moissac to other so-called primitive arts, the art of children and untrained artists.[137]

Though Löwy's <u>Rendering of Nature in Early Greek Art</u>, was arguably the most significant of the German texts for Schapiro's thinking in his dissertation, he also briefly referred to several other texts, such as the aforementioned <u>Die Anfänge des monumentalen Stiles im Mittelalter</u> by Vöge. In these references, Schapiro admires the work of German-speaking art

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[135] Schapiro, "Moissac," 26 n. 3a.

[136] Schapiro, "Moissac," 90.

[137] See for example, Schapiro, "Moissac," 17, 30, 91, 95-96, 102.

historians. For example, Schapiro described the Romanesque period as a baroque phase in the development of art, a characterization that he borrowed from Wölfflin.

> The designer not only disregards the character of the [porch] wall in the applied members, but even the letter in the distribution of the sculpture between them. This is hardly the unity of structure and decoration, which a sentimental aesthetic theory has called the essential character of medieval architecture as distinct from the Renaissance and Baroque styles. Actually, the combination of architectural elements on these walls is baroque in principle, and we may add the Romanesque to the increasing number of early styles in which investigation detects a baroque phase.[138]

While Schapiro's references to the conceptual frameworks of German-speaking scholars such as Löwy, Vöge and Wölfflin are mostly favorable, his reactions to the work of French art historians are not.

While medieval art of the Gothic period had become acceptable subject matter for art historical scholarship during the Romantic movement in 19th century Germany, the French scholar Emile Mâle (1862-1954) was the first to have established the stylistic validity of the Romanesque style in the sculpture at Moissac.[139] In his L'Art religieux du XIIe siècle (1922), Mâle argued that the source of the iconography in the monumental sculpture as seen at Moissac was in manuscript illuminations, particularly the miniatures of the Beatus Commentary, an 8th century commentary on the Apocalypse written by the Spanish monk Beatus of Liébana. Mâle based his argument that the Beatus provided the source for the Moissac tympanum sculpture on the similarities he found between the sculpture and a miniature from the Beatus manuscript found at Saint-Sever in Gascony.[140]

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[138] Schapiro, "Moissac," 154.

[139] Epstein, "Passion," 79.

[140] Emile Mâle, Religious Art in France: the Twelfth Century, a Study of the Origins of Medieval Iconography, trans. Marthiel Mathews (Princeton: Princeton UP, 1978) 4-8.

Schapiro boldly took on Mâle, carefully dismantling his argument.[141] He first dispelled Mâle's hypothesis by demonstrating that the Saint-Sever Beatus is unique within the Beatus tradition and therefore could not be used to link the Moissac tympanum to a broad Beatus tradition. Furthermore, Schapiro pointed out that iconographic parallels to the Moissac sculpture exist in other monumental works, especially in Aquitaine and Touraine, both near to Moissac in Languedoc. While he did refer to Mâle's "fine chapter" on Romanesque wall painting, Schapiro argued harshly against Mâle's well-known work.[142]

Schapiro's focus on the secular nature of the sculptures at Moissac opposed Mâle's emphasis on religious iconography. For example, Schapiro emphasized that the popularity of themes from the book of Daniel was attributable not only to their religious meaning, but also to the "folk love of the unreal and terrible," which some themes from the book of Daniel provided.[143] And again, in discussing the change in representation of the elders around the Enthroned Christ from a primitive type to a seated musician, Schapiro explained that:

> The choice of that particular instant of the vision of St. John, in which the elders are seated and bear instruments, so different from the more austere and hieratic iconography of the early church, may be explained then as a Romanesque preference for a colorful, musical, fantastic, and animated art . . . Romanesque art seized upon and multiplied without restraint a religious motif in which a contemporary preoccupation, otherwise profane, was so well expressed.[144]

Art historian Moshe Barasch has similarly argued that Schapiro's emphasis on secular tendencies in Romanesque art in his essays from the late 30s must be seen in part as a corrective to the

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[141] Schapiro, "Moissac," 277-303.

[142] Schapiro, "Moissac," 299.

[143] Schapiro, "Moissac," 36-37.

[144] Schapiro, "Moissac," 306-307.

overly spiritualistic views that dominated the French discourse in the work of figures such as Mâle.[145]

As we have seen, Schapiro's most significant and earliest inspirations came from German-speaking scholars, especially Löwy, as he aligned himself against French scholars like Mâle. Yet, I have already pointed out that the German art historical tradition frequently used racial and national characterizations of style. Even in his earliest writing, Schapiro responded negatively to such essentialist arguments. Seidel has pointed out that Schapiro critiqued the use of racial categories in his notebooks from his 1926-27 trip abroad; here, in reflecting on a relief in Constantinople, he critiqued medievalist Charles Rufus Morey's categorization of the eastern Mediterranean roots of Early Christian art. According to Seidel:

> Schapiro writes that 'this relief shows the Attic or better the primitive Asiatic tendency toward neutral ground and ample spacing,' while its ornament is of the 'endless surface filling type' seen in Byzantine sculpture. 'This contrast,' which pulls at Morey's neat categories, 'should lead us to guard against purely psychological or racial or ethnical explanations of near East. [sic] art,' he warns himself and the reader.[146]

Not only do his concerns emerge in his personal notebooks, but he addressed them in his dissertation as well.

In his dissertation, Schapiro expressed his concern with stylistic categories that align neatly with different racial or ethnic groups, a point that Seidel also recognizes. She states:

> In his dissertation, Schapiro extended this critique to other aspects of what was then a fashionable type of ethnic argument in art historical study, noting that 'the sculptures of Moissac have been invoked by Germans as evidence of the passionate unworldiness of mediaeval [sic] man and as examples of a specifically Northern temper'; he characterized such 'an explanation drawn from the

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[145] Barasch, "Mode and Expression," 52-53. This overly spiritualistic aspect of French medieval scholarship is also addressed by Brush. See Brush, <u>Shaping of Art History</u>.

[146] Seidel, "'Shalom Yehudin!'": 576.

presumed psychology of peoples (a psychology sometimes inferred from such works of art, and then invoked to explain them)' as 'extremely doubtful' (357-58).[147]

Though he only commented on the use of racial psychology in passing within his dissertation, this early expression of his unease foretold his later clear rejection of racial and national constants in style. Furthermore, Schapiro's attraction to Löwy's notion of archaic art, which sees similar characteristics in the art of various nations at various times, corresponds with his rejection of style rooted in race or ethnicity.

Like Schapiro, the medievalist Arthur Kingsley Porter rejected art historical arguments that favored particular nations.[148] As Seidel has also pointed out, both Porter and Schapiro critiqued those European scholars for whom arguments regarding the dating of medieval monuments seemed connected to their national affiliations.[149] In his Romanesque Sculpture, Porter did not discuss Romanesque works in terms of national differences.[150] In his attempt to bypass the debates that sought to locate the origins of Romanesque style in either France or Spain, Porter emphasized the mutual influences of a variety of artistic centers.[151] In his dissertation, Schapiro referred to Porter's challenge to Mâle. He stated:

> The inferred dependence of the presumed later school on the earlier has provoked an interesting controversy in which Porter has delighted us with revelations of hitherto unknown Spanish monuments. The orthodox notion that Languedoc was the creative center of Romanesque art and the source of Spanish styles, if not the actual works, has been severely shaken. For Porter, it is from

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[147] Seidel, "'Shalom Yehudin!'": 576.

[148] Seidel discusses the collegial relationship between Porter and Schapiro. See Seidel, "Introduction," xii-xxi.

[149] Seidel, "Introduction," xiii.

[150] For that reason, Farago suggests that his book could be recouped as a part of a narrative history of art history that emphasized cultural exchange as opposed to national culture. Farago, "Vision," 86.

[151] For a detailed discussion of the debate between Mâle and Porter, see: Janice Mann, "Romantic Identity, Nationalism, and the Understanding of the Advent of Romanesque Art in Christian Spain," Gesta 36.2 (1997).

Spain that Moissac and Toulouse borrow their early styles and motifs.[152]

Yet Schapiro did not support the opinions of either Mâle or Porter, stating that: "If the older opinion erred in attributing an exclusive role to Toulouse, Porter is equally mistaken in denying the existence of sculpture in Languedoc before 1100 and in deriving the earliest known works from Spain."[153] Schapiro explained that the possibility of a South French origin for a "Romanesque renaissance" seemed plausible when the arts in general were considered. So while Porter and Schapiro were not necessarily in agreement, they both attempted to remain outside of the nationalistic debates regarding the origins of monumental sculpture.

One way in which Schapiro tended to avoid national distinctions in his dissertation was by discussing art in terms of its region, as opposed to its nation, of origin. For example, he clarifies that in comparing miniatures, ivories and metalwork to the Moissac sculpture he is not finding sources for the latter in the former, but rather he is demonstrating commonalities in "forms common to many arts of a period or a region."[154] Yet Schapiro did not always avoid discussions that cast artistic production in national terms.[155] For example, in discussing the cross-fertilization between regions north and south of the Pyrenees, Schapiro refers to France and Spain, though most likely he refers here to the geographic regions. While at times he used the boundaries of the modern European nations as means to categorize styles, he always remained outside of nationalistic debates.

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[152] Schapiro, "Moissac," 202.

[153] Schapiro, "Moissac," 202-03.

[154] Schapiro, "Moissac," 195. In another example, Schapiro emphasized that the style shared by three separate works belonged to the West French region of Touraine and Aquitaine. Schapiro, "Moissac," 289.

[155] In his obituary, John Russell stated that Schapiro utilized "national characteristics (real or imagined)" in his dissertation. Russell does not elaborate any further. John Russell, "Peeping into Glory," The Guardian 5 March 1996.

2.4. CONCLUSION

During the 1920s, Schapiro strove to situate himself within the contemporary art historical debates in France, Germany and the U.S. As his review of Löwy and his dissertation testify, Schapiro was most inspired by the work of German-speaking art historians, such as Löwy, Riegl and Vöge, and most critical of the French, particularly Mâle. Schapiro's early encounters with the writings of these well-known figures had a lasting impact on his work. His interest in the secular tendencies in Romanesque art and non-naturalistic styles can both be traced to the 1920s. Furthermore, his emphasis on the inseparability of form and content in understanding the meaning of a work of art as well as his recognition of the situated nature of knowledge correspond with ideas expressed by Riegl that Schapiro began to explore while completing his Ph.D. While Schapiro found much fodder for his art historical praxis, he also expressed tentative concern with the prevailing understanding of racial and national styles. With the increasingly urgent political situation in the 1930s, these characterizations became ever more pernicious. Rather than abandon the theoretical questions being posed by German-speaking art historians, Schapiro chose to negotiate the uneven terrain.

3. SCHAPIRO'S ROLE IN SHAPING "A NEW ERA" IN ART HISTORY

3.1. INTRODUCTION

> In most institutions of higher learning courses in the fine arts, in the days before the war, were lightly referred to as 'pink tea courses' to be taken for easy credit . . . [Today] a cultural attitude prevails widely – of making the fine arts something essential and even integral in education; something that links up with the evolution of history and that is related to literature, philosophy, religion, sociology, ethnology, political history and even economics."[156]
>
> <div align="right">Howard Devree, 1934</div>

The 1930s have long been recognized as a legendary decade in Schapiro's life. Since the 1970s, scholars have focused overwhelmingly on his radicalization and the development of his Marxist art history, while his art historical formation has until recently remained less explored. During the 30s, Schapiro was able to cement his reputation as both a medieval scholar and as an early proponent of modern art within the academy. In 1928, he was appointed lecturer in Columbia's art history department, a particularly notable accomplishment given the department's perceived, if not actual, prejudice against Jews in those years.[157] The publication of portions of his dissertation in the Art Bulletin in 1931 brought his intellectual and scholarly strengths to the attention of a wider art historical community.[158] Following its publication, Harvard University, the University of Chicago and New York University all extended him offers of appointment.[159]

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[156] Howard Devree, "Awakening in the Arts: A Widening Interest at All Levels Attested by Plans at N.Y.U.," New York Times 23 September 1934: XX5.

[157] In describing Schapiro's appointment, Epstein writes that "[Schapiro] was regarded by many as having broken through a long-established anti-Semitic tradition." Epstein, "Passion," 82. The anti-Semitic practices of universities in the 1920s are also commented on by Bloom, Prodigal Sons 6-7; Diana Trilling, "Lionel Trilling, A Jew at Columbia," Commentary 67.3 (1979).

[158] His Art Bulletin article merited a note in the *New York Times*. "Current Art Periodicals," New York Times 31 July 1932.

[159] According to Russell, Schapiro also gave lectures at NYU between 1932 and 1936 and at the New School for Social Research between 1936 and 1952. Russell, "Schapiro."

Choosing to stay at Columbia, Schapiro was named assistant professor in 1936. He solidified his reputation in 1939 with the publication of two of his most significant and still well respected medieval essays: "From Mozarabic to Romanesque in Silos" and "The Sculptures of Souillac."[160] These publications exemplify Schapiro's pioneering efforts in art history.

Schapiro's burgeoning career was integral to what New York Times reporter Howard Devree heralded in 1934 as "a new era in the study of the fine arts" in the U.S.[161] This "new era" was characterized by a rethinking of the role of the fine arts within the American academy. No longer trivial in nature, art history was beginning to be treated in the U.S. as a topic worthy of serious study. Devree noted innovative changes in the graduate division in the Institute of Fine Arts at New York University (NYU) and specifically cited Schapiro among the "notable outside lecturers" teaching graduate courses that year.[162] Schapiro contributed to this critical rethinking of the academic practice of the discipline through his attempts to develop a historically based, systematic analysis of style that did not rely on racial or national determinants. The sudden influx of émigré art historians seeking refuge from the Nazis also contributed to this "new era."[163] For example, Erwin Panofsky (1892-1968) was another of the so-named "notable outside lecturers" at NYU that year.

In fact, Schapiro and Panofsky began a friendship at the start of the 1930s that lasted until Panofsky's death in 1968. The two first met in the fall of 1931 when Panofsky, who was at that

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[160] Meyer Schapiro, "From Mozarabic to Romanesque in Silos," Art Bulletin 21.4 (1939); Meyer Schapiro, "Sculptures of Souillac," Mediaeval Studies in Memory of A. Kingsley Porter, ed. W. R. W. Koehler (Cambridge: Harvard UP, 1939). Subsequent references to these works refer to their reprints in: Meyer Schapiro, "From Mozarabic to Romanesque in Silos," Romanesque Art (New York: Braziller, 1977). Meyer Schapiro, "Sculptures of Souillac," Romanesque Art (New York: Braziller, 1977). I discuss "The Sculptures of Souillac" and Thomas Crow's discussion of that essay in chapter four.

[161] Devree, "Awakening in the Arts," XX5.

[162] Devree, "Awakening in the Arts," XX5.

[163] NYU art historian Richard Offner explained: "Hitler shook the tree and I picked up the apples." From an interview with Helen Franc, 6 June 1986. As cited in: Alice Goldfarb Marquis, Missionary for the Modern (Chicago: Contemporary, 1989) 184.

time still professor of art history in Hamburg, was invited to teach for a semester at NYU. In a letter to Schapiro dated April 13, 1953, Panofsky recalled their first encounter more than 20 years earlier:

> You appeared, on October 1, 1931, in the little apartment on East 54th Street which I had just rented after having stepped off the ship and was still sitting on my unpacked boxes like Marius on the ruins of Carthage. We had a long, wonderful talk, then dinner, and then another talk on the ruins until, about 2:00 o'clock in the morning, you said the unforgettable sentence: 'And now we must talk about method,' on which I felt much closer to fainting than ever before or after in my life and begged off.[164]

Panofsky was forced to resign his position at Hamburg University in 1933 when the National Socialists came to power. He subsequently emigrated to the U.S. where he obtained a position at Princeton in 1934, a situation that facilitated Schapiro's continued dialogue with Panofsky.[165] The political turmoil of the 1930s effectively brought Schapiro into closer proximity with exiled art historians, including Panofsky, who made significant contributions to the development of the discipline in the U.S.

Yet much of contemporary scholarship on Schapiro in the 1930s has focused on his Marxism. Scholars, including Wayne Andersen, David Craven, Andrew Hemingway, Donald Kuspit and Gerardo Mosquera, have carefully addressed the interconnections between Schapiro's politics and his scholarship.[166] Hemingway, in particular, has traced Schapiro's shifting political

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[164] Erwin Panofsky. Letter to Meyer Schapiro. 13 April 1953. Microfilm roll 2121. PP.

[165] While the earliest letter in the extant correspondence in the PP between Schapiro and Panofsky is from 6 October 1937, their letters indicate that their relationship grew over the course of the 1930s. In one instance, they reflect back on moments they shared from the early 1930s. After receiving Vöge's collected studies to which Panofsky had written the foreword, Schapiro commented on how he remembered sitting at the Princeton Club with Panofsky in New York in the early 30s and being so pleased to discover that Panofsky had been Vöge's student. Meyer Schapiro. Letter to Erwin Panofsky. 16 September 1958. Microfilm roll 2121. PP.

[166] Andersen, "Schapiro, Marx, and the Reacting Sensibility of Artists."; David Craven, Abstract Expressionism as Cultural Critique: Dissent during the McCarthy Period (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1999); Craven, "Critical Theory."; Hemingway, "1930s."; Donald B. Kuspit, "Meyer Schapiro's Marxism," Arts Magazine 53.3 (1978); Kuspit, "Dialectical Reasoning."; Mosquera, "Meyer Schapiro, Marxist Aesthetics, and Abstract Art."

sympathies, beginning with his radicalization in 1932 through his final disillusionment with Stalinism in 1939, and has described how these affiliations are evident in his writings of that decade. As a group, Andersen, Craven, Hemingway, Kuspit and Mosquera have applauded Schapiro's undogmatic Marxism, his avoidance of determinism, his historical materialism and his systematic application of the early Marx, as opposed to a rigid application of a Marxist system.[167] Schapiro emphatically avoided deterministic characterizations that view culture to be determined by economics. Just as the political events of the 1930s fostered Schapiro's Marxist art history, they also further enabled Schapiro's active engagement with German-speaking art historians.

In this chapter, I take a fresh look at this well-treated decade of Schapiro's life by focusing my attention on the mutual influences of his art historical and political investments. Rather than consider how his politics helped shape his Marxist art history as others have, I am interested in how his struggle to understand and theorize artistic style was linked to his cultural and political beliefs. He published on topics ranging widely from the International Style to the Romanesque and from debates on regionalism, social realism and abstraction to the art historical methodology of the New Vienna School. While his writings on contemporary art and architecture focused primarily on their revolutionary possibilities, he concurrently pursued an explanation of stylistic change that adequately addressed the expressive qualities of art's form and content, but did not rely on racial or national determinants. He debated issues of methodology in correspondence with art historians and political ideas with public

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[167] Many scholars consider there to be an ideological break between an earlier more humanistic Marx and a later deterministic Marx of the post-Paris Commune years.

intellectuals.[168] Likewise, while he was contributing to the debates concerning art and architecture in politically aligned journals, he was also publishing academic reviews in art historical journals.[169] His scholarly views have been largely recorded in these reviews, yet most of these have not been considered in the literature.[170] Just as Schapiro's academic success did not indicate his withdrawal from the world into a rarified academic environment, neither did his political agenda compel his abandonment of scholarly concerns. Rather, he took an active interest in understanding how art historical methodology related to contemporary political and cultural events.

In this chapter, I trace the development in Schapiro's thinking of the significance of both form and content in understanding the meaning of a work of art within its specific social-historical context. I begin by examining how this idea emerged in Schapiro's 1932 review of Jurgis Baltrusaitis's <u>La Stylistique Ornamentale dans la Sculpture Romane</u> (1931) and was subsequently developed in his 1933 exhibition review of the John Reed Club's exhibition "The Social Viewpoint in Art." Between 1934 and 1936, Schapiro faced an increasing challenge to address nationalism and racial essentialism and thus became more adamant and explicit in his

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[168] For example, Schapiro began to correspond with both Erwin Panofsky and Otto Pächt in the 1930s. I will treat Schapiro's correspondence with Panofsky in chapter three. Among the political figures with whom Schapiro corresponded in the 1930s are his college friend Whitaker Chambers and novelist James T. Farrell.

[169] Schapiro's publications appeared in politically aligned journals, such as <u>New Masses</u>, <u>Art Front</u>, <u>Marxist Quarterly</u> and <u>Partisan Review</u>, at the same time that they appeared in more conventional art historical publications, such as the <u>Art Bulletin</u>. The authorship of Schapiro's many early political writings, which were published under several pseudonyms, has only relatively recently been established, therefore the literature that considers them is fairly limited. Epstein mentions that Schapiro had published in <u>New Masses</u>, but does not attribute any specific essays to Schapiro. Helen Epstein, "A Passion to Know and Make Known: Part 2," <u>ARTNews</u> Summer 1983: 84. Hemingway was the first to discuss these essays as an essential part of Schapiro's oeuvre. See Hemingway, "1930s." The following year, Schapiro's widow published them in Lillian Milgram Schapiro, ed., <u>Meyer Schapiro: the Bibliography</u> (New York: Braziller, 1995). Two of these articles were posthumously reprinted in Meyer Schapiro, <u>Worldview in Painting - Art and Society</u> (New York: Braziller, 1999). Most recently, Schapiro's architectural essays have been reprinted as a group in Meyer Schapiro, "Looking Forward to Looking Backward: A Dossier of Writings on Architecture from the 1930s," <u>Grey Room</u> 6 (2002).

[170] Christopher Wood's discussion of Schapiro's review of the New Vienna School is the only exception. Christopher S. Wood, "Introduction," <u>The Vienna School Reader: Politics and Art Historical Method in the 1930s</u>, ed. Christopher S. Wood (New York: Zone, 2000).

condemnation of racial and national constants as a determining factor of style. I consider how this rejection is tied to his argument that the meaning of a work of art - both its form and content – is acquired through its particular social-historical context. I examine his arguments in the "Social Bases of Art" given as a speech at the First American Artists' Congress in February 1936 and his essay "Race, Nationality, and Art" published the following month. I then turn my attention to his 1936 review of the New Vienna School, which was published in a journal dedicated to the consideration of art historical methodology. I further investigate the complexities of his relationship to the group vis-à-vis correspondence between Schapiro and Otto Pächt (1902-88), one of the group's founding members.

In the final two sections of this chapter, I consider how Schapiro shaped his position regarding modern and medieval art out of both his political and cultural concerns. I first address Schapiro's increasingly open support of modern art and his continued commitment to socialism in his 1937 critique of Alfred H. Barr's <u>Cubism and Modern Art</u> (1936). I then analyze how Schapiro masterfully brought various argumentative threads together in "From Mozarabic to Romanesque in Silos," one of Schapiro's most famous essays on medieval art from 1939. I conclude by reflecting on Schapiro's shifting reaction to the contemporary style of Surrealism.

3.2.   FORM, CONTENT AND THE MEANING OF ART

> To make Romanesque a modern art, or an art in modern terms, [Baltrusaitis] has reduced content to a passive role, and has identified form with geometrical schematisms and with architecture – an abstract art. But this passivity of content today has become problematic. The condition and interests which promoted an analytic art no longer exist. We detect all the more readily the inadequacy of an interpretation like B's [sic], which gives no formative role to the functions and meanings of a public

religious art and which explains the choice of expressive effects solely by a geometrical coincidence.[171]

<div align="right">Schapiro, 1932-33</div>

In 1932, Schapiro's review of Jurgis Baltrusaitis's book, <u>La Stylistique Ornamentale dans la Sculpture Romane</u>, appeared in <u>Kritische Berichte zur kunstgeschichtlichen Literatur</u>, a journal dedicated to the pursuit of a more solid methodological foundation for art history. The Viennese journal ran from 1927 to 1937 and published essays by theoretically minded art historians including those affiliated with the New Vienna School, such as Pächt and Hans Sedlmayr (1896-1984), as well as Panofsky.[172] Here, Schapiro harshly critiqued the formalist approach of the Lithuanian-born Baltrusaitis (1903-1988) who was both the student and son-in-law of French art historian Henri Focillon (1881-1943).[173] In his dissertation, Schapiro had already expressed his distaste for the iconographical approach with its singular focus on subject matter that was more common to French art historians, particularly Mâle.[174] Schapiro began his review by expressing the uniqueness of Baltrusaistis' work, stating that it was "the first French work on mediaeval art that deals systematically with problems of form."[175] But Schapiro was clear that Baltrusaitis's formalism, his discussion of form at the expense of content, was no better than Mâle's iconography.

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[171] Meyer Schapiro, "Über den Schematismus in der Romanischen Kunst," Rev. of <u>La Stylistique Ornamentale dans la Sculpture Romane</u>, by Jurgis Baltrusaitis. <u>Kritische Berichte zur Kunstgeschichtlichen Literatur</u> 1 (1932-33). Subsequent references refer to the reprint in: Meyer Schapiro, "On Geometrical Schematism in Romanesque Art," <u>Romanesque Art</u> (New York: Braziller, 1977) 283.

[172] For more on <u>Kritische Berichte</u> see, Heinrich Dilly, <u>Deutsche Kunsthistoriker 1933-1945</u> (Munich: Deutscher, 1988) 17-22. All the issues have been reprinted in <u>Kritische Berichte zur kunstgeschichtliche Literatur (1927-1937)</u>, (Hildesheim: Olms, 1972).

[173] Walter Cahn has written on Schapiro's relationship with Henri Focillon, Baltrusaitis's teacher and father-in-law. Walter Cahn, "Schapiro and Focillon," <u>Gesta</u> 41.2 (2002).

[174] See chapter two for a more detailed discussion of Schapiro's treatment of Mâle.

[175] Schapiro, "Geometrical," 265.

According to Schapiro, Baltrusaitis argued that Romanesque form emerged out of an antagonistic relationship between form and content; a predetermined formal schema was imposed on iconographic material thereby creating what Baltrusaitis saw as the distorted and disorderly appearance of the sculpture of the Romanesque period. Not only did Schapiro disagree with Baltrusaitis over the formal nature of Romanesque sculpture, which Schapiro contrastingly described as "a purposeful, deeply ordered decoratively coherent object," but he also challenged Baltrusaitis's singular reliance on form.[176] Instead, Schapiro articulated the complex interrelated roles of form, content and meaning in understanding style:

> A crucial weakness of B.'s [sic] dialectic lies in the inactive, neutral role of content in the formation of the work of art; it allows for no interaction between the meanings and shapes; the schemas remain primary and permanent. It is therefore an artificial or schematic dialectic which ignores the meanings of the works, the purpose of the art in Romanesque society and religion, the willed expressive aspects of the forms and meanings (which were created as wholes and not as combinations of antagonistic forms and subjects), and fails to explain the known historical development of Romanesque art. The subject matter, the represented objects, which are stamped with the geometrical schemas, are considered wholly passive, without significance or value to the artist. The expressive qualities are merely the by-products of distortion by the frame, and sometimes they are even generated by the frame.[177]

Schapiro disagreed with Baltrusaitis's idea that the schema was forced upon the content to produce the work of art. Instead, Schapiro suggested that the meaning of a work of art is produced jointly through the expressiveness of its forms and subject matter. By critiquing the passivity and the "neutral role of content" in Baltrusaitis's approach, Schapiro makes clear how significant both form and content are to his understanding of the meaning of art. This dual emphasis is also a critical element in his contemporaneous writings on revolutionary art.

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[176] Schapiro, "Geometrical," 270.

[177] Schapiro, "Geometrical," 268.

In response to the increasingly dire political situation, Schapiro began to publish anonymously on the topic of revolutionary art in the Communist affiliated journal New Masses in 1932.[178] The crash of 1929 ushered in the Great Depression, the stock market hit rock bottom in 1932 and 1933, and, as the decade progressed, the imminence of World War II became increasingly apparent. Schapiro's concerns regarding these events quickly propelled him into the role of a public intellectual.[179] Many of the so-called New York Intellectuals, including Schapiro, were radicalized by contemporary political events and turned to the Communist Party (CP) and its faith in an international, working-class revolution to transform society.[180] For Schapiro, who had been acquainted with the writings and ideas of Marx and Engels since he was

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[178] While Schapiro published reviews of five scholarly art history books and portions of his dissertation in 1930 and 1931 respectively, in 1932, he published five articles that dealt explicitly with the current political situation in addition to three scholarly book reviews. For a complete bibliography, see Schapiro, ed., Bibliography.

[179] Between 1932 and 1934, Schapiro's enthusiasm for the Soviet model of Communism surged; though never orthodox in his beliefs, his affinities with Stalinism and the CP were at their strongest during these years. For example, in 1932 he published Architects and the Crisis, a pamphlet modeled on the 32-page pamphlet Culture and the Crisis: An Open Letter to Writers, Artists, Teachers, Physicians, Engineers, Scientists, and Other Professional Workers of America that was published by the League of Professional Groups for Foster and Ford, the Communist presidential ticket in 1932. Meyer Schapiro, "Architects and the Crisis: An Open Letter to the Architects, Draughtsmen, and Technicians of America," Worldview in Painting - Art and Society (New York: Braziller, 1999). Hemingway describes Schapiro's involvements with the League in some detail. See Hemingway, "1930s," 14. For more on the League of Professional Groups for Foster and Ford and Schapiro's significant role within this organization, see Harvey Klehr, The Heyday of American Communism: The Depression Decade (New York: Basic, 1984) 80-84. Schapiro's enthusiasm had grown when in 1932 the Soviet Union publicized its idealized reports of the success of the first Five-Year Plan, which targeted the industrialization and collectivization of agriculture in the Soviet Union. In his careful description of Schapiro's political trajectory, Hemingway reports that Schapiro had later recalled how excited he had been when he saw images of construction in the Soviet Union in the late 1920s and early 1930s. Hemingway, "1930s," 14. For a discussion of Schapiro's deviation from orthodox Marxism, see Craven, "Critical Theory," 42-43.

[180] "New York Intellectual" is a term coined by Irving Howe in his famous article of 1969. Irving Howe, "The New York Intellectuals," Commentary 46 (1969). Though Schapiro was a part of this group, the scholarship on the New York Intellectuals has only mentioned him in passing. For more on the New York Intellectuals, see: Bloom, Prodigal Sons; Terry A. Cooney, The Rise of the New York Intellectuals: Partisan Review and Its Circle, 1934-45 (Madison: U of Wisconsin P, 1986); Morris Dickstein, "The New York Intellectuals," Dissent 44.2 (1997); Alan Wald, The New York Intellectuals: The Rise and Decline of the Anti-Stalinist Left from the 1930s to the 1980s (Chapel Hill: U of North Carolina P, 1987); Hugh Wilford, New York Intellectuals: From Vanguard to Institution (Manchester: Manchester UP, 1995).

a boy, the economic and political crises made him more deeply aware of the contemporary

relevance of Marxist thought.[181]

This critical link between form and content was also a key point in contemporary Marxist

cultural analysis, with which Schapiro was undoubtedly acquainted. Schapiro published the

majority of his political essays between 1932 and 1934 in New Masses. This journal supported

the idea of an art that was revolutionary in both form and content.[182] Though initially founded in

1926 as a politically unaligned journal, New Masses became increasingly sympathetic to

Moscow and was named the official organ of the International Union of Revolutionary Writers

(IURW) and the International Bureau of Revolutionary Artists at their conference in Kharkov in

1930.[183] At this conference, members drafted a statement entitled "To All Revolutionary Artists

of the World," which stated that revolutionary artists must fight "for revolutionary content and

form in art, intelligible to the broad working masses and based on class struggle; for the

synthesis of class content and new form in revolutionary art."[184] New Masses and its progenitor,

the John Reed Club (JRC), both signed the statement.[185] The question of the role of form and

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[181] In his 1983 interview with Epstein, Schapiro commented on his radicalization: "People felt that the Depression was a historical turning point, that the system could no longer provide for the community. Of course I had read Marx and Engels long before, but the difference was between reading something as part of one's general education and reading it to find out as much as possible about a situation in which you felt very concerned because you saw it all around you. We looked to Russia as the example of a successful revolution just as people had once looked to the French Revolution." Epstein, "Passion: Part 2," 84.

[182] See for example Stanley Burnshaw, "Notes on Revolutionary Poetry," New Masses 20 February 1934.

[183] Virginia Hagelstein Marquardt, "Art on the Political Front in America," Art Journal (1993): 77. Schapiro's college friend Whitaker Chambers was briefly an editor at New Masses from 1931 until 1932 when he was released from his position. Schapiro's friendship with Chambers may have facilitated the publication of his essays under a pseudonym. In an undated letter from 1932, Chambers assures Schapiro that he will take care of his article, even though he is no longer an editor. Whitaker Chambers. Letter to Meyer Schapiro. Undated letter from 1932. Meyer Schapiro Papers, Box 1, Columbia University, New York.

[184] As quoted in Marquardt, "America," 77. Originally in "To All Revolutionary Artists of the World," Literature of the World Revolution, special number (Second International Conference of Revolutionary Writers, 1931): 11.

[185] Virginia Hagelstein Marquardt, "'New Masses' and John Reed Club Artists, 1926-1936: Evolution of Ideology, Subject Matter, and Style," Journal of Decorative and Propaganda Arts Spring 1989: 67.

content in revolutionary art became key for writers and artists associated with <u>New Masses</u>, the JRC and the CP.

Early on, Schapiro was attracted to the revolutionary possibilities of experimental form. This interest emerged in his writings published under a pseudonym on the International Style, an architectural style that had relinquished a traditional formal vocabulary in favor of a minimalist approach. In 1932, Schapiro reviewed the Museum of Modern Art's (MoMA) landmark International Style exhibition, at which the work of Le Corbusier, Walter Gropius and Ludwig Mies van der Rohe was presented. In this review, Schapiro argued that: "these bolder architects anticipate the style of a Socialist Republic."[186] Importantly, the International Style had not yet proven its revolutionary status; it only showed its potential.

Schapiro's argument against Baltrusaitis's formalism paralleled Schapiro's understanding of revolutionary architecture. He criticized Baltrusaitis for not considering the meanings of the forms of Romanesque sculpture within their particular social-historical context. Schapiro believed that the meaning with which forms are invested does not derive from the forms themselves or predetermined schema. The forms acquire meaning in conjunction with social-historical context. Likewise, the International Style was not inherently revolutionary and could "remain a means of exploitation, or the newest fad of the rich class, the symbol of a profitable, spectacular efficiency."[187] According to Schapiro, the fascists would be just as capable of appropriating the International Style's forms for their purposes as the socialists would be for

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[186] Meyer Schapiro, "The New Architecture," <u>New Masses</u> May 1932: 23; <u>Modern Architecture: International Exhibition</u>, (New York: Museum of Modern Art, 1932). His review was originally published under the pseudonym John Kwait.

[187] Schapiro, "The New Architecture."

theirs.[188] Only a class-based revolution would provide the necessary step towards socialism, which would ensure the architecture's revolutionary role.[189]

Schapiro articulated the integral relationship of form and content in other essays of the 1930s as well. For example, in "Art and Social Change," an essay most likely written in the 1930s, but published posthumously, Schapiro contrasted an aesthetic position that privileged formal considerations, such as art critic Robert Fry's formalism or the notion of "art for art's sake," with a social view that was held by those interested in the promotion of a particular content, such as social reformers.[190] Schapiro argued that neither of these approaches was sufficient. Neither form nor content could be adequately addressed individually. Though the iconographic material of two works may be the same, the content and meaning may differ. He stated that: "The question of social change and art becomes then a problem of discovering the manner in which a new content modifies the conventional manner of expression: the manner in

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[188] Architect and co-organizer of this exhibition, Philip Johnson, became a supporter of National Socialism and Hitler on a trip to Berlin the same year as the exhibition. See Franz Schulze, <u>Philip Johnson: Life and Work</u> (New York: Knopf, 1994) 89-90, 105-110.

[189] Likewise in an essay originally published under the pseudonym of John Kwait, Schapiro condemned the architectural ideas of the reformists like Buckminster Fuller and Lewis Mumford for placing their faith in the ability of art or architecture to effect change. Schapiro condemned Fuller and his Structural Studies Associates (S.S.A.) for seeing "housing reform as a substitute for revolution." Meyer Schapiro, "Architecture Under Capitalism," <u>New Masses</u> December 1932: 10. According to Schapiro, Fuller's trust in technology was a foolhardy mistake: "For a group of architects to trust technology as an automatic principle of social evolution is to commit themselves to the existing rulers of industry and to support the status quo." Schapiro, "Architecture Under Capitalism," 13. Similarly, in his review of Mumford's <u>Technics and Civilization</u>, Schapiro criticized Mumford's belief that technocratic efficiency would bring about a transition to a socialist society. Though the reformists believed that the application of new technological forms would result in a new society, Schapiro argued that such a technocratic revolution could alternatively lead to fascism. While, according to Schapiro, Mumford saw "the cult of machine forms in art as a guarantee of a socialist efficiency," Schapiro countered by pointing to the Italian Futurists whose machine aesthetic was used in the name of fascism. Schapiro argued that: "Neither socialism nor fascism is latent in the machine. It is the will and interest of the classes that control the machine, which determine the one direction or the other." Meyer Schapiro, "Looking Forward to Looking Backward," <u>New Masses</u> July 1934: 38.

Schapiro continued to criticize the architectural reformists into the late 1930s. See Meyer Schapiro, "Looking Forward to Looking Backward," Rev. of <u>The Culture of Cities</u> by Lewis Mumford. <u>Partisan Review</u> 5.2 (1938); Meyer Schapiro, "Architect's Utopia," Rev. of <u>Architecture and Modern Life</u>, by Baker Brownell and Frank Lloyd Wright. <u>Partisan Review</u> 4.4 (1938).

[190] Meyer Schapiro, "Art and Social Change," <u>Worldview in Painting - Art and Society</u> (New York: Braziller, 1999).

which purely aesthetic changes, occasioned by social changes, modify content to accord with newer forms . . ."[191]

In his review, Schapiro accused Baltrusaitis of applying the contemporary doctrine of "art for art's sake" to medieval art. As the epigraph to this section makes clear, Schapiro understood Baltrusaitis to characterize Romanesque art as a modern art, where it is defined as a pure art uninfluenced by society. Schapiro went on in 1936 to argue explicitly that all artistic production must be understood as being produced within a particular society, urging socially conscious artists to express social action in both form and content.[192] In his 1933 review of Baltrusaitis's book, Schapiro had also expressed concern regarding the passive content of contemporary art, which he stated had hindered its revolutionary potential. The shaping of art's form and subject matter within a particular social-historical context was critical to its meaning, whether Schapiro was discussing the role of the artist in the revolution or art historical methodology.

Not long after Schapiro addressed the International Style's role in a forthcoming socialist society, he entered into broader deliberations regarding the revolutionary nature of art that surged in leftist journals between 1918 and 1937.[193] Discussion centered on the role of art in society and what forms and techniques were most suitable for a politically active art. Debates occurred between proponents of representational styles and those of an abstract style, as well as between the regionalists and the social realists, both proponents of representational styles. While both regionalism and social realism sought to depict life in the United States, the two styles are extremely different in their choice of subject matter and subsequent meaning and content. While

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[191] Schapiro, "Art and Social Change," 116-17.

[192] Schapiro's most famous expression of this is in: Schapiro, "Social Bases of Art."

[193] For more on these debates see Marquardt, "America."; Virginia Hagelstein Marquardt, "Art on the Left in the United States, 1918-1937," Art and Journals on the Political Front, 1910-1940, ed. Virginia Hagelstein Marquardt (Gainesville: UP of Florida, 1997).

regionalist painting usually represents picturesque scenes of the country and rural areas and is more often than not nostalgic, social realist painting most often represents images of the experiences of the urban working poor.

One locus of activities for such debates was the John Reed Club (JRC).[194] The JRC was an organ of the CP founded with the help of New Masses in 1929 in order to encourage the spread of proletarian writings. In 1931, the JRC also began to sponsor art exhibitions. In 1933, the New York branch of the JRC organized "The Social Viewpoint in Art," their first attempt at a major exhibition, which elicited a critical debate over the inclusion of various artists.[195] Schapiro's review, which appeared in New Masses in February 1933 under the pseudonym of John Kwait, was critical of the JRC's decision to include non-member artists.[196] He was particularly concerned that the art of regionalists like Thomas Hart Benton was not revolutionary. Schapiro argued that:

> The very title of the exhibition betrays the uncertainties of our revolutionary art. What is *The Social Viewpoint in Art*? It is as vague and empty as "the social viewpoint" in politics. It includes any picture with a worker, a factory or a city-street, no matter how remote from the needs of a class-conscious worker. It justifies the showing of Benton's painting of Negroes shooting crap as a picture

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[194] For more on the history of the John Reed Club, see: Helen Harrison, "John Reed Club Artists and the New Deal: Radical Responses to Roosevelt's Peaceful Revolution," Prospects 5 (1980); Eric Homberger, American Writers and Radical Politics, 1900-39 (Houndmills, Eng.: Macmillan, 1986) 119-140; Marquardt, "'New Masses'."; Francine Tyler, "Artists Respond to the Great Depression and the Threat of Fascism: The New York Artists' Union and its Magazine Art Front (1934-1937)," Diss., NYU, 1991, 23-47.

[195] Meyer Schapiro, "John Reed Club Art Exhibition," Social Realism: Art as a Weapon, ed. David Shapiro (New York: Ungar, 1973); Jacob Burck, "Sectarianism in Art," New Masses March 1933; Meyer Schapiro, "Response to Burck," New Masses March 1933. (Schapiro's review and comment appeared under the pseudonym of John Kwait. It was originally published as "John Reed Club Art Exhibition." New Masses February 1933: 23-24.) Subsequent references will refer to the reprint.

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[196] Perhaps Schapiro's review had some impact, as Patricia Hills has pointed out that the JRC's next exhibition, The World Crisis Expressed in Art: Paintings, Sculpture, Drawings, Prints, on the Theme Hunger[,] Fascism[,] War, seems to have responded to many of his criticisms, though I do not know of any place where Schapiro expressed his approval. Hills, "1936," 32.

of Negro life, or a landscape with a contented farmer, or a decorative painting labelled [sic] "French factory."[197]

While Schapiro praised the stated goal of the exhibition to promote "an active revolutionary art," he argued that less than half of the works in the exhibition expressed any revolutionary ideas, and of those, only a few truly communicated to the worker "the crucial situations of his class."[198]

Schapiro was particularly critical of the inclusion of Benton's works and went so far as to accuse the JRC of being guided by Benton and the cultural critic Thomas Craven, a key proponent of regionalism, in what Schapiro saw as their promotion of "American Life" as the goal of art.[199] To Schapiro, the JRC's selection of works seemed based on subject matter alone and thus he felt that social meaning was lacking in many of the images. Take for example Benton's painting of "Negroes shooting crap," which Schapiro disparagingly referred to as picturesque. In no way did Benton's works contribute to the class struggle. Schapiro's accusation that Benton and Craven were guiding JRC policy was particularly harsh. Through their promotion of an indigenous "American" art, Benton and Craven had demonized both the social realists and the abstractionists as foreign elements.[200] Furthermore, as Hitler's repressive policies towards Jewish artists were being reported and parallels between German fascism and American

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[197] Schapiro, "John Reed Club," 66.

[198] Schapiro, "John Reed Club," 66.

[199] Schapiro, "John Reed Club," 67.

[200] For example, Craven remarked that: "If the mechanized United States has produced no plastic art of any richness or vitality, it is because she has borrowed her art from foreign sources and refused to utilize the most exciting materials that have ever challenged the creative mind." Thomas Craven, Men of Art (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1931) 508. Also, see Craven, Men of Art 506-13; Thomas Craven, "American Men of Art," Scribner's 92.5 (1932). In his review of Men of Art, Paul Rosenfeld criticized Craven for his negative characterization of French art and its effect in the U.S. Paul Rosenfeld, "Art: A Defense of Sensibility," The Nation 6 May 1931.

nationalism were being made, American Scene nationalism quickly became suspect, especially given its tendency towards anti-Semitism.[201]

According to Schapiro, Benton's mural series at the library of the Whitney Museum of American Art - The Arts of Life in America (1932) – clarified the JRC's error in including Benton's work in "The Social Viewpoint in Art."[202] At the Whitney, Schapiro explained, "Negro life is summarized by a revival meeting and crap-shooting boys, and the city is an intentionally confused panoramic spectacle of overlapping speakeasies, strikers, gunmen, and movies, that corresponds to the insight of the tabloid press."[203] The crapshooters and revival meeting can be seen in the panel of Arts of the South, while the spectacle of the city is visible in Arts of the City. Shortly after Schapiro's review, contemporary critics accused Benton's murals of being both racist and anti-leftist. Following a devastating review of the murals by Paul Rosenfeld in the

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[201] Parallels were being made between fascism in Germany and in the U.S. For example, Joseph Freeman argued in 1933 in Partisan Review that: "The Nazi-Nationalist terror reveals once more that capitalism thrives on racial hatred. In Germany it incites the Jewish pogroms; in the United States it lynches the Negro." Joseph Freeman, "The Background of German Fascism," New Masses April 1933: 8. Freeman continues on that: "Writers and artists, scientists and musicians, editors and publishers, physicians and surgeons have been beaten up, fired from their jobs, deported or made so miserable that they have been compelled to flee . . . The victims of the terror include the finest names in the history of modern German culture." Freeman, "German Fascism," 8.

Reports on the repressive cultural policies appeared in The New York Times. See for example, Guido Enderis, "Nazis Glorify Art that is 'Germanic'," New York Times 15 October 1933; Edward Alden Jewell, "Art in Review: Carnegie Institute's 31st Exhibition Opens Today, With a Strong American Section," New York Times 19 October 1933; Elizabeth Wiskemann, "On the Cultural Front the Nazis Drive," New York Times 27 May 1934; "Makes Plea for Nazi Art," New York Times 23 December 1934.

Many of the social realists were either immigrants, or the children of immigrants and many were also Jewish. For example, social realist Ben Shahn was a Jewish immigrant from Lithuania who had arrived in New York as a young boy at about the same time that Schapiro had. The photographer Alfred Stieglitz, a well known promoter of modern art, was attacked by both Craven and Benton. Craven denigrated Stieglitz's claim to being an American artist by emphasizing his status as a "Hoboken Jew." Thomas Craven, Modern Art: The Men, the Movements, the Meaning (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1935) 212. David A. Gerber has argued that anti-Semitism peaked in the U.S. between 1920 and 1950. Gerber provides a brief history of anti-Semitism in America in his entry on this subject in David A. Gerber, "Anti-Semitism in America," Encyclopedia of American Social History (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1993), vol. 3. Marcia Brennan recounts the critical dialogue that took place between Benton and Stieglitz in Marcia Brennan, Painting Gender, Constructing Theory: The Alfred Stieglitz Circle and American Formalist Aesthetics (Cambridge, MA: MIT, 2001) 202-31.

[202] The murals are now in the Collection of the New Britain Museum of American Art in New Britain, CT.

[203] Schapiro, "John Reed Club," 67.

New Republic in April 1933, a group of students and teachers at the Art Students League, presumably led by abstract artist Stuart Davis, circulated a petition advocating the destruction of the murals because of what they viewed as the racist portrayal of African-Americans.[204] Furthermore, Benton's explicit rejection of leftist politics in both his ceiling panel Strike, Parade, Speed and Political Business and Intellectual Ballyhoo ran contrary to Schapiro's own beliefs.[205] The New Masses reader in the latter of these murals was widely viewed as an anti-Semitic image.[206] Schapiro's warning not to confuse a work of art's subject matter with its meaning was grounded in these contemporary concerns. He maintained that revolutionary content emerges from class struggle and not through the reproduction of American life.[207]

As far as revolutionary form was concerned, Schapiro seemed less certain. The Kharkov statement had instructed that revolutionary form must be new form that comes out of class struggle and must be able to communicate to the broad masses. While hardly a conclusive definition, Schapiro was almost equally vague here in his discussion of revolutionary form, though his efforts to follow the Kharkov directive are notable. While not necessarily a cartoon

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[204] Paul Rosenfeld, "Ex-Reading Room," New Republic 12 April 1933; Henry Adams, Thomas Hart Benton: An American Original (New York: Knopf, 1989) 190.

In 1935, Davis referred to "the gross caricatures of Negroes by Benton." Freeman, "German Fascism."; Stuart Davis, "The New York American Scene in Art," Art Front 1.3 (1935): 6.

[205] In Strike, Parade, Speed, Benton depicted a group of strikers carrying a sign reading "Work for Wages" who are being shot at by guards on the roof at right. This scene takes place alongside symbols of speed on the left, including a jeep, airplane and locomotive engine and two dancing chorus girls on the right. While the subject matter is typical of the social realists, Benton's manner of representation offers no clear social message. In Political Business and Intellectual Ballyhoo, Benton ridicules the political process as well as the leftists more specifically. A top-hatted broomstick labeled "The Representative of the People" on the right satirizes the political process with its senseless slogans "Don't be a trillium/ They call it halitosis/ 5 out of 6 have it." On the left Benton depicts the leftists. He includes several cartoon characters – Mickey Mouse and Mutt and Jeff –amidst various signs and papers that mock the leftists, such as "Greenwich Village Proletarian Costume Dance" and "Literary Playboys League for Social Consciousness." Beneath these figures stand caricatures of readers of leftist journals including New Masses, The Nation and The New Republic. For more on Benton's The Arts of Life in America, see Adams, Benton 184-91.

[206] According to Adams, the "New Masses reader (with his curly hair, sloping forehead, prominent nose, and recessive chin) was widely viewed as a tasteless anti-Semitic character." Adams, Benton 188.

[207] Schapiro, "John Reed Club," 67-68.

Schapiro felt that revolutionary work "should have the legibility and pointedness of a cartoon."[208] Furthermore, Schapiro would have preferred to see cooperative work done by artists in media such as prints, banners, posters and cartoons, which "actually reach their intended audiences."[209] The revolutionary art that Schapiro describes bears a resemblance to the mainly political cartoons reproduced in the pages of New Masses. Here, some cartoons such as Birth of a New World from the November 1926 issue were done cooperatively. This image includes five wedge-shaped sections each done on a distinct theme by a separate artist (Hugo Gellert, William Groper, I Klein, William Siegel, and Louis Lozowick). Though New Masses' editors attempted to follow the Kharkov directive in their publication, they were subsequently criticized for using illustrations that the IURW felt were not sufficiently militant in subject matter and were aesthetically too modern.[210] While Schapiro was noncommittal as far as the exact form that revolutionary art should take, he appeared to follow the CP line maintaining that its form should help the work to reach its intended audience: the working class.

In condemning Benton, Schapiro aligned himself with neither the social realists nor the abstractionists exclusively, since supporters of both had joined forces against the advocates of regionalism.[211] Yet in his criticism of the regionalists, Schapiro praised modern French art, remarking that it was "technically far superior" to American art.[212] In so doing, Schapiro was further distancing himself from Benton and Craven's anti-modernist stance and the nationalistic

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[208] Schapiro, "John Reed Club," 67.

[209] Schapiro, "John Reed Club," 68.

[210] For more discussion, see Marquardt, "America," 77.

[211] In looking back on his involvement in these debates, Schapiro has stated that: "I was never interested in any position that forced you to choose between social realism and modern art. In fact, members of the Communist Party and of the John Reed Club . . . accused me of being against 'art for the people,' because I said that with one or two exceptions the social realists were bad artists from whom the people had little to gain." David Craven. Interview with Meyer Schapiro. 19 February 1993. As quoted in Craven, Abstract Expressionism 178.

[212] Schapiro, "John Reed Club," 67.

stereotypes that went with it. Nowhere did Schapiro deny that the revolutionary forms of European modernism could provide an appropriate art for a socialist society, and in further publications, he even argued that the most radical modern art may in fact persist under socialism, thereby becoming revolutionary.[213] While Schapiro could not conclusively point to an existing style of art as potentially revolutionary as he had with the International Style of architecture, one thing was certain: whatever the revolutionary forms of art would look like, they needed to be combined with a revolutionary content. He suggested that the artists could find a valuable way to "fight for freedom" by producing images "illustrating phases of the daily struggle, and reenacting in a vivid forceful manner the most important revolutionary situations."[214] In this way, Schapiro advocated revolutionary form and content that was active in nature and that emerged out of class struggle.

In 1934, when the CP began to promote socialist realism, a realist style that depicted positive aspects of life under socialism, Schapiro remained intrigued by the revolutionary possibilities of experimental form.[215] At this same moment, Schapiro's relationship with the CP also began to show signs of strain.[216] Rather than remain faithful to CP doctrine, Schapiro

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[213] See for example: Meyer Schapiro, "Arts Under Socialism," Worldview in Painting - Art and Society (New York: Braziller, 1999) 132.

[214] Schapiro, "John Reed Club," 68.

[215] At the First Soviet Writers Congress in August 1934, A. A. Zhdanov delivered a speech in which he defined socialist realism. He called for writers "to depict reality in its revolutionary development." A. A. Zdhanov, Soviet Literature - The Richest in Ideas, the Most Advanced Literature, 1934, Marxists Internet Archive, Available: http://www.marxists.org/subject/art/lit_crit/sovietwritercongress/zdhanov.htm, 24 May 2007. For more on socialist realism, see Irina Gutkin, Cultural Origins of the Socialist Realist Aesthetic 1890-1934 (Evanston, IL: Northwestern UP, 1999).

[216] Schapiro was among those who in 1934 signed an open letter denouncing "the culpability and shame of the Communists" after the CP broke up a memorial meeting called by the Socialist Party to eulogize the defeat of the Austrian Social Democrats. Letter in *New Masses* as quoted in: Edward Alexander, Irving Howe - Socialist, Critic, Jew (Bloomington: Indiana UP, 1998) 8. Alexander described the moment: "The Communists suddenly lost the most distinguished group of intellectuals ever to have approached the party orbit." Alexander, Howe 8. In1935, Schapiro did not publish in any of the political journals and in 1936, he supported the Socialists in the presidential election whereas in 1932 he had voted Communist. Epstein, "Passion: Part 2," 86. Schapiro published one last article in New Masses in 1936. Meyer Schapiro, "Architecture and the Architect," New Masses April 1936.

continued to experiment with the idea of a revolutionary art that was innovative in both its form

and content, that arose out of class struggle and that was legible to the masses. He continued to

explore a definition of revolutionary art that closely paralleled that set forth at Kharkov.

3.3. RACE, NATIONALITY AND THE SOCIAL BASES OF ART

> Where else but in the historic remains of the arts does the nationalist find the evidence of his fixed racial character? His own experience is limited to one or two generations; only the artistic monuments of his country assure him that his ancestors were like himself, and that his own character is an unchangeable heritage rooted in his blood and native soil. For a whole century already the study of the history of art has been exploited for these conclusions.[217]
>
> <div align="right">Schapiro, 1936</div>

> There is need for an artists' organization on a nation-wide scale, which will deal with our cultural problems. The creation of such a permanent organization, which will cooperate with kindred organizations throughout the world, is our task.
>
> <div align="right">Call for the American Artists' Congress, 1936</div>

Schapiro's most explicit condemnations of racial and national understanding of style appear in

his publications from the mid-30s, when, with the rise of National Socialism, the necessity to

counter racial characterizations in art history became more immediate. At this time, some art

historians became increasingly vocal in their support of National Socialism. For example, Hans

Sedlmayr, one of the founding members of the New Vienna School, wrote a letter prefacing his

contribution to the 1938 Festschrift for Wilhelm Pinder congratulating Hitler on the annexation

of Austria.[218] Schapiro took particular care to counter these efforts through his theorizations of

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[217] Meyer Schapiro, "Race, Nationality and Art," Art Front 2.4 (1936): 10.

[218] Hans Sedlmayr, "Vermutungen und Fragen zur Bestimmung der altfranzösischen Kunst," Festschrift Wilhelm Pinder (Leipzig: Seemann, 1938). For a detailed description of Sedlmayr's increasingly public support for National Socialism, see Wood, "Introduction," 12-13.

style and his recommendations to practicing artists. He recognized that theory was shaped by individual cultural and political investments and believed strongly that an individual's politics were crucial to one's art history.

The development of an adequate explanation of stylistic change was a key concern in Schapiro's reviews from these years. He insisted that the connections made between art and social historical context must be more in depth than just a "constructed parallelism."[219] He criticized those art historians who made too loose of a connection between art and its particular social historical contexts; what Schapiro desired was an understanding of the "functional relation" between art and social historical context.[220] One particularly revealing example is Schapiro's fairly favorable review of K. A. C. Creswell's Early Muslim Architecture, in which Schapiro lamented the lack of a clear description of Umayyad architecture, the earliest form of Muslim architecture.[221] While Creswell pointed to the role of the local Syrian art as well as the combination of Persian and Coptic influences, Schapiro desired an explanation that took into account the social nature of the development of Umayyad architecture. Schapiro argued that: "The variety of influences is attributed to the conscription of foreign laborers and artisans by the Umayyad rulers, but the significance of this practice and its social base for the character of Umayyad architecture is not investigated."[222] Schapiro insisted that an examination of "more essential problems," such as what historical changes accompanied the change from Syrian to

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[219] Meyer Schapiro, Rev. of Deutsche Malerei der Gotik, vol. 1, by Alfred Stange. The Germanic Review 10.3 (1935): 216.

[220] Schapiro, "Rev. of Deutsche Malerei," 216. Schapiro refers to the "looseness" of the work of art historians in considering art in relation to its social bases. See for example: Meyer Schapiro, "New Viennese School," The Vienna School Reader: Politics and Art Historical Method in the 1930s, ed. Christopher S. Wood (2000) 259. His review was originally published in: Meyer Schapiro, "New Viennese School," Rev. of Kunstwissenschaftliche Forschungen, vol. 2, edited by Otto Pächt. Art Bulletin 18.2 (1936).

[221] Meyer Schapiro, Rev. of Early Muslim Architecture, by K. A. C. Creswell. Art Bulletin 17.1 (1935).

[222] Schapiro, "Rev. of Early Muslim Architecture," 112.

Umayyad architecture, was necessary.[223] Schapiro thus stressed that stylistic change was bound to social change.

Schapiro increasingly pointed out how art historians write their art history from distinct points of view, including nationalistic ones, which impacted their scholarly arguments.[224] In the mid-30s, Schapiro critiqued several art historical publications in which the author's sympathies, which were often nationalistic, colored the outcome of their research.[225] For example, Schapiro reviewed a new English edition of Lombardic Architecture by G. T. Rivoira, a book originally published some twenty-five years earlier, in which the author argued that Early Christian building in both the East and the West was derived from Roman architecture and that Lombardic architecture in particular was the source for Romanesque and Gothic architecture across Europe. Schapiro pointed out that Rivoira openly recognized his patriotic stance. Schapiro seemed compelled to consider Rivoira's work because: "Unlike other nationalistic writers, [Rivoira] wished to show the force and operation of his native tradition, not by a search for a constant psychological or aesthetic quality in art, but by a scientific investigation of techniques, forms of construction, materials, and ornaments, contributed by his nation."[226] Yet even though Rivoira's nationalistic approach was more scientific than those who relied on racial psychological traits, Schapiro maintained that Rivoira's method of focusing on isolated elements or motifs and their subsequent diffusion allowed him to ignore the variety and creativity of artistic activity in

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[223] Schapiro, "Rev. of Early Muslim Architecture," 112.

[224] This claim was not new for Schapiro: he had argued for the significance of a writer's point of view in his very first publication in 1925. See, Schapiro, "Löwy." See chapter two for a discussion of this review.

[225] In 1930, Schapiro pointed out that as a Norman, Camille Enlart ascribed the development of Gothic architecture to a particular Norman spirit, going so far as to attribute an old tower at Newport, RI to Norse construction. Meyer Schapiro, Rev. of Les Monuments des Croisés dans le Royaume de Jerusalem. Architecture Réligieuse et Civile, by Camille Enlart. Art Bulletin 12.3 (1930): 301. Schapiro even criticized one individual for simply having too much enthusiasm for Byzantium. See Meyer Schapiro, New York Herald Tribune Books 27 April 1930: 12.

[226] Schapiro, "Rev. of Lombardic Architecture," 406.

regions besides his own native Lombardy. His singular focus blinded him to the architecture's complexity.

In another review from 1935, Schapiro critiqued Lawrence Binyon for relying on fixed racial characters in his description of Asian art. To begin with, Schapiro criticized the artificial polarity that Binyon established between the materialism and mass of European art and the line and spirituality of Asian art. Schapiro accused Binyon of attributing its unity to "a vague, undefined, unlocalized spirit," instead of considering the specificity of Asian art in relation to its social-historical circumstances.[227] According to Schapiro, Binyon attributed any deviation from this unity to "disturbing intrusions."[228] For Binyon, art remained a realm outside of everyday life; Schapiro described Binyon's understanding of art as "the flavor of a period, as a necessary, timeless, universal demand of the human spirit for an escape from the triviality and incompleteness of material existence."[229]

Schapiro published two essays in 1936 – "The Social Bases of Art" and "Race, Nationality, and Art" – which were addressed to contemporary practicing artists and which built on the ideas that he had expressed in his reviews from 1935. He emphasized the social bases of art in his speech of the same name given at the First American Artists' Congress in February 1936 and published the same year in the Congress' proceedings.[230] Following a period of uncertainty in his relationship with the CP, Schapiro showed renewed interest following the Party's official adoption in 1935 of the Popular Front strategy – a call for individuals of various political affiliations to come together in a 'united front' against the threats of war and fascism in

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[227] Meyer Schapiro, "Wistful View of Asian Art," New York Herald Tribune Books 4 August 1935: 12.

[228] Schapiro, "Asian Art," 12.

[229] Schapiro, "Asian Art," 12.

[230] For an authoritative treatment of the American Artists' Congress, see Matthew Baigell and Julia Williams, eds., Artists Against War and Fascism: Papers of the First American Artists' Congress (New Brunswick: Rutgers UP, 1986).

Germany and Spain.[231] Schapiro was among the founding members of the First American Artists' Congress, organized primarily by New York artists in response to the CP's call for a Popular Front.[232] In addition, the CP's seeming willingness to collaborate with those who shared their anti-fascist stance contrasted sharply with their earlier dogmatism. Thus, while the CP continued to advocate socialist realism, the Popular Front allowed for alliances with artists working in a variety of styles.

In "The Social Bases of Art," Schapiro urged contemporary artists to recognize that both the form and content of their art derived from their social conditions. According to Schapiro, a singular focus on form impeded artists from realizing the social nature of their art. Yet, he also recognized an active quality in their formal considerations that was absent in their subject matter:

> The passivity of the modern artist with regard to the human world is evident in a peculiar relation of his form and content. In his effort to create a thoroughly animated, yet rigorous whole, he considers the interaction of color upon color, line upon line, mass upon mass. Such pervasive interaction is for most modern painters the very essence of artistic reality. Yet in choice of subject he rarely, if ever, seizes upon corresponding aspects in social life.[233]

While the forms expressed an action, the subject matter of the modern artist centered on spectacles, the artist himself, his studio or "isolated intimate fields."[234] Placed in a position of catering to the leisure class, who had no direct relation to work, artists produced an art with a

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[231] The Popular Front strategy was officially adopted at the Seventh World Congress of the Stalinist Communist International (Comintern) in 1935.

[232] American intellectuals anticipated the adoption of the Popular Front by holding their first congress, the First American Writers' Congress, in April 1935. With the adoption of the Popular Front strategy, the JRC was abandoned. The First American Artists' Congress was held February 14, 1936.

T. J. Clark's description of Schapiro's position in "The Social Bases of Art" as Stalinist is incorrect. T. J. Clark, "Jackson Pollock's Abstraction," Reconstructing Modernism: Art in New York, Paris, and Montreal 1945-64, ed. Serge Guilbaut (Cambridge: MIT, 1990) 224, 238. Hemingway has made a cogent argument against Clark's assertion. Hemingway, "1930s," 22.

[233] Schapiro, "Social Bases of Art," 126-27.

[234] Schapiro, "Social Bases of Art," 122.

passive subject matter that was linked to a passive nature in social life. Schapiro argued that if artists were concerned with the world around them they needed to recognize the social nature of their art and thus develop an artistic style that recognized the action of social life in both its form and content. While some have suggested that at this point Schapiro was advocating an anti-modern revolutionary art, his criticisms here actually focus on the passive nature of the subject matter and not on the limitations of modern art, per se.[235]

In fact, in 1935, Schapiro was actively engaged in the discussion of modern art. In March of that year, Schapiro approached MoMA's director Alfred H. Barr, Jr. with the idea of "the formation of a group for the discussion of modern, and especially contemporary art."[236] Barr responded enthusiastically offering space at the museum where the group could meet.[237] Among the members that Schapiro proposed were: Panofsky, Robert Goldwater (author of Primitivism in Modern Painting (1938)), Jerome Klein (gallery owner and art dealer), Louis Lozowick (painter), Lewis Mumford (cultural critic), and James Johnson Sweeney (curator of MoMA.)[238] The group began meeting in the spring of 1935 and continued intermittently until at least 1937.[239] In their

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[235] See Serge Guilbaut, "The New Adventures of the Avant-Garde in America: Greenberg, Pollock, or from Trotskyism to the New Liberalism of the "Vital Center"," October 15 (1980): 63-64; Guilbaut, New York 24-26; Crow, "Modernism," 226-27. Crow states that "the 1936 essay was in fact a forthright anti-modernist polemic, an effort to demonstrate that the avant-garde's claims to independence, to disengagement from the values of its patron class were a sham . . ."

[236] Meyer Schapiro. Letter to Alfred H. Barr. 8 March 1935. 1.6 mf 2166:307. Alfred H. Barr, Jr. Papers, The Museum of Modern Art Archives, New York. Alice Goldfarb Marquis mentions the group in her biography of Barr: Marquis, Modern 125.

[237] Alfred H. Barr. Letter to Meyer Schapiro. 11 March 1935. 1.6 mf 2165:980. Alfred H. Barr, Jr. Papers, The Museum of Modern Art Archives, New York.

[238] According to Marquis, all of these attended, though some irregularly. Marquis, Modern 125.

[239] In January 1937, the group was still meeting. Schapiro had written to Panofsky that he was sorry that he had missed their meeting. The psychiatrist Paul Ferdinand Schilder had spoken on "the image we form of our own bodies during curious mental states, and also about the role of gravitation, body balance and orientation in fantasy." Schapiro mentioned that: "Schilder's talk was very exciting, at least to me and Jerome Klein." Meyer Schapiro. Letter to Erwin Panofsky. 17 January 1937. Microfilm roll 2121. PP. Later that year in October, Schapiro indicated in another letter to Panofsky that both Goldwater and Walter Friedlander had individually asked Schapiro that the group resume meeting. Meyer Schapiro. Letter to Erwin Panofsky. 6 October 1937. Microfilm roll 2121. PP. It is unclear when the group disbanded.

letters they mentioned both Dadaist Richard Huelsenbeck and James Thrall Soby, who had recently published After Picasso, as possible speakers. Soby was specifically asked to open a discussion on MoMA's "Fantastic Art, Dada, Surrealism" show.[240] Thus, at the same moment that Schapiro's relationship with the CP began to disintegrate, he was seeking out opportunities to discuss modern art.

Though Schapiro's aim in the "Social Bases of Art" was to convince contemporary artists of the intimate links between art and the social conditions of its production, he began his speech by illustrating this relationship historically. In so doing, he demonstrated that art was not the result of racial or national determinants, but rather could be explained socially. He specifically stated that art produced in the same country at the same time would be more similar than art produced in the same country centuries apart.[241] While he did not elaborate this argument any further here, he did so in another essay – "Race, Nationality, and Art" – that was published in *Art Front* just one month after the First American Artist's Congress.[242] Schapiro's essay was strikingly similar in content to a speech of the same name given by the artist Lynd Ward at the American Artists' Congress.[243] Even though Schapiro's essay appeared after the American

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[240] James Thrall Soby, After Picasso (Hartford: Mitchell, 1935). Alfred H. Barr. Letter to Meyer Schapiro. 10 December 1936. 1.6 mf 2166:307. Alfred H. Barr, Jr. Papers, The Museum of Modern Art Archives, New York. In a subsequent letter, Barr reports that Soby had to decline and suggests Huelsenbeck. Alfred H. Barr. Letter to Meyer Schapiro. 21 December 1936. Alfred H. Barr, Jr. Papers, 1.6 mf 2166:303, The Museum of Modern Art Archives, New York.

[241] Schapiro, "Social Bases of Art," 119.

[242] In a brief announcement in the same issue of Art Front, the editors pointed out that the National Negro Congress opened in Chicago the same day as the American Artists' Congress opened in New York. They drew attention to the parallels between racism in the U.S. and in Germany. "When a national minority is made a national scapegoat, then we must turn apprehensively to Germany to see the ultimate logic of such persecution." Charmion von Wiegand, "American Artists' Congress," Art Front 2.3 (1936).

[243] Prior to the Congress, a report in Art Front indicated that "[Meyer Schapiro's paper on the social bases of art] will be followed by Y. Kuniyoshi with a paper on the subject of race, nationality and art." von Wiegand, "American Artists' Congress."Francine Tyler has stated that: "a version Meyer Schapiro had worked on had in February 1936 been presented at the American Artists' Congress Against War and Fascism by Lynd Ward." Tyler, "Artists Respond," 252.

Artists' Congress, his ideas were evidently the catalyst for Ward's speech as Ward recognized

his debt to Schapiro in a footnote in the published proceedings.[244]

Schapiro's "Race, Nationality, and Art" was his most in depth renunciation of an

understanding of artistic style and meaning as based on a racial or unchanging national character.

Directed primarily at artists practicing in the U.S., his essay has been described by Patricia Hills

as part of Schapiro's prescriptive art criticism.[245] At that time, Art Front was the official journal

of the Artists' Union, a national organization formed in order to help secure government funding

to relieve unemployment among artists.[246] Schapiro's essay directly contributed to an ongoing

debate occurring in its pages between supporters of an indigenous American art and advocates of

an art that recognized both its specific social-historical situation in the U.S. and its relationship to

broader international concerns.[247] These essays made clear Benton and Craven's contempt for

the foreigner. In his essay, Schapiro aligned himself with the editorial position of Art Front,

arguing against the regionalist painters and in favor of an international as opposed to an

"American" perspective. His position also coincided with the ideas expressed at the inception of

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[244] "The writer wishes to acknowledge his indebtedness to Mr. Meyer Schapiro for part of the material contained in this paper."Lynd Ward, "Race, Nationality, and Art," Artists Against War and Fascism, eds. Matthew Baigell and Julia Williams (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers UP, 1936) 38. Marquardt misattributes Ward's address at the American Artists' Congress to Schapiro. Marquardt, "America," 79; Marquardt, "Art on the Left," 236.

Though the two essays make the same argument, Schapiro's essay elaborates a number of the ideas that were only touched upon by Ward. Schapiro's essay is more fully developed and carefully composed.

[245] Hills, "1936," 31. See her essay for a careful description of Schapiro in 1936.

[246] Though *Art Front* had initially been politically unaligned, it became the official journal of the Artists' Union in April 1935. For more on Art Front and the Artists' Union, see Boris Gorelick, "Artists' Union Report," Artists Against War and Fascism (New Brunswick: Rutgers UP, 1986); Marquardt, "America," 77-81; Gerald Monroe, "Art Front," Studio International 188 (1974).

[247] Regionalist painters Benton and John Steuart Curry wrote in favor of a specifically American art while the abstractionist Davis and the social realist painter Jacob Burck argued against them. See Davis, "The New York American Scene in Art."; Thomas Hart Benton, "On the American Scene," Art Front 1.4 (1935); John Steuart Curry Curry, "A Letter from Curry," Art Front 1.4 (1935); Jacob Burck, "Benton Sees Red," Art Front 1.4 (1935); Thomas Hart Benton and et. al, "And So On Ad Infinitum," Art Front 1.5 (1935). The debate was spurred by the publication of "The U.S. Scene in Art," Time 24 December 1934. For more on this debate, see Marquardt, "America," 79; Marquardt, "Art on the Left," 235-236.

the American Artists' Congress, which emphasized the need for an artist's organization that would deal with cultural problems on a national level and that would cooperate with similar organizations on an international scale.[248] With the adoption of the Popular Front, Art Front began in 1936 to cooperate in a new capacity with the CP and Schapiro's essay was indicative of this new collaboration.[249]

Schapiro begins "Race, Nationality, and Art" by carefully dismantling the notions held by many artists "that national groups, like individual human beings have fairly fixed psychological qualities and that their art will consequently show distinct traits, which are unmistakable ingredients of a national or racial style." He continued, pointing out that: "Such distinctions in art have been a large element in the propaganda for war and fascism and in the pretense of peoples that they are eternally different from and superior to others and are therefore, justified in oppressing them."[250] Schapiro spends the bulk of the essay arguing that: "The conception of racial or national constants in art, considered scientifically, has three fatal weaknesses."[251] First, significant changes in artistic style coincide with great societal changes. Secondly, style cannot reflect the psychology of a race or nation, but is rather the product of the psychology of a particular class. And third, as anthropologists had demonstrated, the notion of a pure race is scientifically untenable. Throughout the remainder of the essay, Schapiro draws parallels between racial theories of fascism as developed in Nazi Germany and the views of the regionalists in the U.S.

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[248] Baigell and Williams, eds., Papers 48.

[249] For an extended discussion Art Front's involvement with the Popular Front, see Tyler, "Artists Respond," 239-83.

[250] Schapiro, "Race, Nationality and Art," 10.

[251] Schapiro, "Race, Nationality and Art," 10.

For Schapiro, the position of Craven and Benton was dangerously similar to that of the Nazis'. This parallel was based on the fact that Craven and Benton had attributed the downfall of American art to foreign, cosmopolitan elements. Schapiro was not alone in this view. For example, the American Artists' Congress had pointed out that " . . . discrimination against the foreign-born [and] against Negroes . . . are daily reminders of fascist growth in the United States."[252] Furthermore, as a Jewish immigrant who was quickly making a name in the New York art world, Schapiro would have been a prime target for Craven and Benton. Schapiro's criticisms specifically pinpoint Craven's emphasis on the foreign in polluting the national art:

> It is taught that the great national art can issue only from those who really belong to the nation, more specifically, to the Anglo-Saxon blood; that immigration of foreigners, mixture of peoples, dilutes the national strain and leads to inferior hybrid arts; that the influence of foreign arts is essentially pernicious; and that the weakness of American art today is largely the result of alien influences.[253]

Schapiro proceeded to emphasize that these views diverted the antagonism of "economically frustrated citizens" away from the dominant class, where they belonged, and towards "a foreign enemy."[254] Thus, Schapiro argued that the nationalistic views of the regionalists hindered the class struggle that was necessary for the transition to socialism.[255]

In "Race, Nationality and Art," Schapiro emphasized class as an alternative to attributing differences of style to racial or national qualities. In his earlier discussion of Benton and Craven

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[252] Baigell and Williams, eds., Papers 47.

[253] Schapiro, "Race, Nationality and Art," 10.

[254] Hemingway has recognized the significance of his political but not his personal investments, stating that: "The cosmopolitan view of culture which informs the article was equally central to his writing, and derived from the Marxist model of socialism as a world-historical movement." Hemingway, "1930s," 18.

[255] Schapiro also wrote a review of Benton's An Artist in America in 1938, in which he put forth similar criticisms as he had in "Race, Nationality and Art." See Meyer Schapiro, "Populist Realism," Rev. of An Artist in America, by Thomas Benton. Partisan Review 4.2 (1938). Schapiro criticized Benton, Mumford and Wright on the grounds of their nativist perspective.

in 1933, Schapiro had also expressed that art needed to emerge out of class struggle in order to be revolutionary, but his association of stylistic differences with class differences was new. In the "Race" essay, Schapiro explained that art does not "reflect the psychology of a whole people or nation; it reflects more often the psychology of a single class, the class for which such art is made, or the dominant class, which sets the tone of all artistic expression." He continued, expressing: "how crucial are the specific social and economic differences, how they obliterate the supposed racial and national constants."[256] Schapiro recognized that Marx's focus on class provided a means for understanding stylistic differences that did not resort to race or nation. Schapiro makes clear that his concern with the social bases of art is an alternative to the expression of fixed racial and national characters in art.

In Schapiro's opinion, the regionalists' understanding of "America" simplified the conception of the nation. Rather than understand the U.S. as being homogeneous, composed only of those of Anglo-Saxon blood, as the regionalists did, Schapiro cited the work of anthropologists who had demonstrated that the notion of a pure race is scientifically untenable. Instead of viewing the nation as being racially pure, Schapiro viewed it as a political entity that is heterogeneous in its composition and that shares a common language and culture. Later in the essay, he points out that "the art of France is: the art produced by people of varying ethnic composition within certain political boundaries, more or less shifting. The community of language and customs is constantly mistaken for a community of blood or physical characters."[257]

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[256] Schapiro, "Race, Nationality and Art," 11.

[257] Schapiro, "Race, Nationality and Art," 11-12.

In her talk, "Alain Locke, James A. Porter, and Meyer Schapiro: 1930's Debates on a 'Racial Art' in *Art Front*," given at the College Art Association Conference in February 2003, Patricia Hills correctly pointed out that Schapiro saw stylistic difference as related to cultural difference, not to differences of nation or race. I am grateful to Professor Hills for sharing her paper with me. Patricia Hills, "Alain Locke, James A. Porter, and Meyer Schapiro:

3.4. THE NEW VIENNA SCHOOL

> . . . American students have much to learn from this new and already influential school of German historians of art. We lack their taste for theoretical discussion, their concern with the formulation of adequate concepts even in the seemingly empirical work of pure description, their constant search for new formal aspects of art, and their readiness to absorb the findings of contemporary scientific philosophy and psychology. It is notorious how little American writing on art history has been touched by the progressive work of our psychologists, philosophers, and ethnologists.[258]
>
> <div align="right">Schapiro, 1936</div>

In 1936, the same year that Schapiro published "Race, Nationality, and Art," he also published a review of the second and last volume of the New Vienna School's journal, Kulturwissenschaftliche Forschungen, in the Art Bulletin.[259] The New Vienna School formed in the late 1920s and early 30s in Vienna around two young art historians, Sedlmayr and Pächt. In his review, Schapiro was critical of the reliance of some members of the group on racial and national constants to explain style. More broadly speaking, he was disturbed by the group's lack of historical grounding and its reliance on the unverifiable. According to Schapiro:

> The authors often tend to isolate forms from the historical conditions of their development, to propel them by mythical, racial-psychological constants, or to give them an independent self-evolving career. Entities like race, spirit, will and idea are substituted in an animistic manner for a real analysis of historical factors.[260]

1930s Debates on a 'Racial Art' in Art Front," College Art Association Conference (New York: 2003), vol. By substituting culture for race, Schapiro participated in a discursive maneuver common to the field of anthropology in the postwar years. His engagement with anthropological theory grew as he continued to search for ways to address historical meaning without recourse to traditional associations of style with racial and national identity. I return to his interests in the anthropological notion of culture in chapter four.

[258] Schapiro, "New Viennese School," 462.

[259] Only two issues of the journal ever appeared.

[260] Schapiro, "New Viennese School," 459.

He criticized the "looseness" of their approach and its lack of "scientific rigor."[261]

Yet Schapiro's relationship with the art historical methods of the New Vienna School was more complex than is evident from my initial description. Though Schapiro rejected their findings on racial and national constants in art as unscientific, he applauded their innovative application of new scientific findings from other disciplines such as philosophy, psychology and anthropology, to the study of art history, as the epigraph to this section makes clear. Schapiro's review summarized the work of the New Vienna School in order to make their ideas available to a non-German speaking audience, as he stated that: "Despite these defects, American students have much to learn from this new and already influential school of German historians of art."[262] Yet Schapiro was also aware of Sedlmayr's associations with National Socialism, which had driven a wedge between Sedlmayr and Pächt in 1934, and was careful to disassociate himself from the group's racist tendencies.[263]

Schapiro's interest in their method is further evident by the fact that he initiated a collegial dialogue with Pächt.[264] In late 1934, over a year prior to the publication of his review in early 1936, Schapiro expressed interest in discussing the issue of national constants in art with

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[261] Schapiro, "New Viennese School," 459.

[262] Schapiro, "New Viennese School," 462. It is curious that Schapiro uses the term "German" to describe these Viennese art historians.

[263] In a letter to Schapiro from February 1935, Pächt explained that there was no volume 3 of Kunstwissenschaftliche Forschungen because when he had found out a year earlier that Sedlmayr was a National Socialist, he had told Sedlmayr that he could no longer collaborate with him. "vor mehr als Jahresfrist, als ich die politische Gesinnung Sedlmayrs kennengelernt habe, habe ich ihm erlkärt, dass ich mit ihm nicht mehr zusammenarbeiten könne. Und diese Zussamenarbeit war doch das Fundament der Kw. Forschungen." Otto Pächt. Letter to Schapiro. 23 February 1935. Personal Collection of J. J. G. Alexander. Photocopies given by Meyer Schapiro to Alexander and access provided by him. Cited hereafter as Personal Collection of J.J. G. Alexander.

[264] As I have not seen Schapiro's letters to Pächt, I have based my references to the content of Schapiro's letters on Pächt's responses.

Pächt to the art historian Bruno Fürst, a friend of Pächt's.[265] Fürst was one of the editors of Kritische Berichte zur kunstgeschichtlichen Literatur, the journal in which Schapiro had published his review of Baltrusaitis's Stylistique Ornamentale in 1932. Pächt responded to Schapiro's inquiry in a letter dated October 4, 1934, attempting to convince Schapiro that the use of racial and national constants need not lead to a "Nazi attitude."[266] Pächt began his letter recognizing that the political climate made it all the more critical that he not be misunderstood.[267] Though Hitler's forces did not invade Austria until 1938, the Austro-fascist regime came to power in 1934. As a Jewish intellectual living under a fascist regime that discriminated against Jews, Pächt's defense of the idea of national constants in art seemed insupportable to Schapiro. Before Pächt was able to complete his first letter to Schapiro, Sedlmayr delivered him a long letter from Schapiro who, along with his questions regarding national constants, must have expressed his concern regarding Pächt's situation in Vienna.[268] In response, Pächt concluded his letter by summarizing the state of his career. He said that though he had received a position as a lecturer in Heidelberg just before Hitler came to power, he never gave a single lecture. Now anti-Semitism had made it impossible for him to find employment.[269]

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[265] Pächt begins his letter: "Dr Fürst hat mir Ihren Wunsch übermittelt, meine Ansichten über bestimmte wissenschaftliche Probleme näher kennen zu lernen." Otto Pächt. Letter to Meyer Schapiro. 4 October 1934. Personal Collection of J. J. G. Alexander.

[266] Otto Pächt. Letter to Schapiro. 4 October 1934. Personal Collection of J. J. G. Alexander.

[267] Pächt wrote: "Ihrer Aufforderung komme ich um so lieber nach, als es einem in der heutigen Zeit doppelt daran gelegen sein muss, von allerhand pseudowissenschaftlichen und pseudogeistigen Lehreninfizieren zu lassen, nicht missvertanden zu werden." Otto Pächt. Letter to Schapiro. 4 October 1934. Personal Collection of J. J. G. Alexander

[268] There is a break in Pächt's letter towards the end, in which he states that before he was able to send this letter, Sedlmayr had given him Schapiro's letter.

[269] Pächt wrote: "Seit meiner Rückkehr aus Heidelberg, wo ich noch knapp vor der Hitlerei die Dozentur bekommen haben, ohne dass es zu einer Antrittsvorlesung mehr gekommen wäre, habe ich wieder ganz für mich gearbeitet (Spätantike und Byzanz), da jede Bewerbung um eine Stelle im Inland bei dem derzeit hier herrschenden klerikalen, verschärft antisemitischen Kurs völlig aussichtslos gewesen wäre." Pächt to Schapiro, 4 October 1934, Personal Collection of J. J. G. Alexander.

Pächt did not understand his argument to be supportive of either National Socialism or anti-Semitism. In fact, he tried to convince Schapiro that the use of national constants in art history "can be a radical critique of the current nationalism as well as a critique of conservatism."[270] He began his first letter to Schapiro with a lengthy definition of national constants in art history.

> This constant factor is not something that could be defined by positing unchanging, regular or only often repeated forms. It is also not enough to describe this constant factor as a specific attitude from which the attitude of the respective style of the times is determined or as a certain way to see or imagine. To the term of constant factor always belongs a constant that is on the object side of the formation. Of course, as already said, not outwardly constant. Rather one must imagine that it is a kind of common ideal that the artists have in vague forms in their minds. This ideal more or less consciously guides the formation process. The always-new work appears in the incessant exchange of ideas. But it is basically always the same and it appears as something else (always being filled with new content) because as it is true for every ideal, it is only approximated in the individual concrete formation so that an unfulfilled demand always remains and that gives the impetus for further development.[271]

Then, in his attempt to explain how his understanding of national constants in style could run counter to a fascist understanding of national style, he emphasized that artists need not be

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[270] Pächt to Schapiro, 4 October 1934, Personal Collection of J. J. G. Alexander.

[271] Pächt wrote: "Dieser stetige Faktor ist nicht etwas, was sich etwa durch Angabe bestimter gleichbleibender, regelmässig oder nur häufig wiederkehrender Formen definieren liesse. Es genügt auch nicht, den stetigen Faktor als die spezifische Enstellung zu kennzeichnen, von der aus die Haltung dem jeweiligen Zeitstil gegenüber bestimmt wird, oder als seine bestimmte Art zu sehen, eine bestimmte Vorstellungsweise. In den Begriff des stetigen Faktors gehört noch eine Konstate auf der Objektseite der Gestaltung. Selbstverständlich, wie schon gesagt, nicht etwas äusserlich Gleichbleibendes. Man muss sich vielmehr vorstellen, dass es eine Art gemeinsamen Ideals ist, das den Künstlern in vagen Formen vorschwebt, den Gestaltungsprozess mehr oder weniger bewusst leitet, dabei in dem unaufhörlichen Wechsel der Auffassungen als ein immer neues den Schaffenden erscheint, im Grunde aber immer dasselbe ist und nur deshalb als ein immer anderes erscheinen muss (mit immer neuen Inhalterfüllt wird), weil es wie jedes Ideal in einer einzelnen Gestaltung nur annäherungsweise konkretisiert wird, so dass immer eine unerfüllte Forderung zurückbleibt, die die Entwicklung weitertreibt." Otto Pächt. Letter to Meyer Schapiro. 4 October 1934. Personal Collection of J.J.G. Alexander.

ethnically related in order to belong to a specific line of art historical development.[272] Pächt argued that one's aesthetic preferences were determined from birth, but were not necessarily tied to ethnicity. In so arguing, he specifically countered the Nazis' reform regarding the attainment of German nationality by emphasizing that one's biological parents would not determine one's aesthetic. Prior to Nazi rule, an individual gained German citizenship by being born within the nation's borders. Hitler's government changed this process; being born German required that both your parents be German.

Schapiro remained unconvinced by Pächt's vindication, replying that: " . . . your account of the constants is largely hypothetical, not empirical or scientific."[273] In his following letter, Pächt expressed his sadness that the two could not come to a common understanding.[274] Schapiro had posed the social bases of art as a counterpoint to national constants, but Pächt discounted this point as a valid understanding of the creative process, stating that: "only one who is caught in the prejudice of a materialistic view of history could think that such studies would promise insight and understanding in the essentially creative forces."[275]

Schapiro sent Pächt an offprint of his review of <u>Kulturwissenschaftliche Forschungen</u> in 1936 and Pächt responded that he knew that Schapiro did not share the same views regarding

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[272] "The task of <u>Kunstwissenschaft</u> is therefore primarily to uncover the origin of the aesthetic and not the empirical personality. The descent of the empirical personality does not irrevocably determine the aesthetic personality. One cannot choose one's biological parents nor one's artistic leanings. With the birth of the aesthetic person, a certain freedom of choice already prevails." Pächt wrote: "Aufgabe der Kunstwissenschaft ist es daher in erster Linie, die Herkunft der ästhetischen, nicht der empirischen Persönlichkeit aufzudecken. Mit der Abstammung der letzteren ist der Charakter der ersteren noch nicht unwiderruflich festgelegt. Man kann sich zwar nicht seine leiblichen, wohl aber seine künstlerischen Ahnen aussuchen. Bei der Geburt der ästhetischen Person herrscht bereits eine gewisse Wahl freiheit." Otto Pächt. Letter to Meyer Schapiro. 4 October 1934. Personal Collection of J.J.G. Alexander.

[273] Pächt cited from Schapiro's letter. Pächt continued by responding that hypotheses are a part of science and empiricism. Otto Pächt. Letter to Schapiro. 28 December 1934. Personal Collection of J.J.G. Alexander.

[274] Near the beginning of his following letter, Pächt expressed that: "Was mich an Ihrem Brief traurig gemacht hat, waren weit weniger die geringen Aussichten auf eine Stellung in U.S.A. als der Umstand, dass mir die von uns beiden ersehnte Verständigung über das strittige Problem der nationalen Konstanten nicht weitergekommen zu sein schien." Otto Pächt. Letter to Schapiro. 28 December 1934. Personal Collection of J.J.G. Alexander.

[275] Otto Pächt. Letter to Meyer Schapiro. 28 December 1934. Personal Collection of J. J.G. Alexander.

national constants.[276] "With respect to your essay on the problem of constants I was already aware of your views based on our letters and I believe that you know my views too so that I don't have anything new to say about that."[277] By this point, Pächt had resigned himself to disagreement on the concept of national constants.[278]

While they could not resolve their differences of opinion on the existence of fixed racial and national characters, their later correspondence indicates that the two were able to agree on many of the merits of the New Vienna School's approach to art. In fact, Schapiro's scholarship of the late 1930s shares more with the work of the New Viennese School than has previously been claimed. Schapiro's 1939 essay "The Sculptures of Souillac" shares many characteristics with the methodology of *Strukturanalyse* as developed by Sedlmayr in his 1931 manifesto, which Schapiro had critiqued in his 1936 review.[279] In a letter dated June 3, 1939, Pächt praised Schapiro's essay for being "the first 'Strukturanalyse' of an [sic] high medieval work of art."[280]

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[276] Otto Pächt. Letter to Meyer Schapiro. 15 June 1936. Personal Collection of J.J.G. Alexander.

[277] Otto Pächt. Letter to Meyer Schapiro. 15 June 1936, Personal Collection of J. J.G. Alexander.

[278] Pächt had conceded in his third letter to Schapiro from 23 February 1935 that they might be able to find common ground around Riegl's concept of the *Kunstwollen*. Pächt stated: "The differences in our points of views appear also to me not that significant that one would have to give up hope of an agreement on the main points. I especially do not see a contradiction between a view that puts the study of the *Kunstwollen* into the center and the demand of considering social factors of the concrete environmental conditions and the individual psychological situations. For me all this is contained in the *Kunstwollen*, and in fact much more concrete than when one wanted to reconstruct the determining forces from the individual biographical or cultural historical data." Pächt had written: "Die Differenzen unserer Standpunkte scheinen auch mir nicht so bedeutend, dass man die Hoffnung auf eine Verständigung in wesentlichen Punkten aufgeben müsste. Vor allem sehe ich keinen kontradiktorischen Gegensatz zwischen einer Betrachtungsart, die die Erforschung des Kunstwollens in den Mittelpunkt rückt, und der Forderung nach Mitberücksichtigung der sozialen Faktoren, der konkreten Umweltsbedingungen und der individuellen psychischen Situation. Für mich ist dies alles in dem Kunstwollen mitenthalten und zwar viel konkreter enthalten, als wenn man aus einzelnen biographischen und kulturhistorischen Daten die bewegenden und bestimmenden Kräfte rekonstruieren wollte." Otto Pächt. Letter to Meyer Schapiro. 23 February 1935. Personal Collection of J.J.G. Alexander. Without Schapiro's response to Pächt's suggestion, it is impossible to determine Schapiro's position.

[279] I consider the parallels between Schapiro's approach in "The Sculptures of Souillac" and Sedlmayr's *Strukturanalyse* in depth in chapter four.

[280] Otto Pächt. Letter to Meyer Schapiro. 3 June 1939. Personal Collection of J.J.G. Alexander. Beginning with this letter, Pächt wrote to Schapiro in English.

Even with his misgivings, Schapiro was able to salvage critical elements of their methodology, which he was able to attempt to apply on his own terms.

3.5.   THE NATURE OF SOCIALIST ART

> . . . [modern German academic writing on art] is most painstaking and logical in its classifications, most remote from science in its explanations by race, personality, and spirit.[281]
>
> <div align="right">Schapiro, 1937</div>

As the decade progressed, Schapiro continued to explore possible understandings of national style, for example in his 1937 review of the second volume of Alfred Stange's <u>Deutsche Malerei der Gotik</u>. Here he explicitly argued that Stange's argument was an attempt to reclaim for Germany an art that Czech nationalists had claimed for Czechoslovakia.[282] According to Schapiro, Stange argued in favor of the German character of 14th century Bohemian art by asserting that the "German race" was responsible for this art. Even though Stange had recognized that the art of German regions had had no visible influence on Bohemian art, he still argued that the art was German on the basis of language; Bohemian artists spoke German and had German names. Schapiro did not find this argument convincing and pointed to the tendency for German scholarship to be guided by nationalist and racist ideologies. In 1935, Schapiro had stated that in order to argue that a work of art was of a particular nation would necessitate demonstrating that it exhibited characteristics of a body of works from a particular region at a certain point in

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[281] Meyer Schapiro, Rev. of <u>Deutsche Malerei der Gotik,</u> vol. 2, by Alfred Stange. <u>Germanic Review</u> 12.2 (1937): 144.

[282] Schapiro, "Rev. of <u>Deutsche Malerei,</u> vol. 2," 144.

time.[283] In 1934, Schapiro had criticized Pächt for not defining temporal and geographical boundaries for his national constants.[284] The art produced by German-speaking artists with German names could not be characterized as German, unless it shared stylistic features with the art produced in the region defined as Germany at that time.[285] In the mid-30s, Schapiro believed that art needed to be based in German culture in order to be identified as German. Significantly, Schapiro did not give up the notion of identifying different national styles; rather, he struggled over the years with how those styles were defined. The social bases of art, here described as culture limited within a specific geographic boundary, continued to serve Schapiro as a way of understanding its meaning.

Following the reports of repression and the Moscow Show Trials that began to emerge from the Soviet Union in 1936, Schapiro distanced himself even further from the Stalinist-led CP, aligning himself more closely with the Trotskyists.[286] When the crimes of the Soviet leader Josef Stalin became obvious in the U.S., many intellectuals turned anti-Stalinist. Marxist Quarterly, a non-partisan leftist journal dedicated to socialist thought of which Schapiro was a founding editor, emerged in response.[287] Furthermore, as national antagonism increased on the

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[283] Schapiro had stated that: "But to say that a work is Syrian is to imply not only that it exists in Syria or was created by artists of Syrian nationality, but that it exhibits the characteristics or qualities of a body of works localized in Syria at a certain period." Schapiro, "Rev. of Early Muslim Architecture," 113.

[284] In his reply to Schapiro, Pächt stated: "Auch den Vorwurf, es fehle die Angabe der zeitlichen und geographischen Grenzen meiner Konstaten, glaube ich nicht verdient zu haben." Otto Pächt. Letter to Schapiro. 28 December 1934. Personal Collection of J.J.G. Alexander.

[285] Perhaps the slipperiest part of Schapiro's discussion of German art was in his definition of what was Germany. In "Race, Nationality and Art," Schapiro had defined the nation as a political entity with shifting borders that was composed of a heterogeneous population and that shared a common language and culture.

[286] The first of the Show Trials began in August 1936. According to Hemingway, Schapiro's final break with the CP occurred when he associated himself with the American Committee for the Defense of Leon Trotsky. In a letter to Aline Louchheim of 13 March 1937, Schapiro expressed his concerns with the Trials as well as the difficulties that he had suffered in aligning himself with the Trotskyists, though not one himself: "I myself am not a Trotskyist, and in joining this committee have had to suffer abuse and ill-will from people who were formerly dear friends. But in this matter, my conscience is clear; if I said nothing about the trials, the burden would be much heavier to bear." As quoted in: Hemingway, "1930s," 20.

[287] See Schapiro's comments on the subject. Thompson, "Vermont," 10.

world stage, art was increasingly employed to support conceptions of racial and national essentialism.[288] From his independent Marxist point of view, Schapiro continued to understand style as changing in conjunction with social historical circumstances.

For example, in "The Nature of Abstract Art," Schapiro again countered the notion of a pure art developing in isolation from the world around it.[289] Published in 1937 in the first issue of the Marxist Quarterly, this essay was a direct response to Barr's Cubism and Modern Art, which had been published as the guide and exhibition catalogue of the MoMA exhibition held in the spring of 1936.[290] In "The Nature of Abstract Art," Schapiro maintained certain arguments that he had made in the "Social Bases of Art" in 1936. For example, he insisted in both that it was necessary for an artist to understand the social bases of art in order to create a revolutionary art.[291] Also, he continued to contrast the passive nature of modern art's subject matter with the active nature of its formal innovations.[292] In comparing these two essays, some scholars have

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[288] Most notable in this regard was the Nazis' Entartete Kunst Austellung (Degenerate Art Exhibition), which opened in Munich on 19 July 1937, and the first annual Große Deutsche Kunstaustellung (Great German Art Exhibition), which opened in Munich 18 July 1937. For more on the Nazi's cultural policies that linked art to race and nationality see Peter Adam, Art of the Third Reich (New York: Abrams, 1992); Eric Michaud, The Cult of Art in Nazi Germany, trans. Janet Lloyd, Cultural Memory in the Present, eds. Mieke Bal and Hent de Vries (Stanford: Stanford UP, 2004); Jonathan Petropoulos, Art as Politics in the Third Reich (Chapel Hill: U of North Carolina P, 1996).

[289] Schapiro, "Nature of Abstract Art."

According to Schapiro, he was supposed to submit an essay on "Fine Art" for a book of essays on Marxist thinking in America edited by Granville Hicks that had been planned in the early 1930s, but that never happened due to the Moscow Show Trials. Instead, Schapiro and some others including Sidney Hook decided to start the Marxist Quarterly. Though Schapiro responded affirmatively to the question: "So your article for the Marxist Quarterly on '"The Nature of Abstract Art' partly grew out of that book project?" - he could not possibly have written his review of Barr's book until it was published in 1936. Thompson, "Vermont," 10.

[290] Alfred H. Barr, Cubism and Abstract Art (New York: MoMA, 1936).

[291] Schapiro's discussion of the art of the Impressionists reveals this continued belief. He states: "But since the artists did not know the underlying economic and social causes of their own disorder and moral insecurity, they could envisage new stabilizing forms only as quasi-religious beliefs or as a revival of some primitive or highly ordered traditional society with organs for a collective spiritual life." Schapiro, "Nature of Abstract Art," 193.

[292] Regarding the passive nature of the subject matter Schapiro stated in "The Nature of Abstract Art," that "[The artists] also reflect in their very choice of subjects and in the new esthetic devices the conception of art as solely a field of individual enjoyment, without reference to ideas and motives, and they presuppose the cultivation of these pleasures as the highest field of freedom for an enlightened bourgeois detached from the official beliefs of his class."

concluded that they illustrate a shift in Schapiro's views on the revolutionary nature of modern art, which corresponded with his shifting political affiliations.[293] Those subtle differences that do exist can be attributed to different audiences and topics and not to any great change in his views of modern art, at least between 1936 and 1937.[294] Recall also that in 1935 Schapiro had formed a discussion group with Barr's support that met at MoMA and focused on modern, especially contemporary, art. Though Schapiro's interest in modern art is evident as early as his 1928 contribution on contemporary art to Columbia's course book for Introduction to Contemporary Civilization in the West, he became increasingly vocal in his support of modern art once the CP began advocating socialist realism and his relationship with the CP disintegrated.[295] In the "Social Bases of Art," Schapiro addressed contemporary artists and their current artistic practice, and therefore, he focused on the absence of a social content in modern art. He did not, as I have already argued, consider modern art to be unsuitable for a socialist society. In his response to Barr's book, Schapiro addressed modern art's role in the history of art, and therefore, the necessity of a revolutionary art was absent from his discussion.[296]

While Schapiro did not discuss revolutionary art in "The Nature of Abstract Art," he did so in another essay – "Arts Under Socialism" – that he wrote the same year. Here, he made clear

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Schapiro, "Nature of Abstract Art," 192. On the active nature of abstract art, Schapiro stated: "To say then that abstract painting is simply a reaction against the exhausted imitation of nature, or that it is the discovery of an absolute or pure field of form is to overlook the positive character of the art, its underlying energies and sources of movement." Schapiro, "Nature of Abstract Art," 201-202.

[293] See for example, Guilbaut, "The New Adventures of the Avant-Garde in America: Greenberg, Pollock, or from Trotskyism to the New Liberalism of the "Vital Center"," 63-64; Guilbaut, New York 24-26; Crow, "Modernism," 226-27

[294] An obvious refinement of Schapiro's position is evident from his 1933 review of the JRC's exhibition, where he refrained from any obvious deviation from the Kharkov directive to both his "Social Bases of Art" (1936) and his "The Nature of Abstract Art" (1937) where he voices his support of modern art.

[295] Meyer Schapiro, "Art in the Contemporary World," Introduction to Contemporary Civilization in the West, eds. John J. Coss, John Fennelly, Jopseph B. McGoldrick and Irving W. Raymond (New York: Columbia UP, 1928).

[296] Hemingway has also argued similarly that the perceived differences in these two articles are attributable to their differing contexts and functions Hemingway, "1930s," 20-21.

his conception of what art under socialism would be: "The socialists who anticipate a new type of art under socialism are mistaken; there will be either a persistence of the most radical modern style or a gradual disappearance of painting and architecture."[297] The latter conclusion follows the ideas of Marx and Engels in The German Ideology, where they contend that in a communist society artistic talent would not emerge solely in certain individuals or artists, as this was a result of the division of labor. In contrast, they argued that: "In a communist society there are no painters but at most people who engage in painting among other activities."[298] On the other hand, Schapiro's conclusion that "the most radical modern style" of art might continue under socialism emphasizes his increasingly vocal support of modern art.

Just as Schapiro argued in his 1933 critique of Baltrusaitis's formalism, he objected in 1937 to Barr's formal determinism and his use of a theory of exhaustion and reaction. Schapiro argued that stylistic change was not inherent in the forms, but rather that it occurred in tandem with social change. Barr had argued that each new style developed as a reaction to the previous style. Schapiro was critical of an inherent impetus for stylistic change and saw Barr's binary patterns as artificial. If styles changed in reaction to the previous style, one might wonder what kept them on a unified path of development in these theories. Schapiro stated that:

> . . . a final goal, an unexplained but inevitable trend, a destiny rooted in the race or the spirit of the culture or the inherent nature of art, has to be smuggled in to explain the large unity of a development that embraces so many reacting generations. The immanent purpose steers the reaction when an art seems to veer off the main path because of an overweighted or foreign element.[299]

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[297] Schapiro, "Arts Under Socialism," 132.

[298] Karl Marx and Frederick Engels, The German Ideology: Part One with Selections from Parts Two and Three and Supplementary Texts, ed. C. J. Arthur (New York: International, 1986). For more on The German Ideology see C. J. Arthur, "Introduction," The German Ideology: Part One with Selections from Parts Two and Three and Supplementary Texts, ed. C. J. Arthur (New York: International, 1986).

[299] Schapiro, "Nature of Abstract Art," 189.

He countered this view directly with a social-historical understanding of stylistic change: "new values and new ways of seeing," which develop under changing historical conditions, compelled changes in style not just boredom with a previous style.[300]

In "Social Realism and Revolutionary Art," an essay written in 1938, Schapiro continued to argue for the development of a non-partisan socialist art, stating that: "The conception of an art expressing the ideas and experiences of the revolutionary movement remains a valid one."[301] In this essay, Schapiro described the evolution of revolutionary painting in the West from Jacques-Louis David to the present, pointing out again the passive nature of the subject matter of modern artists. He also described Russian art from just prior to the Russian Revolution to the contemporary moment. He made his disdain for socialist realism clear, declaring that: "[It] is neither revolutionary nor socialist nor realist."[302] He further emphasized that the artistic doctrine of the Soviet Union ran counter to the Marxist view of socialist freedom and the ideals of democracy upheld by a proletarian revolution.[303] He harshly criticized those artists outside of the Soviet Union who had been inspired by socialist realism in developing a so-called revolutionary art – the social realists.[304] Instead, he praised Pablo Picasso and Joan Miró's artistic responses to the Spanish uprising and Max Beckmann's response to fascism.[305] Unlike his earlier work of 1933, Schapiro freely proclaims his support of the revolutionary nature of artistic modernism.

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[300] Schapiro, "Nature of Abstract Art," 189-90.

[301] Meyer Schapiro, "Social Realism and Revolutionary Art," Worldview in Painting - Art and Society (New York: Braziller, 1999) 211.

[302] Schapiro, "Social Realism and Revolutionary Art," 225.

[303] Schapiro, "Social Realism and Revolutionary Art," 226.

[304] Schapiro, "Social Realism and Revolutionary Art," 221. Here he also points out that: "It is only in countries like the United States, which are themselves backward in painting, that this Russian art enjoys any prestige."

[305] Schapiro, "Social Realism and Revolutionary Art," 226.

3.6. "FROM MOZARABIC TO ROMANESQUE IN SILOS"

> . . . an art historian who is a Marxist, has at once a whole series of problems and responsibilities which tie his work & teaching to an every day world and to a future which he can anticipate with enthusiasm.[306]

> Schapiro, 18 August 1936

In "From Mozarabic to Romanesque in Silos," Schapiro attempted to explain the coexistence of two distinct and opposing styles, Mozarabic and Romanesque, at the monastery at Santo Domingo de Silos in Castile around 1100 by describing them in relation to the changing social and economic situation in the local region at this time. Common in northwest Spain until the 11th century, the Mozarabic style is characterized by its static forms, flattened space, and use of brilliant colors, especially red, orange and yellow. In contrast to the Mozarabic style, the Romanesque, while still rather schematized, is more energetic in its depiction of movement and exhibits a relatively greater interest in what Schapiro terms "naturalism."[307] Schapiro contended that the persistence of Mozarabic qualities within an emerging Romanesque style in Silos could be attributed to the fact that they were created just as feudalism was beginning to give way to capitalism.

While Schapiro chose to uphold the stylistic integrity of Mozarabic in this essay, current scholarly opinion held otherwise. In 1934, for example, Morey had published an introductory essay to an exhibition catalogue of illuminated manuscripts from the Pierpont Morgan Library in which he described Mozarabic as a "disintegrated style."[308] In 1937, Schapiro reviewed Morey's

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[306] Hills, "1936," 35.

[307] Schapiro, "Silos," 51.

[308] Charles Rufus Morey, "Introduction," The Pierpont Morgan Library Exhibition of Illuminated Manuscripts held at the New York Public Library (New York: Pierpont Morgan Library, 1934) iii. While the exhibition that this

essay, arguing that "[Morey's broad views on the history of mediaeval art] are dominated largely by naturalistic standards which close his eyes to Coptic and Mozarabic art, and by ethnic theories which lead him to interpret the history of art in terms of racial psychological traits and geographical polarities."[309] Schapiro correctly pointed out that for Morey, deviations from a naturalistic or classical style could either be understood as "cultural decay" or the result of the invasion of foreign "races" whose inherent temperaments adversely affected the traditional.[310] Nowhere in his straightforward art history does Schapiro more clearly or thoroughly articulate his disdain for theories of style based on inherent racial character. In addition, his criticisms of Morey's treatment of the Mozarabic style presage his 1939 essay, which could be read as an extended diatribe against the contemporary prejudice for naturalism.

"From Mozarabic to Romanesque in Silos" is a demonstration piece in which Schapiro attempted to avoid all of the methodological "weaknesses" that he had described in his publications throughout the 1930s.[311] In his reviews, Schapiro repeatedly argued against methodological tendencies that either relied on racial psychological traits to explain stylistic change or made too loose of an association between artistic and social change. His research was anything but loose as the length and scholarly depth of his footnotes attest. He did not rely on racial-psychological traits or any other vague theories, but instead turned to the advances of the

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catalogue accompanied occurred in 1934, Morey's introduction was a "'reprinting with additions and corrections of two articles which the writer contributed to <u>The Arts</u>, of April and June, 1925." Morey, "Introduction," xxii.

[309] Meyer Schapiro, Rev. of <u>The Pierpont Morgan Library Exhibition of Illuminated Manuscripts,</u> by Charles Rufus Morey. <u>Art Bulletin</u> 19.1 (1937): 126. Schapiro was also critical of those who view medieval and modern art as inferior, childish or simply experimental. See for example, Meyer Schapiro, "Behind Christian Art," <u>New York Herald Tribune Books</u> 6 April 1930.

[310] Schapiro, "Rev. of *Morgan*," 127.

[311] O. K. Werckmeister has referred to FMRS as a "demonstration piece" of a Marxist art history such as was outlined in the editorial statement to the first issue of <u>Marxist Quarterly</u>. See Werckmeister, "Jugglers in a Monastery," 60. Williams similarly called it a "showpiece of a Marxist approach." Williams, "Silos," 442.

social sciences and philosophy. He even described Romanesque as an international style.[312]

More specifically, Schapiro applied many of the theoretical arguments that he had developed in both his political writings and in his art historical reviews over the course of the decade in this one essay.

For example, a discussion of one of the miniatures at Silos illustrates Schapiro's emphasis on the dual significance of form and content in understanding stylistic change. Here he describes the meaning of both the form and the subject matter of a frontispiece illumination of Hell from the Silos Beatus manuscript in great detail. Though the Beatus manuscript as a product of the monks is more Mozarabic in character, Schapiro selects the image of Hell as it stands out from the other illuminations because of its more distinctly Romanesque character. Through a careful analysis of its formal elements, Schapiro contrasts those distinctly Romanesque elements from the Mozarabic elements. While largely Romanesque in the energy, movement, action, dynamism and instability of its formal elements, Schapiro also pointed to a "Mozarabic substratum."[313] For example, the compactness of the depiction of the lovers is typically Mozarabic. Yet the frontispiece is predominantly Romanesque in character. Schapiro contrasts the passive Mozarabic figure clothed in a "mosaic of arbitrary hues" with the active Romanesque figure depicted in the frontispiece.[314] The emerging significance of secular values in Silos is apparent in the Romanesque style. Schapiro explains that in the Romanesque period:

> . . . secular interests acquire an independent value and begin to modify the extreme spiritualistic views of the early Middle Ages. Then the human figure, no longer a vessel of color but more individualized, flexible and active within the persistently religious framework, becomes increasingly the vehicle of expression and acquires, for the first time in Christian art, a monumental relief

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[312] Schapiro, "Silos," 66.

[313] Schapiro, "Silos," 32.

[314] Schapiro, "Silos," 35.

form; the environment also is more concrete, and new qualities of movement, line, modeling, and tonal relations replace the older static forms and ungraded intensity of color in an abstractly stratified space.[315]

Schapiro thus sees the formal shift towards the naturalism of the Romanesque style as coinciding with the societal shift towards capitalism. While Schapiro carefully considered the formal differences between Mozarabic and Romanesque styles, he argued that the changes in subject matter more readily demonstrated the sources for a change in style.

For Schapiro, the subject matter of the image of Hell indicates the increasing power of secular views that coincided with the emergence of a Romanesque style. To illustrate, he points to the emphasis placed on the vices of Avarice and Unchastity in the Silos illumination. The vices are represented "directly and concretely" and not through allegory.[316] Schapiro argued that: "These basic vices [of Avarice and Unchastity] had always existed for the Christian world, but not until the Romanesque period did they become the main subjects of painted and sculptured moral homilies. In singling them out for a special criticism, the church attacked the twin sources of worldliness and secular independence."[317] At the very moment that these vices, which emphasized "immediate pleasures and gains," acquired a new significance, their representation became increasingly naturalistic.[318] Just as Schapiro had urged the artists at the American Artists' Congress in 1936 to develop an artistic style that recognized the action of social life in both its form and content, he pointed out that with the adoption of a Romanesque style, "The

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[315] Schapiro, "Silos," 36.

[316] Schapiro, "Silos," 36.

[317] Schapiro, "Silos," 37. Schapiro related Unchastity with a growing culture among higher feudal nobility, which "promoted an aristocratic, libertine culture." Avarice was the vice of the newly formed burgher class.

[318] Schapiro, "Silos," 37.

systematic picture of the invisible region of Hell . . . acquired the dynamic continuity and the explicit energies of situations of violence and torment in the familiar world."[319]

In "From Mozarabic to Romanesque in Silos," Schapiro attributed stylistic change to changing social and economic conditions. In response to Barr's history of modern art, Schapiro had argued that stylistic change corresponded with "new values and new ways of seeing."[320] That argument was applicable here as well. According to Schapiro, a Romanesque style emerged at Silos when "secular interests acquire an independent value and begin to modify the extreme spiritualistic views of the early middle ages [sic]."[321] The conflict between changing secular views and religious doctrine resulted in a changed religious art. Because of the increasing influence of secular interests and the burgher class, the church had to adopt forms of naturalistic representation in order to continue to support their traditional spiritualistic views.

> The Romanesque forms of church art embody naturalistic modes
> of seeing (and values of the new aristocracy) within the framework
> of the church's traditional spiritualistic views and symbolic
> presentation. The persistence of Mozarabic qualities in the early
> Romanesque art of Silos may be seen then not only as incidental to
> a recent cultural transition, but as a positive aspect of the expansive
> development of the church.[322]

The changing social and economic conditions of the Romanesque period required an art appropriate to those circumstances. In 1932, Schapiro had argued that the International Style of architecture was a "necessary part of a new society," and he had further argued in 1937 that modern abstraction in architecture would continue under socialism.[323] Similarly, Schapiro began the Silos article by pointing out that the local conditions in Silos "made this new art appropriate

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[319] Schapiro, "Silos," 37-38.

[320] Schapiro, "Nature of Abstract Art," 189-90.

[321] Schapiro, "Silos," 36.

[322] Schapiro, "Silos," 64.

[323] Schapiro, "The New Architecture."; Schapiro, "Arts Under Socialism."

and even necessary."[324] Religious life necessarily changed as well under these new economic and social conditions. In order to maintain the strength of their position in society, monasteries were increasingly drawn into the workings of the secular world.[325] Changes in both the form and content of the new art combined with social changes in a moment of great historical change.

3.7. CONCLUSION: "TOWARDS A FREE AND REVOLUTIONARY ART"

In The Nation in 1937, Schapiro published two fairly critical reviews of books that presented surrealism to an English-speaking audience. In January 1937, Schapiro published "Surrealist Field Day," a review of Julien Levy's anthology of surrealist art, objects and poetry.[326] Schapiro argued that the surrealists' artwork was not revolutionary because their subject matter did not directly engage the social bases of their art. Just as Schapiro had argued that the passive subject matter of the modern artist corresponded with the social passivity of the artist in "The Social Bases of Art," here Schapiro saw the surrealists' subject matter – "the hidden psychological roots of fantasy" – as being "independent of experience."[327] While the subject matter of the surrealists did not come out of the artist's world or studio, Schapiro argued that: "For the surrealists the subconscious is itself an artistic world, a studio within the psyche."[328] Furthermore, he was critical of the idea that their artwork was universal and timeless, pointing out that their so-called symbols of the subconscious were also historical objects and that different individuals would therefore respond to them in different ways. For example, Schapiro pointed

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[324] Schapiro, "Silos," 28.

[325] Schapiro, "Silos," 61.

[326] Meyer Schapiro, "Surrealist Field Day," The Nation 23 January 1937.

[327] Schapiro, "Surrealist Field Day," 102.

[328] Schapiro, "Surrealist Field Day," 102.

out that in some of surrealist artist Salvador Dali's work, bicycles and automobiles can be dated, and therefore, his work is not "timeless," but historically specific.

"Blue Like an Orange," Schapiro's review of Herbert Read's anthology of five surrealist essays, appeared in an issue of The Nation in September 1937. Here, Schapiro called for what he believed was a seemingly impossible rational explanation of the surrealist theory of art. His frustration stemmed from the fact that the surrealists identified their so-called "logic" and their "muddled, cabalistic" dialectical materialism with Marxism.[329] Furthermore, Schapiro was wary of any position that equated a particular style with a particular ideology. He doubted that all of the artists who the school claimed as surrealists were in fact Marxists and pointed out that there have been both fascist and communist surrealists, and one American surrealist had even written in 1929 that: "communism and fascism were virtually the same."[330]

Despite his criticisms Schapiro did perceive some revolutionary possibilities in the surrealists' work. In his review of Levy's book, he admitted that surrealism "avowedly reflects in the most vivid form the decay of society and prepares the spectator psychologically for the coming revolution."[331] However, he ends his essay with a call to the surrealists to address their work to their particular social historical moment. He conceded that while the surrealists had in fact "created some memorable spooks," their most recent work was becoming more aestheticized and less horrific than their earlier work. He expressed that this trend seemed to correlate to an

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[329] In an interview in 1991, Schapiro recalled how he had participated in a debate organized by André Breton at his home in New York regarding the term "dialectical materialism." In New York, Breton lived near by to Schapiro and the two became friends. According to Schapiro, he had told Breton that though dialectical materialism "had some merit" he believed that it "was being over-used in a dogmatic way." Breton was shocked. An argument ensued and Schapiro suggested that they have a debate. Breton selected Trotsky's former secretary Jean van Heijenoort and the Greek poet Nicolas Calas to defend the concept and Schapiro selected the philosopher Ernest Nagel and a British civil servant working in the information bureau in New York, A.J. Ayer, for his side. Schapiro recounted that: "[The debate] ended when van Heijenoort was unable to answer, and poor Nicolas Calas was left to himself. Afterward Breton made no allusion to the phrase in his writing anymore." Thompson, "Vermont," 10-11.

[330] Meyer Schapiro, "Blue Like an Orange," The Nation 25 September 1937: 323.

[331] Schapiro, "Surrealist Field Day," 102-03.

increasingly broader audience for their work, particularly that of the U.S. and England, where the economic situation had vastly improved since the Depression. "With the imminence of war and the actual outbreak of struggle in Spain . . . these objects appear abstract, trivial, and evasive as well as artistically petty."[332]

Not long after the publication of these two reviews, Schapiro's relationship with the surrealists changed. In May 1938, Surrealist leader André Breton visited the exiled revolutionary Leon Trotsky in Mexico.[333] (At the request of Trotsky's secretary, Jean van Heijenoort, Schapiro had sent Trotsky some of Breton's writings so that Trotsky could prepare for his meeting.)[334] Out of their meeting, came Breton and Trotsky's manifesto, "Towards a Free Revolutionary Art," in which they upheld the freedom to create art that comes out of the inner world of the artist as opposed to being imposed from the outer world.[335] In this regard, they condemned both Hitler and Stalin for eliminating the realm of liberty from artistic creation. Both in Stalin's Soviet Union and Hitler's Germany, artists were forced to adopt a representational style that depicted scenes that glorified the nation and its leaders. In contrast, Breton and Trotsky wished to uphold the possibility of a truly revolutionary art. They argued that:

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[332] Schapiro, "Surrealist Field Day," 103.

[333] For more on this famous meeting between Trotsky and Breton, see: Alain Dugrand, Trotsky in Mexico, trans. Stephen Romer (Manchester: Carcanet, 1992) 32-37; Robin Adèle Greeley, "For an Independent Revolutionary Art: Breton, Trotsky and Cárdenas's Mexico," Surrealism, Politics and Culture, eds. Raymond Spiteri and Donald LaCoss, Studies in European Cultural Transition (Aldershot, Hants: Ashgate, 2003); Mark Polizzotti, "When Breton Met Trotsky," Partisan Review 62.3 (1995); Gérard Roche, "Breton, Trotsky: une collaboration," Pleine Marge.3 (1986).

[334] Trotsky wrote to Schapiro on June 14, 1938: "In my eyes it is a sign that you belong to the camp of friends who as yet are not too numerous but who are, fortunately, increasing." Leon Trotsky. Letter to Meyer Schapiro, Trotsky Papers, T2. Trotsky to Schapiro, June 14, 1938. As cited in Werckmeister, "Jugglers in a Monastery," 62. Werckmeister has provided the most detailed information surrounding Schapiro's role in the meeting between Breton and Trotsky.

[335] This manifesto expressed a change in Trotsky's opinion from that which he expressed in Literature and Revolution (1924) regarding the potentially revolutionary nature of modern art. See Leon Trotsky, Literature and Revolution (Ann Arbor: U of Michigan P, 1971).

> We believe that the supreme task of art in our epoch is to take part actively and consciously in the preparation of the revolution. But the artist cannot serve the struggle for freedom unless he subjectively assimilates its social content, unless he feels in his very nerves its meaning and drama and freely seeks to give his own inner world incarnation in his art.[336]

Schapiro's support of Breton and Trotsky's description of revolutionary art is evident in both his signing of Partisan Review's U.S. version of the manifesto in 1938 and of the statement of the League for Cultural Freedom and Socialism in 1939.[337] His continued support of a truly revolutionary art was also evident in the Silos article.

In "From Mozarabic to Romanesque in Silos," Schapiro repeatedly emphasized the freedom of the independent artist working in the margins. For example, Schapiro described a second miniature of secular musicians or *jongleurs* that, like the Hell image discussed above, stood out from its more conservative context because of its more Romanesque character. Schapiro describes the illumination of the *jongleurs* as a secular intrusion into the religious framework of the Silos Beatus as "a free invention of an artist."[338] For Schapiro, the individual artist expresses his newly acquired freedom from the bonds of Christian feudalism in his artistic expression. He made explicit the parallel he was drawing between the role of the revolutionary artist in the 11th century and in the 20th century in his discussion of the inclusion of musicians in

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[336] André Breton and Leon Trotsky, "Manifesto: Towards a Free and Revolutionary Art," Partisan Review 6.1 (1938): 52. Though the publication listed Breton and Diego Rivera as its authors, Breton and Trotsky drafted the document.

[337] Schapiro signed a printed broadsheet put out by the editorial board of Partisan Review that was entitled "Statement to American Writers and Artists." According to O.K. Werckmeister, their manifesto was adapted from the ideas expressed in Breton and Trotsky's manifesto to the conditions in the U.S. As cited in: Werckmeister, "Jugglers in a Monastery," 62, 64 n. 16. The statement of the League for Cultural Freedom and Socialism, also signed by Schapiro, condemned Stalin for abandoning revolutionary ideals, replacing them instead with a dictatorial regime that controlled the cultural realm. The statement also condemned the popular front. Gerald Monroe, "The American Artists' Congress and the Invasion of Finland," Archives of American Art 15.1 (1975): 16.

[338] Schapiro, "Silos," 42.

the spandrels on a pier relief sculpture of the Doubting Thomas scene from the cloister at Silos.

He stated that:

> In representing the musicians – jongleurs who improvise a sensual music, in contrast to the set liturgical music of the church – the sculptor expresses also the self-consciousness of an independent artistic virtuosity. He inserts in a context controlled by the church and committed to religious meanings figures of lay artists, free, uninstitutionalized entertainers whose performance is valued directly for its sensuous and artisan qualities; just as in modern art, which is wholly secular, painters so often represent figures from the studio or from an analogous world of entertainment – acrobats, musicians, and harlequins – consciously or unconsciously affirming their own autonomy as performers and their conception of art as a spectacle for the senses.[339]

The medieval artist's subject matter is similar to the modern artist's as Schapiro described it in "The Social Bases of Art" in 1936.[340] Schapiro saw the emergence of Romanesque art in the 11th century to be a parallel to the emergence of a revolutionary art at the end of the 1930s. His increasing support of and interaction with modern art throughout the decade is notable. The complexity of his approach, which incorporates a Marxist understanding of history at the same time that it focuses on the question of how and why styles change, places it firmly within Devree's "new era in the study of the fine arts."[341]

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[339] Schapiro, "Silos," 46.

[340] Meyer Schapiro, "Social Bases of Art," Social Realism: Art as a Weapon, ed. David Shapiro (New York: Frederick Ungar, 1973) 121.

[341] Devree, "Awakening in the Arts."

4.   RECOGNIZING THE COMPLEXITY OF ART HISTORICAL MEANING: SCHAPIRO AND THE PRACTICE OF ICONOLOGY

4.1.   INTRODUCTION

> Emerging from its role as an auxiliary to the history of art, iconography began to acquire the status of a new critical methodology. This transformation also brought the shift from the old to the modern sense of the term "iconology." The change was wrought chiefly by German and Austrian scholarship of the first quarter of the 20th century: by Max Dvorák, Julius von Schlosser, and the Vienna School; and especially by the pioneer work of Aby Warburg, Fritz Saxl, and Erwin Panofsky, whose names are most intimately connected with modern iconological studies.[342]
>
> Jan Bialostocki, 1958

Though the formalism of the Vienna School is usually considered to be the methodological antithesis of iconology, art historian Jan Bialostocki tells a different story in his entry on iconography and iconology in the <u>Encyclopedia of World Art</u>. Bialostocki cites the work of Max Dvorák (1874-1921) and Julius von Schlosser (1866-1938), both of whom were chairs of art history at Vienna, Dvorák from 1909 to 1921 and von Schlosser from 1921 to 1936. Bialostocki especially emphasizes the significance of Dvorák, "who though trained in the methods of visual analysis propounded by Alois Riegl, laid particular stress on the connection between artistic form and philosophical and religious content, arriving at a new and more profound interpretation of iconographic problems."[343] Bialostocki does *not*, however, mention either Josef Strzygowski, who was made second chair of art history while Dvorák was chair, or Hans Sedlmayr, who was von Schlosser's successor from 1936 to 1945, both of whom are known for their racist art

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[342] Jan Bialostocki, "Iconography and Iconology," <u>Encyclopedia of World Art</u>, vol. 7 (New York, Toronto and London: McGraw Hill, 1963) 774.

[343] Bialostocki, "Iconography and Iconology," 774.

history.[344] Arguably, the racist and nationalist content of Sedlmayr and Strzygowski's writings is responsible for the perceived methodological distance between the work of the Viennese and those Germans, such as Erwin Panofsky, who are typically credited with the development of iconology.

In the introduction to his groundbreaking book Studies in Iconology, Panofsky laid out an art historical methodology that took the practice of iconography, particularly as it was understood in the U.S., to a new level. Not simply the deciphering of subject matter, as iconography was then understood to be, iconology was instead dedicated to the discovery of the historical meaning of both stylistic types and subject matter as an expression of specific cultural attitudes. Not long after his theorization of an iconological approach, Panofsky and others quickly began doing iconographical studies that dealt almost exclusively with subject matter. This retreat into subject matter allowed for questions of form and meaning to be bypassed. Further, this tendency belies iconology's early history in the German art historical tradition, where iconological practice included the treatment of form, subject matter and content.

The foundation of the modern practice of iconology is usually attributed to the German art historian Aby Warburg, who introduced the concept in his famous lecture on the Schifanoia Palace frescoes in 1912.[345] Iconology was further developed by individuals affiliated with the

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[344] It is intriguing to consider that Strzygowski was made a second chair of art history at Vienna while Dvořák was chair, effectively creating two art history centers at the University. Mathew Rampley has proposed that the break between the two was political as well as methodological. Strzygowski was already committed to an essentialist ideology that favored the Nordic-Aryan race, whereas Dvořák supported the cosmopolitanism of the Austria-Hungarian Empire. Matthew Rampley, "Max Dvorak: Art History and the Crisis of Modernity," Art History 26.2 (2003): 217-18.

[345] The lecture was first given at the 10th annual Congrès International d'Histoire de l'Art in 1912. Aby Warburg, "Italienische Kunst und internationale Astrologie im Palazzo Schifanoja zu Ferrara," Gesammelte Schriften, eds. Fritz Rougemont and Gertrud Bing, vol. 2 (Leipzig and Berlin: Teubner, 1932).

Besides Warburg and Panofsky, another fairly early discussion of the iconological approach can be found in G. J. Hoogewerff's expanded version of a paper given at the Congrès International Historique in Oslo in 1928 on the importance of developing an iconological approach. G. J. Hoogewerff, "L'Iconologie et son importance pour l'étude systématique de l'art chrétien," Rivista di Archeologia Cristiana 8.1 and 2 (1931).

Warburg Institute particularly Panofsky and Fritz Saxl, both collaboratively and individually. Both men had a close relationship with the Warburg Institute during their years in Hamburg. As art history professor at the University of Hamburg, Panofsky had close connections with both Saxl and Warburg. Saxl began his affiliation with the Warburg Institute in 1913, when Warburg invited him to come to Hamburg to be his librarian and assistant.[346] After Warburg died in 1929, Saxl became the Institute's first director. The increasing pogroms against Jews in Germany eventually forced Saxl and the Warburg Institute to relocate to London in 1933, the same year that Panofsky fled Hamburg permanently for the United States. Thus, the arrival of iconology in both the U.K. and the U.S. in the 1930s corresponded with the rise of National Socialism in Germany.

Over the course of the 1930s, Schapiro's increasing contact with German-speaking scholars, many of whom eventually ended up in the U.S. or U.K., coincided with his continued critical engagement with their approaches. A number of Schapiro's essays from the late 1930s and early 40's treat iconographical problems, but his approach moves beyond a purely iconographical treatment of subject matter. Rather, Schapiro adopted elements from both the New Vienna School's approach of structural analysis (*Strukturanalyse*) and Panofsky's iconology. As others shied away from the joint study of form and subject matter, Schapiro tackled the matter head on, adapting the approaches of his German-speaking colleagues.

In this chapter, I am concerned with how Schapiro's involvement in an international art historical dialogue that was implicated in politics shaped his methodology as well as with how iconography emerged out of this dialogue as the conventional method of art historical analysis in

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[346] For more on Saxl's biography, see: D.J. Gordon, ed., <u>Fritz Saxl 1890-1948: A Volume of Memorial Essays from his friends in England</u> (London: Nelson, 1957).

the U.S. in the postwar years. I begin by considering Schapiro's 1939 essay "The Sculptures of Souillac" in relationship to his complex relationship with the work of the New Vienna School. His correspondence with Otto Pächt, co-founder of the New Vienna School, gives insight into Schapiro's affinities and differences with their approach. I distinguish Schapiro's approach from that of Saxl of the Warburg Institute, with particular emphasis on Schapiro's "The Religious Meaning of the Ruthwell Cross" (1944), which was written in direct response to work published by Saxl. I continue, arguing that Schapiro's iconological studies of the early 1940s can be read as part of a dialogue surrounding the practice of iconology and iconography that was initiated by Panofsky's Studies in Iconology. I buttress my argument by comparing Schapiro's iconological practice in essays such as "'Muscipula Diaboli,' the Symbolism of the Mérode Altarpiece" (1945) with Panofsky's theory and practice. Schapiro's personal correspondence with Panofsky and Saxl, both Jewish exiles, further supports my thesis. The almost 40 year friendship that Schapiro cultivated with Panofsky is largely recorded in their extant correspondence and provides a significant point of departure for understanding their distinct tactics for dealing with the racialist turn in art history.[347]

Even though Schapiro increasingly focused his attention in the 1940s on questions of iconology turning his explicit focus in his publications away from contemporary political events, his art historical practice continued to be enmeshed within a web of political and methodological concerns.[348] Schapiro's disillusionment with Stalin, his new contacts with exiled Surrealists like Kurt Seligmann and his growing dialogue with exiled art historians, all informed the direction of

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[347] In addition to the Panofsky Papers at the Archives of American Art, my research relies on selections from Panofsky's correspondence that are being published by Dieter Wuttke. Dieter Wuttke, ed., Erwin Panofsky: Korrespondenz 1910 bis 1936, vol. 1 (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz Verlag, 2001); Dieter Wuttke, ed., Erwin Panofsky: Korrespondenz 1937 bis 1949, vol. 2 (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 2003).

[348] Werckmeister has defined Schapiro's Marxist phase as lasting from 1933 to 1941. Otto Karl Werckmeister. "Meyer Schapiro et la tradition marxiste." Paper presented at Relire Meyer Schapiro, Louvre, Paris, 2005.

his art historical approach. But rather than settle for theories that equated nation with style or literary sources with subject matter, Schapiro insisted on complexity and historicity. Thus, I argue that his iconological work, which maintained that both formal characteristics and subject matter emerged out of complex social, economic and cultural circumstances, can be seen to coincide with his pursuit of an anti-nationalist art historical praxis that continued to address both form and content in art.

4.2.   STRUCTURAL ANALYSIS AND "THE SCULPTURES OF SOUILLAC"

> The reading of your article gave me a very great joy. I think it is the first "Strukturanalyse" of an [sic] high mediaeval work of art. Apart from that, it seems to me to be a completely new method of iconographical analysis, which art history needs so badly. It was for this latter reason that your article gave me particular pleasure. For here [in London] the crossword puzzle game of the Warburg symbolism is regarded as the only valid iconography.[349]

<div align="right">Otto Pächt, 3 June 1939</div>

In his 1939 article "The Sculptures of Souillac," Schapiro addressed a relief sculpture and trumeau that are located on the inner west wall of the abbey church of Souillac in France.[350] The relief depicts the legend of Theophilus, in which a pious lay officer of the church, after having been mocked for initially turning down a position of worldly power, sells his soul to the devil in return for the restoration of his position. After Theophilus's period of penance and prayer in a

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[349] Otto Pächt to Meyer Schapiro, 3 June 1939, Personal Collection of J. J. G. Alexander. Beginning with his letter of 5 May 1939, Pächt's letters to Schapiro are in English.

[350] The question of whether the "tympanum" is actually a tympanum remains. See Jacques Thiron, "Observations sur les fragments sculptés du portail de Souillac," Gesta 15.1/2 (1976); M. Durliat, "Un nouvel examen des sculptures de Souillac," Bulletin Monumental 135.1 (1977); Regis Labourdette, "Remarques sur la disposition originelle du portail de Souillac," Gesta 18.2 (1979). Schapiro seems to accept that the relief sculpture was in fact a tympanum. This reading is significant to his interpretation, since if the relief sculptures were originally from doorjambs, the structure would be not unlike other similarly placed sculptures. Similarly, he concludes that the trumeau, which is now placed below and off to the right side of the relief panel, was probably a part of the original sculptural program. For my purposes, I will not debate the original placement of these sculptures, but instead focus on Schapiro's interpretation of them.

church dedicated to the Virgin Mary, the Virgin returns the pact to Theophilus who publicly burns it and happily dies three days later after having been reunited with God. At Souillac, the story is depicted in relief through continuous narrative: two scenes of the Devil and Theophilus in which the Devil first tempts Theophilus and then seals the pact occupy the central field over which appears a third scene depicting the Virgin in the arms of an angel swooping down to save Theophilus as he prays at the doors of the church. To the left of this central field is Saint Benedict and to the right is Saint Peter. The trumeau, which is now located to the bottom right of the relief sculpture, is animated by pairs of contorted, crisscrossing beasts devouring their victims who are entangled within their struggling forms.

Schapiro begins his essay by considering what has been viewed as the work's formal deviance from conventional Romanesque sculpture. While Romanesque tympana are conventionally symmetrical and hieratic, the Souillac tympanum is governed by what Schapiro calls discoordination: "By discoordination I mean a grouping or division such that corresponding sets of elements include parts, relations, or properties which negate that correspondence."[351] Schapiro argues that what others have viewed as mediocre design or a possible later reconstruction from a more "rationally" arranged sculpture, is actually "a deeply coherent arrangement, even systematic in a sense, and similar to other mediaeval works."[352] He further emphasizes the artistic merit of the work: "Such arrangements are not 'errors' of taste or artistic judgment; they occur in works of high quality in the Middle Ages and must be seen in detail to be understood."[353]

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[351] Schapiro, "Souillac," 104. Donald Kuspit has discussed Schapiro's use of "discoordination" in his analysis of dialectical reasoning in Schapiro's work. See Kuspit, "Dialectical Reasoning."

[352] Schapiro, "Souillac," 102.

[353] Schapiro, "Souillac," 104.

While Schapiro devotes the first two-thirds of the article to a detailed analysis of the sculpture's formal arrangement, he is equally concerned with how the subject matter differs from that of conventional Romanesque tympana, and in fact, considers the formal and iconographic deviance of the work jointly. According to Schapiro:

> The subject of the great relief is . . . not the supervening Christ-Savior, dogmatically centralized and elevated, but an individual rescued from the devil, from apostasy, from material, feudal difficulties and his own corruption within the political body of the church, through the direct intervention of the mother of Christ, opposed as a woman to the loathsome male devil.[354]

Thus, by relating the subject matter and formal characteristics of the sculpture to contemporary social concerns, Schapiro discerns a distinctly Romanesque content.

In considering the meaning of the work, Schapiro looks to what he calls the "formal aspects of the story [of Theophilus]."[355] The religiously inferior figures of Theophilus and the Devil are centralized and the religiously significant figures of saints Benedict and Peter, as well as the angels and the Virgin Mary are marginalized. Schapiro understands the meaning of the composition historically. He reads this formal aspect of the story as "a devaluation of transcendence," which corresponds with the growing power of the secular world at the time.[356] Schapiro thus gleans the meaning of the tympanum from both formal and iconographic concerns as understood within the social historical context.

In a maneuver that is similar to that which he uses in "From Mozarabic to Romanesque in Silos," Schapiro looks to the intricate relationship of a contemporary secular world with the religious at a moment of great historical change in order to provide a complex interpretation of a

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[354] Schapiro, "Souillac," 119.

[355] Schapiro, "Souillac," 116.

[356] Schapiro, "Souillac," 117.

work of art. In both Silos and Souillac, an emerging capitalism conflicts with a faltering feudalism and opens up the possibility to better understand the close relationship of both form and subject matter to social historical context. In the "Sculptures of Souillac," Schapiro noted that: "The antitheses of rank and privation, of the devil and the Virgin, of apostasy and repentance, create a psychological depth – the counterpart of a world of developing secular activity and freedom, more *complex* than the closed field of Christian piety represented in the dogmatic images of the majestic Christ on Romanesque portals" [my emphasis].[357] In this way, Schapiro accounted for the sculpture's Romanesque quality even in the absence of conventional Romanesque form and subject matter. The complexity of the formal and iconographic meaning at Souillac corresponds with the great historical change and the accompanying struggle.

Schapiro's approach in this essay shares some affinities with structural analysis (*Strukturanalyse*), the methodological approach developed by members of the New Vienna School in the late 1920s and early 1930s. Schapiro had reviewed the second volume of the group's journal, Kulturwissenschaftliche Forschungen, in the Art Bulletin in 1936 and had also begun to correspond with Pächt in 1934. Within this context, Schapiro's "The Sculptures of Souillac" can be read as part of a continued dialogue on the theory and practice of structural analysis. In fact, Pächt had responded to an offprint of an article that Schapiro had sent him in 1939, presumably the Souillac article, stating explicitly his appreciation: "The reading of your article gave me a very great joy. I think it is the first 'Strukturanalyse' of an [sic] high mediaeval work of art."[358] A closer look at the methodological approach of structural analysis as described by Sedlmayr reveals its similarities to Schapiro's methodological approach in "The Sculptures of Souillac."

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[357] Schapiro, "Souillac," 119.

[358] Otto Pächt. Letter to Meyer Schapiro. 3 June 1939. Personal Collection of J. J. G. Alexander.

In "Towards a Rigorous Study of Art" published in the first volume of
<u>Kulturwissenschafliche Forschungen</u> in 1931, Sedlmayr defined two studies of art. The "first"
dealt at the empirical level with dating, attribution and iconography. The "second" went beyond
the first by working at the interpretive level to understand the work of art as an aesthetic object.
In order to accomplish this, Sedlmayr proposed that the art object must be approached with the
proper "attitude," that is to say, one that corresponds with the original "attitude" of
conception.[359] According to Sedlmayr, "The more correct view of a work would be the one that
construed previously unexplained aspects of the permanent, objective condition of the work as
comprehensible, necessary, and significant."[360] Furthermore, he added that: "If a view of the
individual work makes sense out of aspects of [a] course of events that another view passed over
as insignificant or coincidental, this would indicate the correct attitude."[361] Importantly, he
argues that the two studies of art must complement each other, and not be performed in
isolation.[362] In "The Sculptures of Souillac," Schapiro arguably approaches the work of art with
what Sedlmayr would have deemed was the "correct attitude," making sense of previously
unexplained aspects of the work by interpreting them within a newly considered social historical
context. Schapiro's essay bears out Pächt's contention that it was the first example of structural
analysis of a high medieval work.

Sedlmayr expressed concern that "thus far, the aims of art *history*, and its practice has
become too much the history of *style*" [original emphasis].[363] By style, Sedlmayr means form. In

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[359] Hans Sedlmayr, "Towards a Rigorous Study of Art," <u>The Vienna School Reader: Politics and Art Historical Method in the 1930s</u>, ed. Christopher S. Wood (New York: Zone Books, 2000) 148.

[360] Sedlmayr, "Rigorous Study," 148.

[361] Sedlmayr, "Rigorous Study," 148-49.

[362] Sedlmayr, "Rigorous Study," 134.

[363] Sedlmayr, "Rigorous Study," 154.

order to remedy this situation, he offered suggestions for the practice of the "second" study of art. In the Souillac essay, Schapiro seems to experiment with several of these suggestions. For instance, Sedlmayr recommends "the *investigation of individual works*" [original emphasis] as opposed to broad ranging surveys that trace the genealogy of particular formal types.[364] This new emphasis on the individual work does not mean that the work should be removed from its historical context. Instead, Sedlmayr argues that: "a work of art *only exists through a particular attitude in which virtually the entire historical situation is concentrated*" [original emphasis].[365] Schapiro's singular focus is on how the tympanum and accompanying trumeau can be understood in relationship to its particular historical context.[366] He makes the historical context an essential element of his discussion; both form and subject matter are linked to the emerging attitudes of the bourgeoisie in conflict with the established religious attitudes.

Perhaps the most significant similarity of Sedlmayr's structural analysis as theorized and Schapiro's practice is the parallel that both see between changing historical attitudes and changing styles. Sedlmayr points out that: "Above all, the study of art is concerned with two sorts of sequences of events: events connected with the emergence of new attitudes, and events connected with the emergence of the individual concrete work of art associated with a given attitude."[367] Through a detailed analysis of the form and subject matter at Souillac, in conjunction with an understanding of the social historical context, Schapiro arrives at a new

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[364] Sedlmayr, "Rigorous Study," 154.

[365] Sedlmayr, "Rigorous Study," 155.

[366] While Carol Knicely has argued that Schapiro's treatment of Souillac is primarily formal analysis, his goal is to make the formal and iconographic characteristics meaningful within the work's individual historical context. He wants to address both form and content. See Carol Knicely, "Decorative Violence and Narrative Intrigue in the Romanesque Portal Sculptures at Souillac," Diss., UCLA, 1992, 113-14.

[367] Sedlmayr, "Rigorous Study," 158.

understanding of the sculpture, which had previously been viewed as poorly designed.[368]

Schapiro concludes his essay with a summary of his approach:

> In the relief of Theophilus in Souillac the elements of the conflict between the older ecclesiastical claims and the new social relations are mythically transposed and resolved in a compromise form which entails, however, a new individual framework of Christian piety. Not in Souillac alone but throughout Romanesque art can be observed in varying degree a dual character of realism and abstraction, of secularity and dogma, rooted in the historical development and social oppositions of the time.[369]

In these concluding remarks, Schapiro expresses how the emergence of new attitudes was linked to the emergence of an individual work of art with its close ties to these new attitudes. It is remarkable how closely Schapiro's methodological approach here parallels that proposed by Sedlmayr.

Yet, in the introduction to his <u>Vienna School Reader</u>, Christopher Wood recently argued that Schapiro's work should be viewed in opposition to that of the New Vienna School, characterizing Schapiro as a proponent of "empirical method, inferential reasoning, and the testimony of fact."[370] Wood bases his argument primarily on Schapiro's 1936 review of the New Vienna School's journal, <u>Kulturwissenschaftliche Forschungen</u>. Schapiro does in fact strongly criticize certain aspects of the practices of the New Vienna School, primarily its lack of historical grounding and its reliance on intuition:

> The appearance of comprehensiveness conceals the lack of historical seriousness in such writings. We reproach the authors not

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[368] Schapiro stated that: "If Porter could admire its inner composition, another writer has spoken of its mediocre architectural design." Schapiro, "Souillac," 102. See Arthur Kingsley Porter, <u>Romanesque Sculpture of the Pilgrimage Roads</u>, vol. 1, 10 vols. (Boston: Marshall Jones, 1923) 199. Alfred Ramé, "Explication du bas-relief de Souillac - La légende te Théophile," <u>Gazette archéologique</u> (1885): 231.

[369] Schapiro, "Souillac," 125-126.

[370] Wood, "Introduction," 17. Richard Woodfield has also argued that Schapiro's review was a harsh condemnation of the New Vienna School. See Richard Woodfield, "Reading Riegl's *Kunstindustrie*," <u>Framing Formalism: Riegl's Work</u> (Amsterdam: G + B Arts, 2001) 64-65.

for neglecting the social, economic, political, and ideological factors in art but rather for offering us as historical explanations a mysterious racial and animistic language in the name of a higher science of art.[371]

Schapiro expresses particular concern regarding Sedlmayr's use of race: "Entities like race, spirit, will and idea are substituted in an animistic manner for a real analysis of historical factors."[372] So although Sedlmayr proposed a significant link between changing historical and artistic attitudes, he resorted in practice to connecting art to supposedly unchanging elements such as race.

While Schapiro was critical of the New Vienna School's reliance on racial and national constants, I have already described in chapter three Schapiro's appreciation of their interest in applying scientific innovations from other fields to the study of art history. In discussing Schapiro's review of the New Vienna School, Wood emphasizes Schapiro's criticisms while downplaying his admirations, maintaining that: "Schapiro delivered a negative view."[373] Schapiro undeniably condemned the New Vienna School's reliance on the unverifiable; however, when taken within the broader context of his reviews, his view of the New Vienna School is fairly admiring, especially when one considers that Schapiro could be downright harsh in his criticisms.[374] Furthermore, the "Sculptures of Souillac" stands as a testament to Schapiro's belief that *Strukturanalyse* might provide useful tools for understanding the meaning of art if proper care was taken in elucidating the social-historical context.

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[371] Schapiro, "New Viennese School," 460.

[372] Schapiro, "New Viennese School," 459.

[373] Wood, "Introduction," 12.

[374] Several scholars have commented on Schapiro's critical nature. See, for example: Cahn, "Schapiro and Focillon."; Carl Nordenfalk, "The Diatessaron Miniatures Once More," Art Bulletin 55.4 (1973): 532.

More recently, Thomas Crow has looked to Schapiro's "The Sculptures of Souillac" as exemplary in its concern with the structural significance of the work of art. In <u>The Intelligence of Art</u>, Crow argues that the new art history operates at the expense of the art historical object. Instead of looking to theories conceived outside of art history, Crow proposes to look at examples of art historical practice from within the history of the discipline in order to return our attention to the structural significance of the art object and thereby provide a roadmap for art historical interpretation.[375] Crow particularly values the developments of a social history of art that emphasize the complexities of individual artworks. Schapiro's "Sculptures of Souillac" is exemplary for Crow because Schapiro has identified an art object that, as an anomaly in Romanesque sculpture, purportedly guides the viewer in the process of interpretation. Crow states that: "Schapiro's 'The Sculptures of Souillac' advances an implicit hypothesis that the most productive cases in art-historical inquiry will involve objects that already exist as disruptive exceptions against a field of related works of art that surround them."[376] Thus, for Crow, the structure of such an exceptional work of art produced at a moment of great historical change "already enacts the disturbance necessary to interpretation."[377]

What motivated Schapiro's selection of these sculptures as a topic of research? The essay appeared in a collection published in honor of medievalist Alfred Kingsley Porter, the famed author of *Romanesque Sculpture of the Pilgrimage Roads* (1923). In 1929, Porter had published

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[375] Crow states that: "The proposal of this book is that latent in the best examples of art-historical practice are overlooked guides to a way forward. It asks whether there can be objects of study for the art historian – individual monuments or circumscribed clusters of works – where the violent acts of displacement and substitution entailed in making any object intelligible are already on display in the art. If so, to explain will also be to explore the conditions that make explanation possible – and not through a more or less arbitrarily imported body of theory but through the concrete necessities of art-historical research." Thomas Crow, <u>The Intelligence of Art</u> (Chapel Hill: U of North Carolina P, 1999) 5.

[376] Crow, <u>The Intelligence of Art</u> 11.

[377] Crow, <u>The Intelligence of Art</u> 23.

a play that took the Theophilus legend as its subject.[378] As Crow has pointed out, in selecting Souillac as his topic Schapiro was thus able to honor Porter, while at the same time conspicuously avoiding any comment on Porter's romanticized views of medieval society, which Schapiro did not share.[379] The sculpture's peculiar form and subject matter also afforded Schapiro the opportunity to explore the methodological possibilities of the New Vienna School's structural analysis while at the same time avoid racial or national understandings of style. Produced at a moment of great historical change, that is, the shift from feudalism to capitalism, the sculptures at Souillac resist easy classification. The formal and iconographic complexity of the Theophilus relief works against established categories. By demonstrating how a work that does not appear to correspond to the conventional Romanesque style is in fact quite Romanesque, Schapiro countered the common conception of the homogeneity of a style. Just as no instinctive racial or national worldviews exist, neither does an inherently homogeneous Romanesque mindset that would guarantee a particular selection of form and subject matter for Romanesque art. Furthermore, a work of such complexity cannot be easily subsumed under national or racial headings. Thus, Schapiro's mode of thinking counters the practice of iconography as an identification of subject matter based on textual sources as well as the practice of formal analysis as a means to discover formal sources and influences.

Interestingly, Crow admired many aspects of Schapiro's essay that were also practiced by members of the New Vienna School. For Crow, the genius of Schapiro's essay lies in his concern with the marginal. Crow praises Schapiro, stating that:

> Instead of proceeding from examples that are statistically most prevalent and then defining everything else as peripheral or exceptional, he began by analyzing what happens when the usual,

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[378] Arthur Kingsley Porter, The Virgin and the Clerk (Boston: Marshall Jones, 1929).

[379] Crow, The Intelligence of Art 10-11.

> reassuring regularities of form disintegrate; then the true power of
> an art system could begin to be comprehended.[380]

Crow admires the way in which Schapiro is able to find order in such a formally complex and unconventional work of art while at the same time "open[ing] art historical interpretation to realistic information about the Middle Ages . . ."[381]

Sedlmayr similarly encouraged the analysis of formally complex works within their historical contexts in his theorization of structural analysis. He explained that even if the work is seemingly chaotic and disorganized each part of the work has a connection to the whole.[382] Crow described Schapiro's ability to make sense of just such a seemingly disorganized work: "In what seems at first glance to be a haphazardly additive composition, Schapiro discerned a fiendishly intricate governing order beyond the imagination of his art historical colleagues seeking after symmetrical triangles."[383] Crow's observation echoes Sedlmayr's description of how one might be able to better understand a work of art. Sedlmayr explains that: "For example, previously I might have seen a piece of architecture as a chaotic, confused mass of different forms; but insofar as I comprehend the function and organization of the parts, each part will appear to have a meaningful and necessary connection to the whole."[384] Sedlmayr, like Crow after him, invited the consideration of individual works that depart substantially from the conventional.[385] By focusing on the Theophilus relief, Schapiro is concerned with a work that diverges considerably from a pre-existing notion of Romanesque style. Thus, Crow admired Schapiro's interest in the

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[380] Crow, The Intelligence of Art 22.

[381] Crow, The Intelligence of Art 21.

[382] Sedlmayr, "Rigorous Study," 151.

[383] Crow, The Intelligence of Art 15.

[384] Sedlmayr, "Rigorous Study," 151.

[385] Sedlmayr, "Rigorous Study," 157-59. Sedlmayr advised against the interrogation of objects according to pre-established conceptual schema; Schapiro similarly rejected an approach based on pre-established conceptual schema in his review of Baltrusaitis' book on geometrical schematism in Romanesque art. See Schapiro, "Geometrical."

structural significance of the Theophilus relief, which corresponds with Sedlmayr's theory of structural analysis.[386]

While Schapiro chose to explain the logic and order of what had previously been viewed as a chaotic and disorganized grouping in his detailed analysis of the sculptural group at Souillac, he did not focus on the formal characteristics of the work alone. Rather, as Crow put it, "Schapiro was pursuing nothing less than a diagnosis of art's fundamental signifying capacities, a dissolution of the conventional dichotomy of form and content."[387] Schapiro departed from conventional art historical methodology in the U.S. by allowing both form and content to contribute to his understanding of the sculptural grouping at Souillac. By seeing a sense of order in a seemingly disordered compositional arrangement, Schapiro diverged from those discussions of medieval art that traced the genealogy of more conventional compositional schema. Similarly, his essay diverged from iconographic treatments where it was enough to relate the subject matter to a theological text.

Both Crow and Pächt point out that Schapiro strayed from the contemporary practice of iconography in his treatment of the Souillac sculpture and the legend of Theophilus. Pächt praised Schapiro's essay as "a completely new method of iconographical analysis, which art history needs so badly."[388] Yet what Pächt calls iconography, Crow terms social history:

> The monument demands a social history, but that history finds its place only at the end of an intricate dissection of internal oppositions and must be sustained within that symbolic armature: Schapiro's mode of analysis – and the choice of object that

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[386] Art historian Donald Kuspit has similarly observed that for Schapiro: " . . . significant stylistic genesis results when known opposites unstably related unite, under socially and personally dynamic conditions, in a restless, risky intrigue, which stabilizes in a tense, new style charged with the contradictory meanings of its origins. Style, in other words is for Schapiro not simply a stable pattern or convention, but a 'complex' of interlocking dimensions." Kuspit, "Dialectical Reasoning," 112.

[387] Crow, The Intelligence of Art 22-23.

[388] Otto Pächt. Letter to Meyer Schapiro. 3 June 1939. Personal Collection of J. J. G. Alexander.

permitted it – opened art-historical interpretation to realistic information about the Middle Ages . . .[389]

Though Crow values Schapiro's final conclusions regarding the relationship of historical context to the work's form and content, he de-emphasizes any iconographic interpretation in Schapiro's essay. Crow pointed out that only after spending two-thirds of the text establishing the formal logic of the sculptural grouping does Schapiro turn to the legend of Theophilus, and then, only in fragmentary form.

Yet even though Crow and Pächt appear to be at odds over Schapiro's methodology, their differences are more terminological than fundamental. Both believe that art history needs to move beyond the simple identification of subject matter. Writing in 1939, Pächt believed structural analysis was the means to achieving what he viewed as a new kind of iconography. Following World War II, iconography became the preferred methodological approach, but it never fully evolved beyond the identification of subject matter through textual sources. From Crow's point of view in 1999, iconography held no potential for the future of art history. Crow characterized Schapiro's effort in the "Sculptures of Souillac" as unfettered by iconographic practice.[390] He argued that Schapiro's approach could be understood as an alternative to "the assumptions of traditional iconography, where the significance of any element lies in its correspondence to name or entity defined elsewhere, to which it will be more or less adequate." He continued: "Schapiro had shifted the primary ground of meaning to relationships activated inside of the work, within which such conventional meanings gained deep significance only as they were mapped according to a limited set of conceptual oppositions."[391] Thus, while Pächt

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[389] Crow, The Intelligence of Art 21.

[390] Crow states that: "In his exegesis of the Souillac sculptor's (or sculptors') invention proceeds independently from the iconographer's traditional matching exercises." Crow, The Intelligence of Art 16.

[391] Crow, The Intelligence of Art 89.

admired Schapiro's work as a "completely new method of iconographical analysis" and Crow viewed his work as an alternative to "the assumptions of traditional iconography," both scholars were drawn to Schapiro's concern with the structure of form and subject matter as they relate to a particular cultural historical moment.

After 1939, Schapiro abandoned, at least temporarily, his explicit concern with questions of form and politics with an onslaught of "iconographic" publications: "Cain's Jaw-Bone that did the First Murder" in 1942, "The Image of the Disappearing Christ" in 1943, "The Religious Meaning of the Ruthwell Cross" in 1944 and "'Muscipula Diaboli': the Symbolism of the Mérode Altarpiece" in 1945. At first glance, a drastic shift from his Marxist writings of the 1930s to his "iconographic" essays of the 1940s may be noted. Yet his tour de force articles of 1939, which are usually considered as his most unambiguous examples of Marxist art history, in fact demonstrate a clear interest in the concerns of iconology as they were developing in the work of the New Vienna School. In the 1940s, Schapiro's "iconographic" essays continued to show an interest in the development of "a new method of iconographical analysis," but now through an interest in Panofsky's theorization of iconology. The stronger emphasis on questions of iconology can be related to his growing dialogue with its practitioners and to the relationship of art historical practice with the political conditions of the time.

Art historians, particularly those like Sedlmayr who sympathized with the National Socialists, continued to express a correspondence between art's expressive nature and racial and national identity.[392] Racist approaches to art history thus complicated the discussion of form for many art historians. The resulting trend was an increased interest in the treatment of subject

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[392] For more on the idea that artistic styles reflected distinct racial differences, an increasingly popular notion in certain veins of German scholarship in the 1920s and 30s, see Barbara Miller Lane, Architecture and Politics in Germany, 1918-1945 (Cambridge: Harvard UP, 1968) 125-45. Lane cites two books of particular interest, in which the authors explained how art expressed racial identity. Hans F. K. Günther and Adolf Hitler, Rasse und Stil (Munich: Lehmann, 1926); Paul Schultze-Naumburg, Kunst und Rasse (Munich: Lehmann, 1928).

matter. Schapiro attempted to address this growing crisis in the foundational premises of the discipline by thoroughly rethinking how the consideration of form and subject matter might continue to engage historical meaning without recourse to traditional associations of style with racial and national identity. Though elements of Sedlmayr's art history had provided Schapiro with a possible guide for his art historical practice, he must have been acutely aware of the increasingly racist tenor of Sedlmayr's work. In the 1940's Schapiro attempted to refine his iconological practice by interacting with those German-speaking scholars responsible for its development.

4.3. SCHAPIRO, SAXL AND THE RUTHWELL CROSS

In the mid-1940s, both Schapiro and Fritz Saxl of the Warburg Institute published articles on the iconographic program of the Ruthwell Cross, a monumental stone cross that was carved in the late 7th century in Dumbriesshire in the old Welsh kingdom of Strathclyde.[393] The unique combination of religious subject matter depicted in sculpture on the Ruthwell Cross had yet to be addressed adequately in the literature. On the front of the cross, the main panel depicts Christ standing on the heads of two beasts; above him is John the Baptist with the Lamb of God and below him are Saints Paul and Anthony dividing the loaf of bread brought by the raven. On the back of the cross in the main panel, Mary Magdalen is shown drying the feet of Christ with her hair. Various other scenes from the life of Christ are depicted in no apparent narrative order. Both Saxl and Schapiro were interested in making sense of this seemingly disordered grouping of subjects. In 1944, Saxl published an article that treated the iconographic program, the dating

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[393] Fritz Saxl, "The Ruthwell Cross," Journal of the Warburg & Courtauld Institutes 6 (1943); Meyer Schapiro, "The Religious Meaning of the Ruthwell Cross," Late Antique, Early Christian and Mediaeval Art. (New York: George Braziller, 1979). Originally published as Meyer Schapiro, "The Religious Meaning of the Ruthwell Cross." Art Bulletin 26, no. 4 (Dec. 1944). Subsequent references will refer to the reprint.

as well as the stylistic and iconographic sources of the Ruthwell Cross.[394] Schapiro's

iconological treatment of the Ruthwell Cross was published shortly thereafter.[395] The proximity

of their publications was not coincidental, but rather, their correspondence suggests that Saxl

may have been inspired by Schapiro's ideas. While the two agreed on the eremitic content of the

sculptures on the Cross, their approaches differed; Schapiro emphasized the social historical

basis of the cross, whereas Saxl was content to decipher its iconography.

Given Schapiro's relationship with Panofsky who had collaborated with Saxl on several

projects, it is not surprising that Schapiro sought out Saxl at the Warburg Institute in London

while he was on his trip abroad in the summer of 1939, a trip that was cut short due to the

impending war.[396] Following their encounter, Saxl and Schapiro corresponded with one another

until Saxl's death in 1948.[397] Their interactions further emphasize the differences in Schapiro's

attempts at iconological practice as opposed to the Warburgian approach as it had developed in

London. Recall that in 1939, Pächt had explicitly contrasted Schapiro's approach in "Sculptures

of Souillac" with the iconographic practice of the Warburgians, stating that "here [in London]

the crossword puzzle game of the Warburg symbolism is regarded as the only valid

iconography."[398] Matthew Rampley has similarly pointed out that by the 1930s, Warburg's

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[394] Saxl, "The Ruthwell Cross." Though Saxl's article was included in an issue of the <u>Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes</u> dated 1943, the article had still not been published as late as April 1944 as Saxl sent a cable to Schapiro verifying a passage from Schapiro's letter that he wanted to quote. Fritz Saxl. Letter to Meyer Schapiro. 25 April 1944. WIA GC, London.

[395] Schapiro, "Ruthwell Cross."

[396] Meyer Schapiro. Letter to Fritz Saxl. 8 May 1940. WIA GC, London.

[397] Schapiro refers to their meeting as "one of the brightest moments [of our stay in London]." Meyer Schapiro. Letter to Fritz Saxl. 11 January 1941. WIA GC, London.

The last letter between the two is from Saxl to Schapiro, 26 March 1947. Fritz Saxl. Letter to Meyer Schapiro. 26 March 1947. WIA GC, London. Schapiro's relationship with the Warburg Institute continued after Saxl's death. Correspondence with subsequent directors – Gertrud Bing and Ernst Gombrich – exist in the WIA. Archival documents also indicate that Schapiro lectured at the Institute in the summer of 1957.

[398] Otto Pächt. Letter to Meyer Schapiro. 3 June 1939. Personal Collection of J.J.G. Alexander.

approach had devolved into "an exercise in cataloguing often overlooked and arcane symbols."[399] Even with Pächt's forewarning, Schapiro expressed the desire to collaborate with Saxl.[400]

Saxl had initiated a dialogue regarding the iconographic program of the Ruthwell Cross in a letter to Schapiro dated July 22, 1943. Here, Saxl mentioned that he was "trying to unravel the iconography of the Ruthwell Cross" and wondered whether Schapiro knew of any rare examples of Christ treading on the beasts.[401] Schapiro responded to Saxl's request in a detailed letter providing two lesser-known examples of the theme as well as his own interpretation of the iconographic problem posed by the Ruthwell Cross.[402] Schapiro argued that the depiction of Christ on the beasts related to Mark 1:13, which describes Christ in the desert, and not to Psalm 91:13, which emphasizes Christ's power over evil. By considering Christ with the beasts in relationship to his stay in the desert, Schapiro tied together several of the subjects depicted on the cross with the overarching theme of monastic life, the hermit and asceticism.

Though Schapiro requested Saxl's response to his interpretation, Saxl never acquiesced; he promptly recognized receipt of the letter, but never participated in the spirit of dialogue that Schapiro enjoyed with other scholars, most notably Panofsky.[403] Schapiro's willingness to

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[399] "For example, Rudolf Wittkower's essay 'Eagle and Serpent: A Study in the Migration of Symbols' of 1938 consists primarily of the empirical gathering of data testifying to the continued presence of the symbols of the eagle and serpent, failing to draw any further conclusion from such an observation. Much the same can be said, too, of Fritz Saxl's lecture on the 'Continuity and Variation in the Meaning of Images,' which opens with the assertion, 'I am not a philosopher, nor am I able to talk about the philosophy of history.'"Matthew Rampley, "From Symbol to Allegory: Aby Warburg's Theory of Art," Art Bulletin 79.1 (1997): 55; Rudolf Wittkower, "Eagle and Serpent," Journal of the Warburg & Courtauld Institutes 11 (1938-39); Fritz Saxl, Continuity and Variation in the Meaning of Images, vol. 1, 2 vols. (London: Warburg Institute, 1957) 1.

[400]" I still have the faith to anticipate some collaboration with you in the future, whether here or in England." Meyer Schapiro. Letter to Fritz Saxl. 11 January 1941. WIA GC, London.

[401] Fritz Saxl. Letter to Meyer Schapiro. 22 July 1943.WIA GC, London.

[402] Meyer Schapiro. Letter to Fritz Saxl. 15 October 1943. WIA GC, London.

[403] Fritz Saxl. Letter to Meyer Schapiro. 2 November 1943. WIA GC, London. In this brief letter, Saxl thanked Schapiro for his long letter, but he never reciprocated Schapiro's intellectual investigation. Compare this exchange

participate in a scholarly dialogue can be contrasted with Saxl's urgency to "solve" the iconographic problem of the Ruthwell Cross. Not until Saxl wrote in March 1944 asking for Schapiro's permission to quote from his letter in a publication on the Ruthwell Cross, did Saxl clearly indicate that he had indeed received Schapiro's letter of July 1943. Saxl wrote:

> I hope that you will not mind my quoting parts of your letter about the "desert side" of Ruthwell Cross in a footnote. When I wrote my first letter I had not yet developed this idea, and you can imagine how surprised I was when I got your letter, expressing exactly the same trend of thought which I had just conceived myself – so I think the readers may be glad to have your confirmation.[404]

Following several short telegrams of clarification, Schapiro responded cordially: "Okay to quote letter. Am publishing article on theory."[405]

In a written exchange following the publication of their individual articles, the two scholars recognized the differences of their approaches. Schapiro stated that his own article "deals solely with the iconographic problem I discussed in my letter last year (the eremitic content of the cross,) but I have added some pages on the relation of the Cross to local insular history."[406] In the spirit of scholarly dialogue, Schapiro had been willing in his earlier correspondence to discuss the iconography of the Ruthwell Cross with Saxl, but in published form, he insisted on including "some pages on the relation of the Cross to local insular history." In contrast, Saxl stated that: "I have not gone into the local insular history because I treated the

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with those that Schapiro has with Panofsky, in which both correspondents provide detailed commentary on the interpretations of the other. Schapiro wonders whether Saxl ever received his letter on the Ruthwell Cross. For example, Meyer Schapiro. Letter to Fritz Saxl. 7 December 1943. WIA GC, London; Meyer Schapiro. Letter to Fritz Saxl. 10 March 1944. WIA GC, London.

[404] Fritz Saxl. Letter to Meyer Schapiro. 1 March 1944. WIA GC, London.

[405] Meyer Schapiro. Letter to Fritz Saxl. 12 May 1944. WIA GC, London.

[406] Meyer Schapiro. Letter to Fritz Saxl. 27 August 1944. WIA GC, London.

problem from an iconographical and stylistic angle."[407] Though Schapiro downplayed the historical side of his article in his letter to Saxl, it was in fact an essential element of his methodological approach. Saxl was practicing iconography, the understanding of subject matter on the basis of literary sources, whereas Schapiro was attempting to practice iconology, the understanding of the intrinsic meaning or content of a work of art, its symbolic value. While Saxl dealt primarily with subject matter, Schapiro dealt with content where historical elements played a significant role. Schapiro pointed out that while their understanding of the "ascetic-Celtic aspect of the subjects" on the Ruthwell Cross was similar, their emphases differed: "the connections with the events and conflicts of the time being more central for my article."[408]

When Schapiro relates the subject matter of the Cross to the expressive nature of its artists at the end of the first part of his Ruthwell article, he reveals his methodological proclivity to explain variants through relationship to social bases of art.

> As we shall see presently, this conception of Christ and the beasts, abandoned by the triumphant church of the fourth century, which adopted the interpretation offered by Eusebius, the panegyrist and historian of Constantine, survived through the Middle Ages among the hermit monks and the independent religious spirits, like St. Francis, who were possessed by a more spontaneous and lyrical Christianity and took as their model the Christ of the desert or the open country and the streets.[409]

An echo of his argument in "From Mozarabic to Romanesque in Silos" emerges here; a spontaneity and independence survived among the hermit monks alongside the Church just as Mozarabic style survived alongside the Romanesque.

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[407] Fritz Saxl. Letter to Meyer Schapiro. 14 September 1944. WIA GC, London.

[408] Meyer Schapiro. Letter to Fritz Saxl, 19 April 1945. WIA GC, London.

[409] Schapiro, "Ruthwell Cross," 160.

In the final section, Schapiro concretely relates the eremitic content of the sculptures of the cross with the particular social-historical conditions of the region. Schapiro details the religious and political conflicts that waged first between the native Britons and the conquering Northumbrians. At the time of the earliest conflicts, the battles were between the native Christian Celtic people and the attacking pagan Northumbrians. The Northumbrians quickly converted to Christianity, and soon the religious conflicts were between competing Christianities: Northumbrian and Roman. In 663, the Northumbrians submitted to Roman religious forms, though Schapiro points out that: "religious traditions of the native churches were not destroyed when their organizations declined."[410] Again, in an argument that resembles that which he made in "From Mozarabic to Romanesque in Silos," Schapiro maintains that the art of this particular social-historical context was shaped by the coexistence of two religious traditions. He argues that: "The coexistence of these opposed currents in England in the seventh and eighth centuries is responsible for the extreme complexity of its arts and the difficulty we have in giving a coherent account of their development."[411]

For Schapiro, a critical difference between his own and Saxl's approaches lay in their viewpoint on the existence of racial constants in art. Schapiro addressed this point in a letter to Saxl regarding their differing approaches to the Ruthwell Cross. While neither Schapiro nor Saxl explicitly took up these issues in their essays, the topic continued to concern Schapiro so that he was compelled to rekindle their debate. Schapiro pointed out that: "Some two years ago we discussed your idea of a racial instinct behind the Hiberno-Saxon style, and you know how little weight I give to such hypotheses."[412] Schapiro contends that Saxl's own interpretation of the

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[410] Schapiro, "Ruthwell Cross," 170.

[411] Schapiro, "Ruthwell Cross," 170.

[412] Meyer Schapiro. Letter to Fritz Saxl. 19 April 1945. WIA GC, London.

Ruthwell Cross contradicts his belief in a specific Hiberno-Saxon racial instinct, stating that: "Your new observations seem to weaken rather than support the idea."[413] Schapiro points out that:

> If the reduction forms of Lindisfarne occur, as you admit, all over Europe and the Near East as a common sub-antique style, and therefore do not permit one to infer a specific connection between examples in different countries, why then attribute the reduction forms in England to a special racial (Celtic? Saxon?) instinct – a concept for which there is no psychological warrant . . . ? And why, moreover, derive these reduction forms at the same time from the <u>imitation</u> of native reduction styles four or five centuries older, if they are products of a racial instinct?[414]

Instead, Schapiro insists that the formal peculiarities must be understood within the local social historical circumstances. He concludes his discussion with Saxl: "I believe that the local insular peculiarities of the common reduction style have yet to be defined; until then it is impossible to determine the history of the insular works." Though neither Saxl nor Schapiro chose to address these issues in their published accounts of the Ruthwell Cross, Schapiro was compelled to express his opinion on them in his personal correspondence. The differences discussed here between Schapiro and Saxl's approaches to the Ruthwell Cross emphasize Schapiro's predilection towards Panofsky's iconological practice as Panofksy had theorized it in 1939.

4.4.   PANOFSKY, SCHAPIRO AND ICONOLOGY

. . . a work of art only exists through a particular attitude in which
virtually the entire historical situation is concentrated.

Sedlmayr, 1931

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[413] Meyer Schapiro. Letter to Fritz Saxl. 19 April 1945. WIA GC, London.

[414] Meyer Schapiro. Letter to Fritz Saxl. 19 April 1945. WIA GC, London.

[The intrinsic meaning or content of a work of art] is apprehended by ascertaining those underlying principles which reveal the basic attitude of a nation, a period, a class, a religious or philosophical persuasion – unconsciously qualified by one personality and condensed into one work.[415]

<div align="right">Panofsky, 1939</div>

The *levels of meaning* in the work of art. [sic] In the individual work of art, regardless of its level of internal unity and consistency, not everything is related equally closely to everything else, but there are different levels of interdependence, of meaningful necessity, and of relative contingency (just as there are in the structure of the "larger world"). Typical complexes of relations develop, each of which can be understood as arising from *one* central structural principle. Furthermore, these complexes stand in a determinable structural relation to one another, whereby certain complexes typically presuppose others and are in this sense positioned "over" them.[416]

<div align="right">Sedlmayr, 1931</div>

The scope of art history is: to *understand* a work of art with respect to its essential structure (formal and iconographic), to *evaluate* this structure under the aspect of its historical significance, and to *connect* phenomenas [sic] so as to gain an insight into what is called 'evolution.'[417] [original emphasis]

<div align="right">Panofsky, 1934</div>

The above epigraphs taken from the work of Panofsky and Sedlmayr demonstrate the strikingly similar conception of art historical meaning that both art historians were interested in accessing. Both saw a historical or cultural attitude as being embodied within the individual artwork. Both theorized that these attitudes are accessible through the understanding of formal and

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[415] Erwin Panofsky, Studies in Iconology: Humanistic Themes in the Art of the Renaissance (New York: Oxford UP, 1939) 7.

[416] Sedlmayr, "Rigorous Study," 168.

[417] Erwin Panofsky, "Book Comment," Bulletin of the Museum of Modern Art 2.2 (1934): 3.

iconographic structure in relationship to the structure of the culture in which the work was produced. While Sedlmayr's work increasingly reflected his support of National Socialism, Panofsky, like Schapiro, rejected an understanding of style as based on racial or national essences. In this light, the juxtaposition of Panofsky's work with Sedlmayr's is perhaps surprising, but I believe that it helps explain Panofsky's historiographical significance as contrasted with Sedlmayr's near obscurity. Schapiro's dialogue with both Panofsky and Sedlmayr highlights the interesting overlaps that exist in their work. Furthermore, Schapiro's waning interest in Sedlmayr's structural analysis and his growing support of Panofsky's iconological approach reveals Schapiro's continued concern with an art history implicated in racial and national politics.

Panofsky is perhaps best known for his <u>Studies in Iconology</u>, which was published in 1939 – the same year as Schapiro's "From Mozarabic to Romanesque in Silos" and "The Sculptures of Souillac." In the introduction to <u>Studies in Iconology</u>, Panofsky systematized his iconological approach, which he had previously discussed in two earlier German publications, thereby fine tuning his method at the same time that he provided access for an English-speaking audience.[418] In his famous synoptical table, the subject matter or meaning of a work of art is subjected to three differing acts of interpretation, which he defines in his 1939 text as pre-iconographical description, iconographical analysis, and iconographical interpretation or synthesis. Pre-iconographical description addresses artistic motifs, but is not to be confused with pure formal analysis, as Panofsky insists that that forms must be understood historically. The iconographical meaning of conventional subject matter is determined by applying knowledge of

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[418] Panofsky's two earlier articles are: Erwin Panofsky, <u>Hercules am Scheidewege und andere antike Bildstoffe in der neueren Kunst</u>, Studien der Bibliothek Warburg, vol. 18 (Leipzig/Berlin: 1930); Erwin Panofsky, "Zum Problem der Beschreibung und Inhaltsdeutung von Werken der bildenden Kunst," <u>Logos</u> 21 (1932). For more on the relationship of these two articles to the introduction of *Studies in Iconology* see, Michael Ann Holly, <u>Panofsky and the Foundations of Art History</u> (Ithaca: Cornell UP, 1984) 159, 232-33 n. 1.

literary sources to the work of art. Iconographical interpretation, which he later calls iconology, determines the intrinsic meaning or content of the work of art. Panofsky emphasizes that no one text will provide the intrinsic meaning of a work of art:

> When we wish to get hold of those principles which underlie the choice and presentation of *motifs*, as well as the production and interpretation of *images*, *stories* and *allegories*, and which give meaning even to the formal arrangements and technical procedures employed, we cannot hope to find an individual text which would fit those principles . . .[419]

Instead, Panofsky argues that one must use "synthetic intuition," which he recognizes "will be conditioned by the interpreter's psychology and 'Weltanschauung.'"[420]

While Panofsky has been lionized for his iconological method, Schapiro has most often been identified with a Marxist approach, his essay "Style" (1953) and his application of semiotics to the study of art, but rarely as a practitioner of iconology, or even iconography. Yet, I have already noted that Schapiro published a number of iconological essays in the 1940s. This meaningful convergence around iconology in the work of Panofsky and Schapiro can be understood in terms of their shared concern for questions of art historical methodology in general and the underlying political ramifications of their art historical scholarship at this moment of crisis in the discipline in particular.[421]

Schapiro's iconological essays of the 1940s immediately followed Panofsky's publication of Studies in Iconology and can be considered as part of a dialogue regarding iconology, in

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[419] Panofsky, Studies in Iconology 14-15.

[420] Panofsky, Studies in Iconology 15.

[421] In his early writings, Panofsky was largely concerned with issues of art historical methodology. For example, he responds to Heinrich Wölfflin on style in Erwin Panofsky, "Das Problem des Stils in der bildenden Kunst," Zeitschrift für Ästhetik und allgemeine Kunstwissenschaft 10 (1915). He critiqued Alois Riegl's concept of the *Kunstwollen* in Erwin Panofsky, "Der Begriff des Kunstwollen," Zeitschrift für Ästhetik und allgemeine Kunstwissenschaft 14 (1920).

which Panofsky was Schapiro's key interlocutor. As friends and colleagues, the two scholars frequently exchanged ideas in their correspondence and in person. Panofsky's iconological studies published in English tend to fall short of his theorization of iconology by focusing primarily on subject matter at the expense of both form and content. By contrast, Schapiro's essays reflect his attempt at a thorough application of iconological theory. Arguably, Schapiro saw iconology as a means by which he might continue to address historical meaning in art without recourse to racial or national determinants, while Panofsky's seeming abandonment of iconology for what is more accurately labeled iconography reflected his rising concern that the basis of iconological interpretation – "synthetic intuition" – was unverifiable.

The arrival of German art historians and their iconological approach was not warmly received by everyone in the U.S., as Francis Henry Taylor, then director of the Metropolitan Museum of Art, made clear in his <u>Babel's Tower: The Dilemma of the Modern Museum</u> (1945).[422] In this book, Taylor openly opposed the German model of a systematic study of art, *Kunstwissenschaft*, arguing that the theory and practice of German art historians had led to the failure of museums in the U.S., which Taylor believed would be increasingly called upon to fill a social function after World War II. Taylor, however, was convinced that the museums were ill equipped to do so because of the scientific nature of German art historical scholarship:

> [the] German passion for classification and spinning *a priori*
> theories from artificially established premises . . . set a standard for
> unintelligibility . . . which has done more to keep the public out of

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[422] In 1937, while Taylor was director of the Worcester Museum of Art, Panofsky protested what he believed to be Taylor's unprofessional practices in a letter to him dated 11 October 1937. See Wuttke, ed., <u>Panofsky: 1937 bis 1949</u> 76. Taylor had published Panofsky's findings regarding the identification of the subject matter of a work in the museum's collection by Piero di Cosimo in a <u>New York Times</u> article of 2 October 1937, prior to its publication by Panofsky in the <u>Worcester Art Museum Annual.</u> Erwin Panofsky, "The 'Discovery of Honey'," <u>Worcester Art Museum Annual</u> 2 (1936/37). In 1944, Taylor sent a letter to Panofsky following the latter's address at the College Art Association meeting. Wuttke, ed., <u>Panofsky: 1937 bis 1949</u> 448.

our museums than any regulations issued by trustees or government bureaucracies have ever succeeded in doing.[423]

Taylor's attack on Panofsky, iconology and German art historical practices drew sharp criticism from Schapiro.[424]

Besides revealing the inconsistencies in Taylor's argument, of which there were many, Schapiro explicitly supported Panofsky and the iconological approach in his 1945 review of Taylor's book:

> The iconologists are not named, but it must be obvious to Mr. Taylor's readers that he means the author of *Studies in Iconology*, a brilliant scholar and teacher, who surely cannot be accused of devoting himself to the rectification of museum labels, and of having influenced for the worse the museum attendance or the policies of American museum directors during the decade that he has been in this country.[425]

Prior to the publication of his review, Schapiro had discussed the matter with Panofsky, who favored critiquing Taylor. In a letter to Schapiro dated October 3, 1945, Panofsky acknowledged:

> I am glad that you are going to speak out against Mr. Taylor, that beautiful instance of the principle of the survival of the fattest. I used to hear mysterious rumblings about attacks on myself from that quarter, partly emanating from the gentleman himself and partly channeled through the daily press, but I never looked it up. The man is certainly dangerous, but in a way pathetic. He has everything in the world, family, wealth, position, influence; there is only one thing he could never acquire by either birth or politics, scholarship. So he has to discredit it, wherever he sees traces of it, by way of self-preservation as it were. Yet it is good that

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[423] Francis H. Taylor, Babel's Tower. The Dilemma of the Modern Museum (New York: Columbia UP, 1945) 16.

[424] Claudia Cieri Via, in her discussion of the history of iconology, discusses the reactions to Panofsky and his iconological approach in the United States. Claudia Cieri Via, Nei dettagli nascosto: Per una storia del pensiero iconologico (Rome: Nuovo Italia Scientifica, 1994) 107-50. For her treatment of Taylor's reaction to Panofsky, see Via, Nei dettagli nascosto: Per una storia del pensiero iconologico 127.

[425] Meyer Schapiro, Rev. of Babel's Tower. The Dilemma of the Modern Museum, by Francis H. Taylor. Art Bulletin 27.4 (1945): 273.

somebody calls the spade a spade, and I am looking forward to the slaughter with keen anticipation.[426]

In fact, Taylor had written a brief letter to Panofsky in 1944 regarding his views on iconographical practices:

> I am not, as you may have suspected, in sympathy with the usual practice of German Kuntswissenschaft and, except as a jeu d'esprit, I find the temptations of iconography too unrewarding to be dangled before the eyes of the uneager American student. For this reason I am opposed to the type of instruction which many foreign scholars have been giving our people recently.[427]

Taylor's assault was a direct affront to both Panofsky and Schapiro who had a shared respect for certain trends in European scholarship and education.[428] Furthermore, though not mentioned outright, Schapiro must have felt indirectly attacked by Taylor's diatribe given his own interest in iconology.

Schapiro clearly supported Panofsky's iconological approach, setting it apart from the lesser practice of iconography. Schapiro noted that while Taylor's criticisms of iconology might apply to some practitioners of iconography, they did not apply to the true practice of iconology.

> Now iconology, in this new sense, is surely nearer to what Mr. Taylor thinks should be the main purpose of research than is 'iconography'; for although it is not committed to Mr. Taylor's program of historical instruction through art, it does deal with the values, ideas, sentiments and general viewpoints behind the images, and is built upon a conception of the larger history of culture. It is also an attempt to discover general principles in the

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[426] Wuttke, ed., <u>Panofsky: 1937 bis 1949</u> 640.

[427] Wuttke, ed., <u>Panofsky: 1937 bis 1949</u> 448.

[428] In a letter from Panofsky to Schapiro, Panofsky agrees with Schapiro that a European-style education is better than an American-style education. Erwin Panofsky. Letter to Meyer Schapiro. 13 April 1953. Microfilm roll 2121. PP.

formation and transformation of image-types and their connection with the great changes in artistic style.[429]

In pointing out the inconsistencies in Taylor's attack on Panofsky and his iconological approach, Schapiro makes clear that historical meaning lies at the heart of iconology. Further, he reiterates that iconology is concerned with understanding how and why style and image-types change.

The question of Taylor's understanding of the differences between iconography and iconology brings up the matter of terminology. According to Schapiro, Taylor's use of the word "iconology" was odd since after Panofsky's introduction of the term in the U.S. in 1939, it never really caught on as a term in the field. Instead scholars continued to use the term iconography to refer to a broad range of practices, from those that focused solely on deciphering the subject matter of a work of art to those, like Schapiro's studies, that addressed the historical meaning or content of a work of art.

In fact, not even Panofsky used the term iconology in his original 1939 introduction to Studies in Iconology. The term only appeared in the book's title. Not until 1955 in the reprint of the introduction in Meaning in the Visual Arts did Panofsky specifically label the third level as iconology.[430] Whereas Panofsky had previously designated the three levels of interpretation as "preiconographical description," "iconographical analysis in the narrower sense" and "iconographical interpretation in the deeper sense," in his 1955 reprint, he renamed these "preiconographical description," "iconographical analysis" and "iconological interpretation."[431]

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[429] Schapiro, "Rev. of Babel's Tower," 273.

[430] The table in 1939 contrasts "*iconographical analysis* in the narrower sense of the word" with "*iconographical interpretation* in the deeper sense of the word" whereas in the 1955 reprint the second and third strata are simply labeled "iconography" and "iconology." See Panofsky, Studies in Iconology 14-15; Erwin Panofsky, "Iconography and Iconology: An Introduction to the Study of Renaissance Art," Meaning in the Visual Arts (New York: Anchor Books, 1955) 40-41. Also compare, for example, Panofsky, Studies in Iconology 8; Panofsky, "Iconology," 31-32.

[431] Panofsky, "Iconology," 40-41.

Though Panofsky did not view the changes he made in 1955 as substantial, as his comments in the preface to <u>Meaning in the Visual Art</u> attest, the shift in terminology is significant.[432] Furthermore, Panofsky added two paragraphs that appear in the text in brackets, in which he clarified the differences between iconography and iconology, emphasizing the descriptive role of the former over the interpretive role of the latter. His terminological shift was thus intended to emphasize the distinctions between iconography and iconology and the risks he recognized in the latter. The changes to his text can be read as a direct response to criticisms of his approach such as Taylor's.

In the addition to his 1955 text, Panofsky belabored the distinction between iconography and iconology, making a vital comparison between the relationship of iconography to iconology to that of ethnography to ethnology. Panofsky was not the first to draw such a comparison. In his 1928 description of iconology, art historian G. J. Hoogewerff had already distinguished the difference between iconography and iconology by comparing it to the difference between geography and geology, as well as ethnography and ethnology.[433] The metaphor of geography

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[432] In the preface, Panofsky states that: " . . . the 'reprints' have not been changed materially except for the correction of errors and inaccuracies and for a few occasional asides which have been enclosed in brackets . . . No attempt . . . has been made to change the character of the originals." Panofsky, "Iconology," v.

Joseph Margolis views the change in terminology as related to "an unresolved difficulty in Panofsky's thesis."Joseph Margolis, <u>The Language of Art and Art Criticism: Analytic Questions in Aesthetics</u> (Detroit: Wayne State UP, 1965) 79-80. Holly merely notes that the change in terminology is "interesting." Holly, <u>Panofsky</u> 200 n. 48. She later refers the reader to Margolis Holly, <u>Panofsky</u> 233 n. 2.

It is interesting to note that in the 1962 paperback edition of <u>Studies in Iconology</u>, the text reads like the original. See his comments in the preface Erwin Panofsky, <u>Studies in Iconology</u> (New York: Harper & Row, 1962) v. Thus, the third level remains "iconographical interpretation in a deeper sense." See Panofsky, <u>Studies in Iconology</u> 14-15.

[433] Hoogewerff's 1931 essay was originally presented as a lecture in 1928. Hoogewerff, "L'Iconologie." He expressed: "Iconology well conceived is related to iconography well practiced, much in the manner that geology is related to geography: it is above all the aim of geography to form clear descriptions; its responsibility is to record the experimental facts, taking into consideration the symptoms . . . without explanatory commentary. It consists in observations and is limited to the exterior aspect of terrestrial things. Geology, on the other hand, is concerned with the study of the structure, interior formation, origin, evolution, and coherence from and of which our globe exists. The same scientific rapport may be observed between ethnography and ethnology. While the former is limited to ascertaining, the latter seeks to explain." Hoogewerff, "L'Iconologie," 57-58. As cited in: Bialostocki, "Iconography and Iconology," 774. Bialostocki's translation omits a third comparison – cosmography and cosmology – which is

and geology suggests a more superficial treatment of meaning in iconography and concern with deeper levels of meaning in iconology. While geography describes the earth's surface, geology treats the earth's strata, thereby inferring that iconology accessed deeper layers of meaning than iconography. Panofsky followed Hoogewerff's example in selecting pairings that served as metaphors for iconography and iconology, but rather than choose the metaphor of geography and geology, he chose to elaborate on the comparison of ethnography and ethnology, a pair of terms that suggest a lingering concern with racial considerations.

Panofsky distinguished ethnography as the "*description* of human races" from ethnology as the "*science* of human races" [original emphasis] as defined by the OED. Today, the OED defines ethnography as "the scientific description of nations or races of men, with their customs, habits, and points of difference" and ethnology as "the science which treats of races and peoples, and of their relations to one another, their distinctive physical and other characteristics, etc." Panofsky's selection of terms emphasizes his concern regarding the perception that iconology could have any relation to the rise of fascism. He expressed this by pointing out his fear that iconology could be seen like astrology: "There is, however, admittedly some danger that iconology will behave, not like ethnology as opposed to ethnography, but like astrology as opposed to astrography."[434] Unlike the "science" of ethnology, astrology is defined by the OED as "the *art* of judging of the reputed occult and non-physical influences of the stars and planets

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included in Hoogewerff. The last two line's of Bialostocki's translation read as follows in Hoogewerff's original: "Le même rapport scientifique s'observe entre la cosmographie et la cosmologie, entre l'ethnographie et l'ethnologie: Ce sont les premières qui se limitent aux *constatations*, ce sont les dernières qui cherchent à fournir des *explications*" [original emphasis]. Hoogewerff, "L'Iconologie," 58. Both cosmography and cosmology were in use through the late 19th century. The OED defines cosmography as "The science which describes and maps the general features of the universe (both the heavens and the earth), without encroaching on the special provinces of astronomy or geography," and cosmology as "The science or theory of the universe as an ordered whole, and of the general laws which govern it. Also, a particular account or system of the universe and its laws."

Panofsky praised Bialostocki's article in the preface to the French edition of <u>Studies in Iconology</u>: Erwin Panofsky, <u>Essais d'iconologie</u>, trans. Claude Herbette and Bernard Teyssèdre (Paris: Gallimard, 1967) 5.

[434] Panofsky, "Iconology," 32.

upon human affairs" [my emphasis]. Whereas Panofsky emphasized that the suffix "logy" was derived from *logos* meaning "thought" or "reason," with his comparison to astrology, he recognized the risk that iconology could become like an art of the occult, which would have no arguable basis in reason.[435]

Though in 1955 Panofsky had attempted to clarify the distinction between iconography and iconology, by 1966, he expressed that a distinction no longer existed between the two terms. At this time, Panofsky made direct reference to Taylor's attack on iconology and the effects that it had on his methodology. In his preface to the French edition of Studies in Iconology (1967), he noted that:

> Today, in 1966, I could have replaced the keyword that appears in the title, *iconology*, with *iconography*, a term that is more familiar and less subject to discussion; but – and to admit it fills me with a sort of sad pride – the very fact that this substitution is possible is to a certain degree linked with the very existence of these *Studies in Iconology*.[436]

That is to say that, although iconology never became a staple of art historical terminology and practice, iconography did. And in Panofsky's mind, its success was somewhat ironically attributable to Studies in Iconology. After explaining the genesis of the term "iconology" in Ripa and Warburg, Panofsky suggested that Taylor's harsh reaction to the term iconology, which Taylor saw as "esoteric, unpleasing, even suspect," was directly related to his tendency to favor

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[435] Panofsky, "Iconology," 32. According to the OED, "astrography" was a term used in the 18th century that referred to "the science of mapping the stars."

[436] "Aujourd'hui, en 1966, j'aurais peut-être remplacé le mot-clé du titre, *iconologie*, par *iconographie*, plus familier et moins sujet à discussion; mais – et l'avouer me remplit d'une sorte d'orgueil mélancolique – le fait même que cette substitution soit désormais possible tient précisément, dans une certaine mesure, à l'existence même de ces *Essais d'iconlogie*." Panofsky, Essais d'iconologie 3.

iconography over iconology in practice.[437] He pointed specifically to Taylor's condemnation of

iconology as a part of the mindset that showed indifference towards "human values," and which

thus had contributed to Hitler's success in Germany.

After addressing Taylor, Panofsky turned his attention to less radical responses to the

terminological misunderstanding that accompanied the initial 1939 publication:

> At that time, however, the word iconography . . . would have
> evoked for the English-speaker in particular, a rather different
> concept than that which the author intended; he would not have
> thought of a method applicable to art history itself, but to an
> auxiliary, even inferior, discipline, to which art historians would
> eventually have recourse – like for example, botany or heraldry.[438]

Significantly, iconography had largely been considered, as Panofsky states, a practice auxiliary

to the discipline of art history in the U.S. until the moment of Panofsky's Studies in

Iconology.[439] Panofsky concludes that if he were writing the book for the first time in 1966, he

would "rebaptize the central theme iconography, especially since I have entirely given in that

iconology risked to appear, as I have said for some 15 years, not like ethnology as opposed to

ethnography, but like astrology as opposed to astronomy."[440]

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[437] "Mais, en 1939, le mot d'iconologie rendait encore à des oreilles non habituées une tonalité si ésoterique, rébarbative, voire suspecte que le directeur du Metropolitan Museum l'acceuillit alors avec un cri d'angoisse." Panofsky, Essais d'iconologie 4.

[438] "A l'époque, pourtant, le mot d'iconographie, que j'ai dit plus familier et moins sujet à discussion, aurait évoqué pour le lecteur de langue anglaise, en particulier, un concept assez différent de celui que l'auteur avait dans l'esprit: il aurait fait penser non pas à une méthode applicable à l'histoire de l'art elle-même, mais à une discipline annexe, voire inférieure, à laquelle les historiens d'art auraient eventuellement recours – comme, par exemple, à la botanique ou à l'héraldique."Panofsky, Essais d'iconologie 4.

[439] For a contemporary discussion of iconography, see Andrew Pigler, "The Importance of Iconographical Exactitude," Art Bulletin 21.3 (1939).

[440] ". . . de rebaptiser iconographie le theme principal, surtout depuis que je me suis pleinement rendu compte que l'iconologie risquait d'apparaître, je l'ai dit voilà une dizaine d'années, non pas comme l'ethnologie en face de l'ethnographie, mais comme l'astrologie en face de l'astronomie" [original emphasis]. Panofsky, Essais d'iconologie 5.

Panofsky made the identical argument in a personal communication of the same year, 1966. Again, Panofsky referred to Taylor's 1944 attack, pointing out as he did in the 1966 French preface to <u>Studies in Iconology</u> that his book could have been titled "Studies in Iconography:"

> When it was published the very term 'iconology,' as yet unknown in America proved to be puzzling to certain colleagues and one of them (the late-lamented Henry Francis Taylor, the Director of the Metropolitan Museum) became so angry that he made me personally responsible for the rise of Hitler, saying that it was small wonder that students 'confronted with this kind of incomprehensible and useless investigation, turned to National Socialism in despair.' He, of course, had never heard of Ripa and his following; nor had he ever thought of the difference between iconology and iconography as it was understood before what may be called the iconological revolution. He repented, however, in the end; and now, I am afraid, things have come to the point where iconology has entered a kind of Mannerist phase which evidences both the successes and the dangers of what we all have been trying to do during the last few decades.[441]

The academic atmosphere in the U.S. as well as Panofsky's reluctance to be identified with anything that could be accused of contributing to National Socialism thus contributed to his change of heart towards the practice of iconology. Panofsky acquiesced to the positivistic, anti-theoretical trend in the humanities in the postwar U.S.

In his 1945 review of Taylor's book, Schapiro defended Panofsky's decision to identify his methodology as iconology: "It was perhaps necessary to employ a new word in order to distinguish the modern study of the meanings of images from their simple classification as conventions of a period or region, which has come to be the chief aim of 'iconography' for some

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[441] Erwin Panofsky. Letter to Monsieur le Chevalier Guy de Schoutheete de Tervarent. 17 February 1966. PP. As cited in Joan Hart, "Erwin Panofsky and Karl Mannheim: A Dialogue on Interpretation," <u>Critical Inquiry</u> 19.3 (1993): 564.

scholars, especially in the United States."[442] As early as his dissertation, Schapiro had critiqued the reductive iconographic approach as practiced by the French art historian Emile Mâle. Furthermore, Schapiro's iconographic studies of the 1940s correspond with Panofsky's definition of iconology and would best be called iconological. Schapiro insists on both the religious and secular aspects of religious iconography, and in so doing, he maintains that understanding the meaning of a work goes beyond simply sleuthing out the text, most often a religious one, which explains the subject matter, but rather that a work of art needs to be understood in a broader context.

Not only does Schapiro's argument against Taylor interest me because of the faith Schapiro expressed in iconology, but also because Taylor's argument against iconology had racialist underpinnings.[443] Schapiro points out in his review that Taylor saw particular methodological characteristics as being inherently German, opposing these to inherently Italian characteristics. Schapiro thus explains Taylor's point of view:

> Out of this German attitude, which is characterized as credulous, rationalistic, religious, socially-minded, came the typical German methods of research, the passion for archaeological classification, the unintelligible theories and the 'tradition of knowing everything about a work of art except its essential significance.'[444]

Schapiro continues here, dismantling Taylor's argument regarding the supposedly German character responsible for the focus on attributions, pointing to "the Italian Morelli and his American disciple Berenson" as clear examples that the concern with "correct classification" was

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[442] Schapiro, "Rev. of Babel's Tower," 273.

[443] Taylor explicitly denied accusations that he was unduly prejudiced against things German. In his 1944 letter to Panofsky, he argued that: "In opposing [German *Kunstwissenschaft*] I have often been suspected of being guided by prejudice. That is not the case. On the contrary it is a deep conviction that American scholarship, however difficult the path, must develop in its own way + not be reduced to the production of footnotes to someone else's contributions to history." Wuttke, ed., Panofsky: 1937 bis 1949 448.

[444] Schapiro, "Rev. of Babel's Tower," 272.

hardly the sole domain of the Germans.[445] Though Schapiro recognized the importance of "correct classification," he also saw its limitations, remarking: "If the concern with classification is wrong, it is to be rejected not as foreign or German, but because it is demonstrably a bad procedure or stands in the way of something better . . ."[446]

Though Panofsky is most well known as a Renaissance scholar and Schapiro as a scholar of both medieval and modern art, Panofsky was interested in the early Renaissance just as Schapiro was interested in the late Middle Ages; therefore, occasionally the two dealt with the same historical period. While Panofsky's interest in what he, after Max J. Friedlander (1867-1958), called Early Netherlandish art spanned many years, Schapiro only published twice on the topic, both times in 1945.[447] In March, Schapiro reviewed <u>Flemish Art Reconsidered</u> by Baron Joseph van der Elst in the Surrealist journal <u>View</u> and, in September, he published an article on the Mérode altarpiece in the <u>Art Bulletin</u>.[448] Two years later, Panofsky delivered his lectures on Early Netherlandish painting at Harvard in 1947 and 1948. These lectures were published several years later in 1953 as his famous book, <u>Early Netherlandish Painting</u>.[449] By comparing their

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[445] Schapiro, "Rev. of <u>Babel's Tower</u>," 273.

[446] Schapiro, "Rev. of <u>Babel's Tower</u>," 273.

[447] Max J. Friedländer, <u>Altniederländische Malerei</u>, 14 vols. (Berlin: Cassirer, 1924-37).

[448] Millard Meiss also published a study of light in Early Netherlandish painting in the same issue of the <u>Art Bulletin</u>. Jed Perl in his 1998 review of the exhibition <u>From Van Eyck to Bruegel</u> at the Metropolitan Museum has pointed out the interest in Early Netherlandish painting at this particular historic time and place. He indicates that: "In 1945, John Bernard Myers, who worked at the Surrealist magazine <u>View</u> and would a decade later be running Tibor de Nagy, one of the most important avant-garde galleries, wrote in his diary about his excitement at reading Erwin Panofsky, whose writing had been suggested by Meyer Schapiro in one of his New School classes." Jed Perl, "True North," <u>New Republic</u> 219.20 (1998): 31. Perl has proposed a connection between the interest in Early Netherlandish painting and the rise of Abstract Expressionism, hypothesizing that: "In the postwar years, Schapiro, Panofsky, and Meiss were all convinced that the miraculously frank naturalism of early Netherlandish painting carried a greater freight of meaning than anybody ever imagined . . . Surely the idea that objects and experiences had hidden meanings made perfect sense in a city where Freud's influence was at its zenith. And for the Abstract Expressionists, the thought that up-front images could be deeply mysteriously encoded may well have sounded like an old idea with new potential." Perl, "True North," 31. Though intriguing, Perl only notes the possibility of convergences. Further evidence is necessary to substantiate this line of argument.

[449] Erwin Panofsky, <u>Early Netherlandish Painting, Its Origins and Character</u>, vol. 1, 2 vols. (Cambridge: Harvard UP, 1953).

works, I argue that while both Panofsky and Schapiro take an iconographical approach, Schapiro's essay takes into account more of the complexities of historical meaning and, therefore, more closely approaches Panofsky's theorization of iconology than Panofsky's own iconographical essays of the same time.

What drew these two scholars to the study of Early Netherlandish art? Panofsky's interest may be partially related to his desire to claim a place for 15th century Flemish painting in the German canon.[450] Art historian Lisa Deam has recently demonstrated that the debate of whether the art was "Flemish" or "Netherlandish" was fueled by national bias.[451] Panofsky aided the German cause by methodically reassigning works from the French to the German school.[452] Furthermore, Deam argued that art historian Max J. Friedländer's use of the term "Netherlandish" was "a vehement rejection of the term used by the Belgian and French scholars, 'Flemish Primitives.'"[453] Panofksy's nod to Friedländer with the title of his own book Early Netherlandish Painting further registered his German bias.[454]

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[450] Both Francis Haskell and Suzanne Sulzberger have examined the "rediscovery" of Early Netherlandish art by Germans and their celebration of medieval Germanic culture as evidenced by German Romanticism. Francis Haskell, History and its Images: Art and the Interpretation of the Past (New Haven: Yale UP, 1993); Suzanne Sulzberger, La Rehabilitation des primitifs flamands (Brussels: Palais des académies, 1961).

[451] Lisa Deam, "Flemish versus Netherlandish: A Discourse of Nationalism," Renaissance Quarterly 51.1 (1998). Deam explains that the Belgians, the French and the Germans argued over the cultural ownership of 15th century art. The Germans used the term Netherlandish whereas the Belgians and the French used the "Flemish Primitives."

[452] Pächt noted this in his review of Panofsky's work: "Panofsky has subjected the French tree to the most severe pruning, leaving a bare minimum of indisputably French works." Otto Pächt, "Panofsky's 'Early Netherlandish Painting' - I," Burlington Magazine 98 (1956): 113. He further continued: "He argues at great length and with infinite patience the case for a specific 'Netherlandish' iconography which is presented as the ancestral background of the founders of Flemish painting, but such questions as that of the antecedents of the Flémalle Master's landscapes, to be sought in the direction of the cosmopolitan Limbourgs, he dismisses in two short paragraphs . . . One would have fewer qualms about the over-emphasis of the iconographic approach if really all the iconographic peculiarities which Panofsky considers as specifically 'regional' were as 'un-French' as he assumes." Pächt, "Panofsky's 'Early Netherlandish Painting' - I," 114-15.

[453] Deam, "Flemish versus Netherlandish," 23.

[454] Deam, "Flemish versus Netherlandish," 23.

Though the idea that Panofsky would continue to participate in the building of a cultural heritage for Germany, a nation that had stripped him of his citizenship, may at first seem paradoxical, Keith Moxey has argued convincingly otherwise. In considering Panofsky's treatment of Albrecht Dürer in general and his engraving <u>Melancolia I</u> in particular, Moxey has argued that Panofsky's portrayal of the German national temperament as characterized by a struggle between materialism and subjectivity, rationalism and irrationalism was a manifestation of his own subjective reaction to the political events of his time.[455] Fittingly, Panofsky had related in 1951 that: "the apparently irreconcilable tendencies [of nominalism and mysticism] could variously interpenetrate in the fourteenth century and ultimately merge, for one glorious moment, in the painting of the great Flemings . . . "[456] Thus Panofsky saw in 15th century Flemish painting the balance of materiality and spirituality that he saw as being essentially German. Even in exile, Panofsky identified strongly with Germany and believed that humanism, which he associated with rationalism, was the moral path.

While Panofsky emphasized the German character of 15th century Flemish art, Schapiro was concerned with the art as an expression of its social-historical context. The 15th century in Flanders was a time of great social-historical change, which resulted in a dramatically changed style. The combination of significant historical and stylistic changes had certainly attracted Schapiro to topics in the past and probably contributed to his interest as did, most likely, his relationship with Panofsky.[457] In his 1945 review of <u>The Last Flowering of the Middle Ages</u> by van der Elst, Schapiro criticized the author for suggesting that a parallel existed between the art

[455] Keith P. F. Moxey, <u>The Practice of Theory: Poststructuralism, Cultural Politics, and Art History</u> (Ithaca: Cornell UP, 1994) 65-78.

[456] Erwin Panofsky, <u>Gothic Architecture and Scholasticism</u> (New York: World, 1951) 19-20.

[457] In 1946, Schapiro discussed the term "Gothic" in a letter to Panofsky, addressing the term's application to different time periods by various authors. He indicates in one instance that the author was guided by "a racial theory." Meyer Schapiro. Letter to Erwin Panofsky. 12 March 1946. Microfilm roll 2121. PP.

of 15th century Flanders and 20th century America without providing a valid argument. Schapiro remarked that a parallel did exist, since 15th century Flanders saw the "decay of feudalism" and 20th century America was experiencing the "decay of bourgeois society."[458] Schapiro's main criticisms of van der Elst center on his inaccurate characterization of the social and political conditions of 15th century Flanders as well as his argument that the realism of the period can be attributed to a "Flemish soul."[459] Schapiro's concerns continued to focus on providing an accurate social historical context in which to understand art. In relation to his critique of van der Elst, Schapiro's treatment of the Mérode altarpiece can be read as a demonstration of how to approach the art of this period by focusing singularly on historical meaning.

In his 1945 essay "'Muscipula Diaboli,' The Symbolism of the Mérode Altarpiece," Schapiro considers the complexity of historical meaning in the exceptional appearance of Joseph with a mousetrap in the context of the Annunciation as depicted in the Master of Flémalle's Mérode altarpiece. Schapiro's iconological reading reveals several interconnected layers of meaning. The inclusion of Joseph alongside the Annunciation scene can be understood in relation to the growing emphasis on the cult of Joseph and hence on Christ's human family. Schapiro attempts to explain Joseph's appearance as a carpenter with a mousetrap by considering several textual references to Joseph. After revealing a variety of seemingly incongruous references to Joseph and the mousetrap, Schapiro determines that: "In the present case, what matters is the fact that Joseph was, for the religious fantasy of the later Middle Ages, the guardian of the mystery of the incarnation and one of the main figures in the divine plot to

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[458] Meyer Schapiro, "Flemish Art Reconsidered," Rev. of <u>The Last Flowering of the Middle Ages</u> by Baron Joseph van der Elst. <u>View</u> 5.1 (1945): 49.

[459] Schapiro, "Flemish Art Reconsidered," 49.

deceive the devil."[460] Though Schapiro found religious meaning in the addition of Joseph and the mousetrap, he also saw the inclusion of particular objects, such as the mousetrap, to relate to more secular, even sexual, meanings by way of folklore. The naturalism of both form and subject matter, which revealed an interest in the secular, was a contested space for both religious and secular meanings. Schapiro concludes his essay with a summary of the intricacies of the various layers of meaning in the representation of Joseph and the mousetrap:

> What is most interesting is how the different layers of meaning sustain each other: the domestic world furnishes the objects for the poetic and theological symbols of Mary's purity and the miraculous presence of God; the religious-social conception of the family provides the ascetic figure and occupation of Joseph; the theologian's metaphor of redemption, the mousetrap, is, at the same time, a rich condensation of symbols of the diabolical and the erotic and their repression; the trap is both a female object and the means of destroying sexual temptation.[461]

Schapiro thus argues that the Mérode altarpiece is polyvocal; the competing meanings at work in the inclusion of Joseph and the mousetrap alone correspond with the competing religious and secular values, and humanity's unconscious desires of the contemporary moment. The complex nature of the work's historical meaning thus goes beyond the notion of national classifications. Schapiro's essay, clearly written in dialogue with Panofsky, can be read as an attempt at iconology. Schapiro concerns himself with both Panofsky's preiconographical and iconographical levels in order to develop a deeper understanding of the historical meaning or content of the work of art, Panofsky's third level. To that end, he relates the naturalism of Early

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[460] Meyer Schapiro, "'Muscipula Diaboli,' The Symbolism of the Mérode Altarpiece," <u>Late Antique, Early Christian and Mediaeval Art</u> (New York: George Braziller, 1979) 7. The essay was originally published as: Meyer Schapiro, "'Muscipula Diaboli,' The Symbolism of the Mérode Altarpiece," <u>Art Bulletin</u> 27.3 (1945). Subsequent references refer to the 1979 reprint.

[461] Schapiro, "'Muscipula Diaboli'," 9.

Netherlandish painting to an increasing secularism and the subject matter of the Annunciation to the particular social-historical moment. Schapiro states that:

> The domestic still life is claimed as a symbolic field by both the ascetic ideals and the repressed desires. The iconographic program of the period, in response to the social trend favors this double process by placing in the foreground of art themes like the Virgin and Child, the Annunciation, the Incarnation and the Nativity, which pertain to the intimate and hidden in private life and call into play this complex, emotional sphere.[462]

The complex and conflicting meanings of the work, both religious and secular, are understood in relation to the triptych's historical context. Schapiro states that "The new art appears as a latent battlefield for the religious conceptions, the new secular values, and the underground wishes of men, who have become more aware of themselves and of nature."[463] The new naturalism and subject matter of the Mérode altarpiece understood in conjunction with the increasing secularism and individualism of the day reveal the historical meaning of the work.

Schapiro's approach bears remarkable resemblance to Panofsky's theorization of iconology. In his 1939 introduction to Studies in Iconology, Panofsky makes clear that iconology must take into account form, subject matter and content, all three levels of his iconological approach. He explicitly states that:

> . . . we must bear in mind that the neatly differentiated categories, which in this synoptical table seem to indicate three independent spheres of meaning, refer in reality to aspects of one phenomenon, namely, the work of art as a whole. So that, in actual work, the methods of approach which here appear as three unrelated operations of research merge with each other into one organic and indivisible process.[464]

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[462] Schapiro, "'Muscipula Diaboli'," 9-10.

[463] Schapiro, "'Muscipula Diaboli'," 10.

[464] Panofsky, Studies in Iconology 16-17.

Working at just one of these levels, such as the iconographic level that deals with subject matter alone, would be insufficient.[465] Schapiro's treatment of the Mérode altarpiece seems to unite all three of Panofsky's levels of meaning into one process. Both form and subject matter are made historically meaningful.

Schapiro thus strove to incorporate all three levels of Panofsky's iconological approach into his own iconological practice. At the end of his article on Schapiro, medievalist John Williams argues that with Schapiro's turn towards iconology in the 1940s, Schapiro abandoned the notion of style as historically significant. Williams argues that iconography and not style "would reflect social content."[466] Yet Schapiro's iconological essays such as that on the Mérode altarpiece in fact take style into consideration. Certainly, Schapiro's attention is no longer turned to a detailed description of the formal characteristics of a work of art, as it was in his treatment of Souillac for example, but he did continue to consider formal elements as historically meaningful. In his 1933 review of Baltrusaitis, Schapiro argued that form should not be considered apart from subject matter and content.[467] Iconology provided a theoretical framework in which Schapiro could address the expressive content of both form and subject matter. Schapiro's turn towards iconology reflects his continued concerns for understanding the historical meaning of a work of art.

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[465] J. A. Emmens has stated "Panofsky does not say whether 'iconology' constitutes the whole process or only its last, deepest stage." J. A. Emmens, "Erwin Panofsky as a Humanist," Simiolus 2 (1967-68): 110. It seems that Panofsky does state fairly clearly that iconology is the whole process. Furthermore, just as Sedlmayr argued that his two sciences of art should be practiced together, Panofsky argues that his three levels of interpretation should be indistinguishable from each other in actual practice.

[466] Williams, "Silos," 464.

[467] Schapiro, "Geometrical," 268.

On the other hand, as others have already argued, Panofsky's practical application of his iconological approach fell short of its theorization in <u>Studies in Iconology</u>.[468] The lectures that Panofsky gave just two years after the publication of Schapiro's piece on the Mérode altarpiece provide a valuable counterpoint to Schapiro's work, as they reveal how Panofsky, in an effort to avoid anything that might be compared with "astrology," practiced what might appear to be more like iconography than iconology. In the published lectures, Panofsky reiterates his idea of "disguised symbolism" that he first used in his 1934 essay "Jan van Eyck's Arnolfini Portrait."[469]

In <u>Early Netherlandish Painting</u>, Panofsky discussed Jan van Eyck's <u>Madonna in a Church</u> (c. 1432-34). While others had attributed the Virgin's disproportionate size in relation to her surroundings to the artist's immaturity, Panofsky argued that her size is in fact meaningful: "In reality, [van Eyck's] picture represents, not so much 'a Virgin Mary in a church' as 'the Virgin Mary as The Church'; not so much a human being, scaled to a real structure, as an embodiment in human form of the same spiritual force or entity that is expressed in architectural terms, in the basilica enshrining her."[470] How she is represented is therefore meaningful. Panofsky also pointed out that the sun shines from the North, which would mean that the church faced the West and not the East.[471] This deviation must be meaningful and Panofsky thus argued for the symbolic character of this light – it is not natural light, but instead divine light, which followed the laws of symbolism and not those of nature. The divine light strikes the Virgin from her right, thereby corresponding with the positive symbolic nature of the right as opposed to the negative

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[468] See for example: Göran Hermerén, <u>Representation and Meaning in the Visual Arts</u> (Lund, Sweden: Scandinavian University Books, 1969); Holly, <u>Panofsky</u> 158-93.

[469] Erwin Panofsky, "Jan Van Eyck's <u>Arnolfini</u> Portrait," <u>Burlington Magazine</u> 64 (1934).

[470] Panofsky, <u>Early Netherlandish Painting</u> 145.

[471] Panofsky, <u>Early Netherlandish Painting</u> 147.

of the left. He concludes his argument for the symbolic nature of the light by pointing to the text, taken from the Book of Wisdom 7:26, 29, that is embroidered and partially visible on the bottom of the Virgin's robe, which compares the radiance of the Virgin to a divine light.[472] In contrast to Schapiro's polyvocal image of Joseph and the Annunciation, Panofsky found singular meaning in his reading of the Virgin. In fact, his theory of disguised symbolism is consistent with determining singular meanings for objects. With an increasingly naturalistic style based on scientific perspective, Panofsky argued that Flemish painters needed to find a way to continue to represent spiritual meaning. The result, according to Panofsky, was disguised symbolism.

Pächt, in his review of Panofsky's Early Netherlandish Painting, notes that Panofsky clearly deviated from his "principal objective" as expressed in the introduction to Studies in Iconology with his development of the notion of disguised symbolism.[473] In Early Netherlandish Painting, Panofsky leaves behind the notion of "symbolical values" that he derived from the thought of Ernst Cassirer and that he referred to in both Perspective as Symbolic Form and the introduction to Studies in Iconology. In the latter, Panofsky stated that: "The discovery and interpretation of these 'symbolical' values (which are generally unknown to the artist himself and may even emphatically differ from what he consciously intended to express) is the object of what we may call *iconography in a deeper sense . . .*"[original emphasis].[474] Pächt compares this characterization with Panofsky's clearly changed conception as expressed in Early Netherlandish Painting "that this imaginary reality was controlled to the smallest detail by a preconceived symbolical program."[475] Pächt summarized that:

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[472] Panofsky, Early Netherlandish Painting 148.

[473] Otto Pächt, "Panofsky's 'Early Netherlandish Painting' - II," Burlington Magazine 98 (1956): 276.

[474] Panofsky, Studies in Iconology 8.

[475] As cited in Pächt, "Panofsky's 'Early Netherlandish Painting' - II," 276.

> Concurrently, since the creative act is placed on the level of consciousness and is imagined to be of non-intuitive nature, art-historical interpretation is orientated in a new direction; its ultimate aim no longer to understand the philosophy embodied by, and implicit in, the visual form, but to discover the theological or philosophical preconceptions that lie behind it.[476]

Much more recently, Michael Ann Holly has made a comparable evaluation of Panofsky's iconographic essays in the U.S. She remarks similarly to Pächt: "How can this sort of decoding of the intentional be called iconological rather than second-level iconographic?"[477] Iconological practice devolved from the interpretation of "unconscious" symbolism into the analysis of "conscious" symbolism. Iconology had become iconography.

Furthermore, as Pächt so observantly pointed out fifty years ago, Schapiro's approach is markedly different from Panofsky's. While Panofsky retreated from his earlier interest in understanding art as a cultural symptom and instead began to decipher the meaning of a work of art as consciously intended by the artist, Schapiro continued to try to understand the meaning of an art work by considering its historical meaning in terms of the work's form and subject matter in relation to its social-historical context. Pächt summarized that: "For [Schapiro] the allusive meaning, the latent symbolism is not consciously hidden by the artist in the pictorial motif, but was implicit for him and the contemporary spectator in the objects in question because a certain allegorical meaning was traditionally associated with them."[478] And, while Pächt clearly admired Schapiro's approach, not even he acknowledged that Schapiro recognized layers of meaning that Panofsky does not.

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[476] Pächt, "Panofsky's 'Early Netherlandish Painting' - II," 276.

[477] Holly, <u>Panofsky</u> 163.

[478] Pächt, "Panofsky's 'Early Netherlandish Painting' - II," 276.

Pächt clearly preferred Panofsky's theorization of iconology to his practical application

of iconography in <u>Early Netherlandish Painting</u>. Pächt stated that:

> The theory of disguised symbolism is a clear manifestation of the newly won autonomy of iconographic research. The former preponderance of the stylistic approach rested on the belief that the stylistic data were more reliable guides to the inner meaning, to the true character of a work of art than the most perfect knowledge of its author's intentions could provide. Has this belief turned out to be a fallacy? At any rate, the ascendancy of the new type of iconography to which we owe a wealth of information on the thematic background of art, calls urgently for reassessment of the mutual relationship of iconographic and stylistic approach [sic] and for a synchronization of their methods.[479]

Pächt's comment as well as his critical review of Panofsky's approach in general reveals Pächt's

proclivity for an understanding of art that considers both form and subject matter as an

expression of a particular historic attitude. As Panofsky limits his discussion to the artist's

consciously intended subject matter, any hope at practicing iconology falls by the wayside.

4.5. CONCLUSION

While both Panofsky and Schapiro explicitly rejected the racist turn that art history had taken in

the hands of a few, their individual social and cultural values, which were informed by their

personal histories, guided their distinct responses to this crisis in the foundational premises of the

discipline. While both men shared similar ethnic backgrounds as Jews, the two men's differing

class backgrounds and educational experiences helped shape their approaches. Panofsky was

born in 1892 into a well-off German-Jewish family in Hanover, Germany. He completed his high

school education at one of the leading schools in Berlin (*Joachimsthalsche Gymnasium*), where

he was immersed in the classics. I contend, as has Moxey, that Panofsky's educational

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[479] Pächt, "Panofsky's 'Early Netherlandish Painting' - II," 276.

experiences as an upper class cosmopolitan German Jew can be characterized by the German tradition of *Bildung* as described by the historian George L. Mosse.[480]

According to Mosse, the emancipation of Jews in Germany at the start of the 19th century coincided with the establishment of *Bildung*, the idea that self-education in the classics combined with moral education would lead to personal enlightenment, a process that was above all rational. The ideal of *Bildung*, which emphasized the possibility of advancement as available to each and every individual regardless of religion or nationality, provided German Jews with a ready-made means to bridge the gap between their own history and German tradition by emphasizing self-cultivation and liberal politics. [481] Over the course of the 19th century, however, the classical ideal of *Bildung*, which valued the idea of humanity as a whole and friendship across religious and national differences, was replaced by a growing sense of nationalism and neo-romanticism. Yet many German Jews clung to the classical notion of *Bildung*, believing in the strength of rationalism as an antidote to the irrationalism of the times. For example, in 1930, an article in the C. V. Zeitung, the official newspaper of the largest German-Jewish organization, still argued, according to Mosse, that: " . . . we must place the highest value on humanity as a whole while at the same time loving the German people and our specific Jewishness."[482]

Mosse maintains that certain German Jewish scholars who were committed to *Bildung* "attempt[ed] to use their own scholarship to exorcise the irrational, to render it harmless by filtering it through the rational mind."[483] Of particular note is Mosse's treatment of Warburg and brief mention of Panofsky. Mosse contends that Warburg's interest in understanding the

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[480] Moxey, Practice of Theory 71-72.

[481] Mosse provides a detailed account of the establishment of the concept of *Bildung*, the failed attempt of German-Jews to bring the idea to popular culture, the intellectual currents associated with *Bildung*, and its heritage in the left-wing Jewish intellectuals. George Mosse, German Jews beyond Judaism (Bloomington: Indiana UP, 1985).

[482] As described in: Mosse, German Jews beyond Judaism 2.

[483] Mosse, German Jews beyond Judaism 47.

persistence of the classical tradition in the Renaissance was typical of the German-Jewish intellectual's attempt at "exorcising the irrational."[484] Warburg sought to present symbols, which communicated humanity's emotions, in an ordered, rational system. Thus, Mosse sees Warburg's scholarship as aimed specifically at countering the German nationalism that longed for a return to a native German soul and helped fuel Hitler's rise to power.[485] In regard to Panofsky, Mosse maintains that Panofsky understood the objectivity of scholarship as an ordering principle in relation to the subjective process of artistic creation.[486] Yet Panofsky's commitment to the ideals of *Bildung* was even more essential to his scholarship than Mosse indicates.

Panofsky consistently reaffirmed the primacy of both an art and an approach that maintained a balance between the rational and the irrational that was ultimately controlled by reason. Panofsky repeatedly returns to art that exemplifies this balance as well as the struggle for it. His preoccupation with Early Netherlandish painting is a prime example; Panofsky attributed its success to the balance between nominalism and mysticism achieved in the images.[487] Moxey also pointed to Panofsky's argument that a struggle between materiality and subjectivity occurred in Dürer's work, in which materiality ultimately succeeded.[488] In addition to his stylistic preferences, Panofsky also sought to achieve a balance between the material and the subjective in his iconological approach. The iconographic level of meaning gained its evidence from texts, which allowed images, stories and allegories to be properly interpreted. Its evidence was material. In contrast the iconological level dealt with the human mind; or more specifically "the manner in which, under varying historical conditions, the general and essential tendencies of

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[484] Mosse, German Jews beyond Judaism 50.

[485] Mosse, German Jews beyond Judaism 50-54.

[486] Mosse, German Jews beyond Judaism 53.

[487] Panofsky, Gothic Architecture and Scholasticism 19-20.

[488] Moxey, Practice of Theory 65-78.

the human mind were expressed by specific themes and concepts." The art historian accessed the content or intrinsic meaning of an image through "synthetic intuition."[489] Panofsky had initially intended that all three levels of the iconological approach be practiced simultaneously, thus ensuring a balance controlled by the rational framework of his approach. In fearing that iconology would become like astrology, he recognized that the balance could be upset; that rationalism could lose control of the mystical.[490] Panofsky's final renunciation of iconology in 1966 signaled his recognition that rationalism was incapable of keeping irrationalism in check.

In "Art History as a Humanistic Discipline," Panofsky also made explicit his view that the humanities were linked to human values, and thus their practice could have a positive impact on the contemporary political situation.[491] He argued that the works of Plato and other philosophers could play an anti-fascist role in contemporary politics, citing the Soviets who had recognized the power of humanistic study in their dismissal of professors for advocating prescientific philosophies.[492] Likewise, Panofsky contended that the teaching of philosophers such as Plato could play an anti-fascist role. Panofsky's political liberalism, which was part and parcel of his educational background and his identity as an upper class German Jew, played a key role in his continual defense of humanism.[493] Carl Landauer has made this very argument, pointing out that the faith in the individual that characterized liberalism was analogous to the support of the creative individual at the center of a humanist approach. Landauer recognized that:

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[489] Panofsky, "Iconology," 38-39.

[490] Mosse likewise argues that Warburg sought to rationalize astrology by examining its symbols. Mosse, German Jews beyond Judaism 51.

[491] Erwin Panofsky, "The History of Art as a Humanistic Discipline," Meaning in the Visual Arts (New York: Anchor Books, 1955) 23.

[492] Panofsky, "Humanistic Discipline," 23 n. 18.

[493] In a letter to Schapiro, Panofsky stated that: " . . . I can safely be trusted to be a consistent liberal." Erwin Panofsky. Letter to Meyer Schapiro. 7 November 1934. Microfilm roll 2121. PP.

"The Renaissance individual could be mustered in defense of a liberalism threatened by Hitler, Stalin, and the regimentation of the war."[494]

Martin Warnke has also maintained that Panofsky's inclination to focus on philosophies such as Neo-Platonism or humanism is related to his desire to remain uncontroversial. Warnke contends that: "Iconography as studied by Panofsky and Saxl was always directed towards the history of ideas; it had a specific philosophical slant, whether Neo-Platonic, Stoic, or humanist. I believe that, as Jews, Panofsky and the others deliberately stayed clear of any politically orientated iconography in order not to be controversial."[495] Yet Panofsky's choice to remain uncontroversial was itself politically motivated, as his own comments on the political ramifications of his emphasis on humanism make clear.

Unlike Schapiro, however, Panofsky avoided discussions of artists and architects as socially situated, political individuals. The individual at the center of Panofsky's iconographic essays of the 1940s and after consciously expresses the philosophical. The expressive spontaneous artist who reappears as a staple in Schapiro's writings makes few if any appearances in Panofsky's work. For Schapiro the artist acts freely and is able to contest meaning, whereas for Panofsky, the artist acts as a conduit passing philosophical meaning into the art. In contrast to Panofsky's bourgeois upbringing as a German Jew, Schapiro's early exposure to socialism, Marx and Engels had left an indelible impression on him and continued to shape his art history. Schapiro's concern with how images operate socially motivates his attempts to employ successfully the iconological process. Panofsky, on the other hand, is content to practice iconography.

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[494] Carl Landauer, "Erwin Panofsky and the Renascence of the Renaissance," <u>Renaissance Quarterly</u> 47 (1994): 268.

[495] Warnke, "'Renationalisation'."

Though Panofsky played a key role in the development of iconology, both in conjunction with the Warburg Institute as well as once he arrived in the U.S., he felt that he could not rightfully claim responsibility for it. Instead, he saw his role as a messenger bringing the continental method to the U.S. Following his first term as a visiting professor at NYU, Panofsky clarified his relationship to the practice of iconology in a letter to William Ivins of the Metropolitan Museum Department of Prints dated February 27, 1932:

> . . . I really fear that you overrate me a little. Please do not regard this as false modesty . . . I honestly think that you as well as some of my students give me the credit for what, in reality, is due to a scientific tradition of which I am a very modest part. Firstly, the material with which I deal was mostly gathered together by the united efforts of my friend Saxl and our common pupils and collaborators. Secondly, and this is more important, the very method of my work, a method which perhaps was not so well known in America, is almost a matter of course in [Germany], and I am indebted for it to my great teachers such as Wilhelm Vöge and Aby Warburg as well as to my friends and even to my own disciples, I came to your country as a mere messenger or representative of this tradition, bringing with me some specimens of the fruit that we endeavor to grow for several decades, and I feel a little bit ashamed when you believe me to be a kind of innovator.[496]

Again, in the preface to Studies in Iconology in 1939, he points out, speaking in the third person, that: "The methods which the writer has tried to apply are based on what he and Dr. Saxl learned together from the late Professor A. Warburg, and have endeavoured to practice in many years of personal collaboration."[497] Panofsky's repeated declaration of his role as messenger and the

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[496] Wuttke, ed., Panofsky: 1910 bis 1936 486.

[497] Panofsky, Studies in Iconology v-vi.

In this context, it is interesting to note Joan Hart's observation that Panofsky's narrative of a man tipping his hat with which he starts the introduction to Studies in Iconology bears a striking resemblance to the sociologist Karl Mannheim's use of a similar incident in a 1923 publication to explain his own three-tiered method of interpretation. For a detailed discussion of the elements, which Panofsky developed from Mannheim, see Hart, "Panofsky and Mannheim," 536, 541, 553. Likewise, I have already pointed to Panofsky's borrowing of the pairing of terms

broader German-speaking roots of iconology, reminds us of the broader Euro-American arena in which Schapiro's iconological practice developed.

By the start of the 1940s, Schapiro's politics were decidedly anti-Stalinist and his involvements with contemporary art reflected this shift. Though he had been a founding member of the American Artists' Congress, giving his talk on "The Social Bases of Art" at their first Congress in 1936, the organization's endorsement of the Soviet invasion of Finland in 1940 forced a change in his affiliation. Furthermore, the Congress had revised its position regarding the boycotting of Nazi and fascist exhibitions. Concerned that the Congress was following the Stalinist line, Schapiro led a group that included Stuart Davis, Adolph Gottlieb and Mark Rothko in breaking away from the organization. They founded the Federation of Modern Painters and Sculptors.[498] Regarding the foundation of this organization, which still functions today, Schapiro recalled that: "We thought we ought to have an artists' organization not hostile to cultural freedom."[499] One of the primary goals of the organization was to advance the interests of free progressive artists working in America.[500] By progressive, artists such as Rothko and Gottlieb meant politically radical and artistically modern. I quote here from the preamble to their original constitution at length, as Schapiro's role in the founding of this group further emphasizes their shared concerns regarding racial and national constants:

> We recognize the dangers of growing reactionary movements in
> the United States and condemn every effort to curtail the freedom
> and the cultural and economic opportunities of artists in the name
> of race or nation, or in the interests of special groups in the

ethnography and ethnology from Hoogewerff's 1931 essay in order to clarify the distinction between iconography and iconology.

[498] Monroe describes Schapiro's role in their secession from the American Artists' Congress. See Monroe, "American Artists' Congress," 16-20. A portion of the group's resignation statement, written by Schapiro, was published in: "17 Members Bolt Artists' Congress," New York Times 17 April 1940.

[499] Dore Ashton, The Federation in Retrospect, Available: http://www.fedart.org/about.htm, 14 August 2007.

[500] Ashton, The Federation in Retrospect.

community. We condemn artistic nationalism which negates the world traditions of art at the base of modern art movements. We affirm our faith in the democratic way of life and its principle of freedom of artistic expression, and therefore, oppose totalitarianism of thought and action, as practiced in the present day dictatorships of Germany, Russia, Italy, Spain and Japan, believing it to be the enemy of the artist, interested in him only as a craftsman who may be exploited.[501]

Their political aims also prompted the Federation to protest the MoMA's exhibition policies, which, the Federation argued, tended to favor the art of the Regionalists. International in its perspective and progressive in its art, the historical moment of the founding of the Federation of Modern Painters and Sculptors also coincided with the arrival of many artists in exile.

With Hitler's invasion of Paris in 1940 many artists were forced or chose to leave Europe and found their way to New York by 1941. Among those of the recent arrivals whom Schapiro befriended, were the surrealists André Breton, André Masson and Kurt Seligmann. After their arrival, it was not long before Schapiro began to collaborate with them on projects, to publish in the Surrealist little magazines like Dyn, View and VVV, and to build close friendships, particularly with Seligmann.[502] Schapiro also gained a newfound appreciation for certain aspects of their work. While in the 1930s Schapiro had argued that a passiveness existed in the modern artist's choice of subject matter, he now saw what might appear to be similar artistic choices as

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[501] Ashton, The Federation in Retrospect.

[502] In 1942, he contributed a short piece to VVV, a surrealist journal started by American sculptor David Hare, and responded to several questions on dialectical materialism in Dyn, artist Wolfgang Paalen's Mexico-based art journal. In 1943, he translated André Masson's artist's book Anatomy of My Universe and in 1944, he retold the myth that accompanied Seligmann's six etchings. In 1945, Schapiro published a scholarly review of a book on Flemish art in View, a Surrealist journal edited by American poet and artist Charles Henri Ford. Meyer Schapiro, "Answer to Three Questions on Dialectical Materialism," Dyn 2 (1942); Meyer Schapiro, "Athanasius Kircher," VVV 1 (1942); André Masson, Anatomy of My Universe, trans. Meyer Schapiro, [anon.] (New York: Valentin, 1943); Kurt Seligmann and Meyer Schapiro, The Myth of Oedipus (New York: Durlacher Bros. - R. Kirk Askew Jr., 1944); Schapiro, "Flemish Art Reconsidered."

Schapiro's friendship with Seligmann is recorded in their extant correspondence. Kurt Seligmann Papers, Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library, Yale University.

related to the artist's revolutionary role. This shift in his views on Surrealism is indicative of his

publications of the 1950s in which he supported Abstract Expressionism as a revolutionary art.

5.   SCHAPIRO AND THE HETEROGENEITY OF ART

5.1.   INTRODUCTION

> The modern experience of stylistic variability and of the
> unhomogeneous within an art style will perhaps lead to a more
> refined conception of style.[503]

Schapiro, 1953

In his canonical essay "Style," first presented at the First International Symposium on Anthropology in 1953, Schapiro offered a definition of style that emphasized the expressive content or meaning of the formal elements of the aesthetic whole. He also reiterated his long-standing rejection of the argument that fixed racial and national characters are "the source of long-term constants in style."[504] During the postwar era, Schapiro's argument fit comfortably alongside those made by a number of social scientists, such as cultural anthropologist Ruth Benedict, who strongly contested the notion of racial essentialism. Furthermore, Schapiro found inspiration for developing "a more refined conception of style" in the stylistic variability and heterogeneity of the work of the modern artist.[505] The aesthetic experience of modern art and the findings of social scientists supported his understanding that style need not only be understood as possessing a homogeneous unity, but rather that an aesthetically unified style could be heterogeneous. Schapiro's interest in recent developments in the social sciences and modern art theory conjoin in the early 1950s with his continued concerns for the German art historical tradition and Marxist thought.

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[503] Schapiro, "Style," 63.

[504] Schapiro, "Style," 86.

[505] Schapiro, "Style," 63.

A systematic discussion of past and current theories of style, the essay "Style" was conceived in response to a series of questions put forth by a group of anthropologists. The article appeared quietly in <u>Anthropology Today: An Encyclopedic Inventory</u> in 1953, the result of an invitation by the Wenner Gren Foundation for Anthropological Research on the occasion of their International Symposium on Anthropology.[506] Though some scholars have pointed to the essay's genesis, none have thoroughly considered the significance of its origin.[507] Not only does the essay's initial appearance in 1953 suggest Schapiro's interdisciplinary reach, but it also points towards a heretofore unexplored context in which to consider his discussion of style.

Having recognized that the field of anthropology had changed in the ten years since the Wenner Gren Foundation's initial formation in 1941, the group decided that an assessment of the state of anthropology was due. The 1953 symposium was intended to draw together scholars from regions all over the world in order to assess both past accomplishments in the field and the direction that future research needed to take. The inclusion of Schapiro's essay in the symposium indicates that a committee of anthropologists selected Schapiro to address the topic of style.[508] Each of the so-called "background" or "inventory papers" presented at the symposium, and subsequently published in <u>Anthropology Today</u>, was intended to be "a systematic overview of the methods deployed and substantive results obtained by research along a particular front – a

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[506] The proceedings were published following the symposium as A. L. Kroeber, <u>Anthropology Today: An Encyclopedic Inventory</u> (Chicago: U of Chicago P, 1953).

James Ackerman admits that he "eagerly read Meyer Schapiro's article 'Style,' which appeared in 1953, but sometime after it was published. Like so many of Schapiro's writings it was hard to find before it became famous, and it was a long time before I learned the secret of its hiding place. Ackerman, "On Rereading 'Style'," 153. Panofsky also thanked Schapiro for an offprint of the essay, admitting that: "I should easily have overlooked it because I normally, I am ashamed to say, do not read books on anthropology." Panofsky to Schapiro, PP, microfilm roll 2121, 3 February 1953.

[507] See for example: Ackerman, "On Rereading 'Style'."; Wallach, "Falling into the Void," 11.

[508] A committee selected forty-eight topics and scholars to address these. See Paul Fejos, "Preface," <u>Anthropology Today: An Encyclopedic Inventory</u>, ed. A. L. Kroeber (Chicago: U of Chicago P, 1953) v.

subject or field or segment of anthropology – as this has developed particularly in recent years."[509]

Though Schapiro's style essay has since achieved canonical status in the discipline of art history, its initial reception was largely limited to those in attendance at the Symposium on Anthropology. Art historian James Ackerman has pointed out that only in 1962, a year after Schapiro's essay became more widely available in its republished form in Aesthetics Today in 1961, did other art historians begin to express a renewed interest in style.[510] Of these publications, the most notable are George Kubler's The Shape of Time in 1962 and E. H. Gombrich's entry on style in the International Encyclopedia of the Social Sciences in 1968.[511] Neither of these treatments of style followed Schapiro's lead in considering the relationship between the social and the aesthetic or in calling for a Marxist approach.[512] Yet despite Schapiro's efforts "to broaden the scope of art-historical discussion," particularly around the issue of the expressive content of style, the very notion of style went "out of style."[513] Instead,

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[509] A. L. Kroeber, "Introduction," Anthropology Today: An Encyclopedic Inventory, ed. A. L. Kroeber (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1953) xv.

[510] Meyer Schapiro, "Style," Aesthetics Today, ed. Morris H. Philipson (Cleveland: World, 1961). Even today, references to the article sometimes refer to its 1961 appearance as if it were its first. For example, in the Dictionary of Aesthetics, the essay "Style" is cited as being first published in 1961.

[511] Gombrich, "Style."; George Kubler, The Shape of Time; Remarks on the History of Things (New Haven: Yale UP, 1962). James S. Ackerman remarked that these two works were responses to Schapiro's essay in Ackerman, "On Rereading 'Style'," 153. Ackerman also pointed out that he himself was prompted by Schapiro's essay to publish on the topic of style. SeeJames Ackerman, "A Theory of Style," Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism 20 (1962); James Ackerman and Rhys Carpenter, "Style," Art and Archeology (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, 1963).

[512] Allan Wallach has reflected on the relative insignificance of Schapiro's work on style to the development of the discipline. He argued that Schapiro's understanding of style was too based in scientific rationalism and mathematics to have any effect on subsequent generations. As I make clear in this chapter, he did not see his work as based on mathematics. His second point, that with McCarthyism at its height in the 1950s any serious discussion of a Marxist theory of style was impossible, is reasonable. See Wallach, "Falling into the Void," 13-14.

[513] Wallach remarks that: " . . . throughout his career, Schapiro engaged in an often frustrating attempt to broaden the scope of art-historical discussion. Schapiro's essay on style is a case in point." Wallach, "Falling into the Void," 11. Lavin makes the point that in the 1950s "style went out of style."Irving Lavin, "Introduction," Three Essays on Style, ed. Irving Lavin (Cambridge: MIT P, 1995) 3.

style was subsequently discussed in terms of form alone, if at all, during a period when iconographical studies proliferated.

In chapter five, I propose that a more refined understanding of the history of the concept of style can be obtained through a rereading of Schapiro's essay. My intention is that a consideration of Schapiro's various contemporary inspirations and concerns will lead to a clearer view of style's role in the discipline's past, present and possibly future. I begin by considering Schapiro's interest in the theoretical advances of the social sciences, particularly those of cultural anthropology and Gestalt psychology, and how his work corresponded with a general postwar trend away from conceptions of society grounded in racialist and nationalist thought and towards more holistic understandings of society rooted in the heterogeneous. Schapiro related stylistic difference to cultural difference where culture is theorized as a heterogeneous whole composed of various, even conflicting, parts. The goal of this theoretical maneuvering was to bypass totalizing notions of race and nation in the theorization of culture. Thus, I argue that Schapiro's preference for the heterogeneous whole in his aesthetic considerations – particularly his interest in modern art – was likewise connected to his rejection of nations and races as undifferentiated totalities, a conceptualization that was part and parcel of totalitarian thought. Not only did the notion of complex stylistic and social wholes coincide with Gestalt psychology, but it was also consistent with Marx's notion of the complex social whole. Thus, I further contend that Schapiro's embrace of the postwar trend towards holism was also connected to his continued concern to practice a Marxist art history.

I continue, arguing that Schapiro's interdisciplinary approach to style corresponded with his commitment to and critical engagement with the German art historical tradition. I focus specifically on Schapiro's position vis-à-vis that of Panofsky. Further comparison of their

approaches reveals Schapiro's affinity for an understanding of the aesthetic whole that is sympathetic to trends in modern art whereas Panofsky remains wed to the Renaissance and its system of linear perspective. I conclude the chapter by returning to Schapiro's relationship with modern art. By examining his belief in modern art's capacity to express the basic unity of mankind, I further relate his understanding of style to his reactions to the contemporary political situation. In insisting that formal elements carry an expressive content, Schapiro continued to support the German art historical tradition's emphasis on the inseparability of form and content while at the same time denying that racial and national character play a determining role. Schapiro's notion of style is thus intimately connected to the political ramifications of understanding the meanings of form.

5.2.   CULTURAL ANTHROPOLOGY AND GESTALT PSYCHOLOGY

> . . . I have used the terms 'wholeness' and 'totality.' Both mean entireness; yet let me underscore their differences. Wholeness seems to connote an assembly of parts, even quite diversified parts, that enter into fruitful association and organization. This concept is most strikingly expressed in such terms as wholeheartedness, wholemindedness, wholesomeness, and the like. As a *Gestalt*, then, wholeness emphasizes a sound, organic, progressive mutuality between diversified functions and parts within an entirety, the boundaries of which are open and fluent. Totality, on the contrary, evokes a *Gestalt* in which an absolute boundary is emphasized: given a certain arbitrary delineation, nothing that belongs inside must be left outside, nothing that must be left outside can be tolerated inside. A totality is as absolutely inclusive as it is utterly exclusive: whether or not the category-to-be-made-absolute is a logical one, and whether or not the parts really have, so to speak, a yearning for one another.[514]

Erik Erikson, 1954

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[514] Erik Erikson, "Wholeness and Totality - A Psychiatric Contribution," <u>Totalitarianism: Proceedings of a Conference held at the Amercian Academy of Arts and Sciences, March 1953</u>, ed. Carl J. Friedrich (Cambridge: Harvard UP, 1954) 161-62.

In 1954, German-American psychoanalyst Erik Erikson described the differences between the concepts of totality and wholeness as they had come to be understood. At the heart of this distinction is the underlying pejorative notion of totalitarianism, which had been firmly established in Western political science by the 1950s.[515] The term totalitarianism, which implies the total control of all aspects of life, had first been used to describe the Fascist regime in Italy, and then later, both Adolf Hitler's regime in Germany and Joseph Stalin's in the Soviet Union. Central to Erikson's preference for wholeness is his rejection of nations and races as undifferentiated totalities, a conceptualization that was part and parcel of totalitarian thought. In the 1950s, Erikson was among a number of Western intellectuals who attempted to avoid the pejorative connotations of totality by replacing it in their work with the notion of wholeness. Following cultural anthropologist Ruth Benedict's characterization of the wholeness of a culture, studies of national character gained in popularity among scholars of the social sciences, particularly sociology, anthropology, psychology and social history.[516] Representative of this trend is the popular work of historians David Potter and David Riesman, both of whom attempted to define national character in terms of holism at the same time that they tried to avoid definitions based on essentialist notions of race.[517]

National character was not the only concept to be implicated in the politics of World War II; as I have made evident in earlier chapters of this dissertation, style as it had originated in 19th

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[515] Erikson's essay was given as a paper at a conference on totalitarianism held by the American Academy of Arts and Sciences held in Boston, March 1953. The term "totalitarianism" was developed through the work of the Graduate Faculty at the New School for Social Research. Peter M. Rutkoff and William B. Scott, New School: A History of the New School for Social Research (New York: Free, 1986) 108.

[516] For more on the history of studies of national character, see Carl N. Degler, "Remaking American History," Journal of American History 67.1 (1980): 13-15; Federico Neiburg, Marcio Goldman and Peter Gow, "Anthropology and Politics in Studies of National Character," Cultural Anthropology 13.1 (1998).

[517] David Potter, People of Plenty: Economic Abundance and the American Character (Chicago: U of Chicago P, 1954); David Riesman, Reuel Denney and Nathan Glazer, The Lonely Crowd: a Study of the Changing American Character (New Haven: Yale UP, 1950).

century Germany was also enmeshed in this political web. In his essay, Schapiro looked to the fields of anthropology and psychology to rethink the notion of style. Like Potter, Riesman and others, Schapiro chose to broaden further his disciplinary practice by looking to the social sciences as he strove to develop a holistic, interdisciplinary approach that avoided racial and national essentialism. As a medievalist who was also interested in modern art, Schapiro also hoped to move beyond the unity of Renaissance linear perspective by proposing an aesthetic whole based on the theory of perception known as Gestalt.

In 1910, three psychologists – Max Wertheimer (1880-1943), Wolfgang Köhler (1887-1967) and Kurt Koffka (1886-1941) – met in Frankfurt am Main and together developed Gestalt psychology, a holistic approach to perception.[518] Wertheimer had studied with the phenomenologist Christian von Ehrlens and together Wertheimer, Köhler and Koffka sought to combine von Ehrlens' ideas with experimental psychology. Their main contention was that the experience of a whole, composed of various elements, is fundamentally different than the experience of each of the elements individually. By the 1920s, they and others were applying their findings in various fields. All three eventually ended up in the U.S. In 1928, Koffka took a post at Smith College in Northampton, Massachusetts. Both Köhler and Wertheimer left Germany because of Hitler's rise to power. Köhler held several visiting positions in the U.S. in 1934 and 1935 before emigrating permanently and being hired by Swarthmore in 1935.

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[518] For an excellent summary of Gestalt psychology, Wertheimer's role in its development and its applications, see D. Brett King, Michael Wertheimer, Heidi Keller and Kevin Crochetiere, "The Legacy of Max Wertheimer and Gestalt Psychology - Sixtieth Anniversary, 1934-1994: The Legacy of Our Past," Social Research 61.4 (1994). Also, see the following:"Gestalt Psychology," Gale Encyclopedia of Psychology, ed. Bonnie Strickland, 2nd ed. (Detroit: Gale, 2001); "Wolfgang Köhler," Gale Encyclopedia of Psychology, ed. Bonnie Strickland, 2nd ed. (Detroit: Gale, 2001); Margaret Alic, "Kurt Koffka," Gale Encyclopedia of Psychology, ed. Bonnie Strickland, 2nd ed. (Detroit: Gale, 2001); "Max Wertheimer," Gale Encyclopedia of Psychology, ed. Bonnie Strickland, 2nd ed. (Detroit: Gale, 2001).

Wertheimer's 1912 article is usually considered to be the founding document of Gestalt psychology: Max Wertheimer, "Experimentelle Studien über das Sehen von Bewegung," Zeitschrift für Psychologie 61 (1912).

Wertheimer left Germany for Czechoslovakia with his family in 1933. Soon after he became one of the first members of the New School for Social Research's University in Exile, which became the Graduate Faculty of Political and Social Science in 1935. Wertheimer and Schapiro undoubtedly crossed paths at the New School as Schapiro famously lectured on modern art there during the years that Wertheimer was faculty.[519]

The wide-ranging scholarly interests that provided Schapiro with the possibility to move beyond the boundaries of the discipline in his holistic approach to style in 1953 had colored his intellectual development since his youth. As an undergraduate at Columbia, his curriculum consisted of languages, mathematics, literature, anthropology and philosophy. He graduated with honors in both philosophy and art history in 1924, and briefly considered graduate study in both anthropology and architecture before continuing on at Columbia as a graduate student in art history, where he also took graduate courses with anthropologist Franz Boas. Since Benedict was also on the faculty at Columbia from 1923 to 1948 where she assisted Boas until his death in 1942, Schapiro undoubtedly had contact with Benedict.[520] Though he chose the field of art history, he stayed active in the theoretical debates of various disciplines, as his involvement at the Symposium on Anthropology indicates.

Schapiro's keen interest in anthropology in general and the parallels between his work and Benedict's in particular highlight a crucial and long-overlooked aspect of Schapiro's theorization of style. Benedict's influential Patterns of Culture (1934) provided a touchstone following World War II for those intellectuals who were interested in bypassing totalizing

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[519] Schapiro was active at the New School during Wertheimer's tenure (1933 – 1943). Index files for the course catalogues of the New School indicate that Schapiro taught there beginning in the Fall of 1935 with a course entitled "The Contents of Modern Art" and ending in the Fall of 1953 with "Masters of Painting." Carmen Hendershott, "Meyer Schapiro." Personal email to the author. 21 August 2007.

[520] Epstein, "Passion," 72-74.

notions of race and nation.[521] Here, she articulated the anthropological notion of culture as a "way of life," a definition that strongly opposed the Arnoldian concept of culture as the most prized products of a civilization.[522] Not only did Benedict thus argue for a non-hierarchical understanding of culture, but she also described cultures as unified stylistic wholes. Her definition is taken nearly verbatim from Gestalt psychology. She stated that: "The whole, as modern science is insisting in many fields, is not merely the sum of its parts, but the result of a unique arrangement and interrelation of the parts that has brought about a new entity."[523]

While Schapiro did not cite Benedict in his essay on style, the similarity of his theorization of style with her concept of culture as an aesthetically unified whole composed of various, even seemingly conflicting parts reveals their shared interest in Gestalt psychology as a means of moving beyond totalizing notions of race and nation.[524] Benedict described culture as a unified stylistic whole in the same way that Schapiro described artistic style as unified.[525] In "Style," Schapiro pointed out that some believed that the character of the whole could be found in individual, disparate parts. On the contrary, Schapiro believed that in these instances, "We may be dealing . . . with a microstructural level in which similarity of parts only points to the homogeneity of a style or a technique, rather than to a complex unity in the aesthetic sense."[526] Schapiro's definition of style rests on the same conceptual basis in Gestalt psychology as

[521] Ruth Benedict, <u>Patterns of Culture</u> (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1934). Both Potter and Riesman acknowledged Benedict's ideas as central to their portrayals of national character. Raymond Williams also acknowledges his debt to Benedict's idea of a "pattern of culture" in theorizing his notion of a "structure of feeling." See: Potter, <u>People of Plenty</u> 39; Riesman, Denney and Glazer, <u>The Lonely Crowd</u> 4; Raymond Williams, <u>Long Revolution</u> (New York: Columbia UP, 1961) 47, 81.

[522] Matthew Arnold defined culture as: "the best which has been thought and said in the world." Matthew Arnold, "Preface to <u>Culture and Anarchy</u>," <u>Culture and Anarchy and Other Writings</u> (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1993) 190.

[523] Benedict, <u>Patterns of Culture</u> 47.

[524] Benedict's active fight against racism in the 1940s is evident in her publications. See for example: Ruth Benedict and Gene Weltfish, <u>The Races of Mankind</u> (Public Affairs Committee, 1943).

[525] See part IV, in particular: Schapiro, "Style," 59-69.

[526] Schapiro, "Style," 61.

Benedict's definition of culture. Schapiro stated that: "The description of a style refers to three aspects of art: form elements or motifs, form relationships and qualities (including an all-over quality which we may call the 'expression')."[527] Schapiro's insistence on the unique qualitative relationships that exist between form elements is similar to Benedict's aestheticized understanding of culture being composed of various parts that form a unified whole through their unique relationships with one another.

Schapiro further insisted on the qualitative aspects of style in an exchange that took place between the well-known proponent of structuralism Claude Lévi-Strauss and Schapiro at the 1953 symposium.[528] Lévi-Strauss questioned Schapiro as to why style could not be understood quantitatively. The anthropologist suggested that "mathematical methods" might be most efficient in translating style in both cultural and natural phenomena into the same language.[529] Schapiro responded that:

> In the ancient world, in the Renaissance, and in the modern period, there were people who seriously believed that one not only could grasp the form of a work of art by mathematical methods but could also create works of art by mathematical methods. That view has been rejected by most artists and also by mathematicians who are really sensitive about art.[530]

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[527] Schapiro, "Style," 54.

[528] Meyer Schapiro indicates that he and Lévi-Struass became friends after the latter arrived in New York in 1941. In an interview with David Craven in 1993, Schapiro stated that: "I knew Claude Lévi-Strauss very well. We talked often during the mid-1940s. We also met with each other in Paris, as for example in 1952. He gave lectures at the New School for Social Research from 1942 to 1945. Once at least, he wrote a letter asking for my opinion on an anthropological point concerning an issue in folklore." Craven, Abstract Expressionism 103. While Lévi-Strauss recalls meeting Schapiro on several occasions, he stated that: "after so many years I keep the faintest recollection." Claude Lévi-Strauss. Letter to the author. 16 May 2003.

[529] Sol Tax, Loren C. Eiseley, Irving Rouse and Carl F. Voegelin, eds., Appraisal of Anthropology Today (Chicago: U of Chicago P, 1953) 61.

[530] Tax, Eiseley, Rouse and Voegelin, eds., Appraisal of Anthropology Today 63.

Schapiro went on to dismiss decisively the possibility of a mathematical, or purely quantitative, method for understanding art with the use of two simple figures. He argued that in order to understand the difference in appearance caused by a change in orientation such as occurs between his figures A and B (see Figure 1), as well as the differences in feeling affected by the addition of two dots or two eyes as in his figures C and D (see Figure 2), psychological studies of form perception are necessary. For Schapiro, these examples demonstrated that the only way to understand the expressive relationships between forms is qualitatively.[531] They also reflect his use of Gestalt psychology.

Not only do Schapiro's figures resemble those used by Gestalt psychologists, but both in his discussion with Lévi-Strauss and his essay "Style" he also emphasized that qualitative relationships exist between quantitative forms. Similarly, Koffka had expressed that although the basis of modern science is quantitative measurement, only through an analysis of the qualitative relationships between these quantities can we determine meaning.[532] Schapiro's definition of style similarly highlighted that meaning emerged from the qualitative relationships between form elements.[533] Schapiro's understanding of the aesthetic unity of complex styles such as the Romanesque also benefited from the theories of Gestalt psychology.

In the style essay, Schapiro pointed to the complexity of style in various works of art, arguing that: "The integration [of a style] may be of a looser, more complex kind, operating with unlike parts."[534] He pointed out that although the marginal and central fields of a work may

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[531] Schapiro gives several other examples of the difficulties presented by undertaking to understand artistic style mathematically. See Tax, Eiseley, Rouse and Voegelin, eds., Appraisal of Anthropology Today 64-65.

Allan Wallach incorrectly states that "Schapiro's notion of what constituted an adequate theory [of style], derived as it was from mathematical and physical models, was itself too rigid . . ." Wallach, "Falling into the Void," 13.

[532] Kurt Koffka, Principles of Gestalt Psychology (New York: Harcourt, 1935) 13-15, 22.

[533] Schapiro, "Style," 54.

[534] Schapiro, "Style," 61-62.

differ formally, they could still be understood as stylistically unified. His arguments here correspond with those of his earlier studies of 1939. At Silos, the marginal imagery of the secular *jongleurs* done in a Romanesque style exists within the religious context of the Beatus manuscript where the dominant field is primarily Mozarabic. Likewise, Schapiro insisted in "The Sculptures of Souillac" on the stylistic integrity of the Souillac tympanum, although it is neither symmetrical nor hieratic in composition like conventional Romanesque tympana, but is organized by the principle of "discoordination." In both instances, Schapiro found meaning in complex formal arrangements. After pointing in the style essay to the various examples of stylistic complexity, Schapiro concludes that: "Such observations teach us the importance of considering in the description and explanation of style the unhomogeneous, unstable aspect, the obscure tendencies towards new forms."[535]

The resonance of Schapiro's work with Benedict's moves beyond the aesthetic nature of the individual artwork, since he also adopted a holistic understanding of culture that can be seen to correspond to his continuing Marxist politics. In Patterns of Culture, Benedict noted that: "If we are interested in cultural processes, the only way in which we can know the significance of the selected detail of behaviour [sic] is against the background of the motives and emotions and values that are institutionalized in that culture."[536] Her argument parallels Wertheimer's notion that the world is a coherent whole and that all of its elements need to be understood as a part of that structure. Similarly, Schapiro continued to emphasize that the meaning of a work of art must be understood within its social-historical context.

Schapiro's continuing interest in understanding art objects in relation to the societies in which they were produced was also a testament to his long-standing commitment to Marxism.

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[535] Schapiro, "Style," 62.

[536] Benedict, Patterns of Culture 49.

While Schapiro had become disillusioned by the totalitarian nature of Stalinism in the late 1930s, he remained an independent Marxist for the rest of his life and he continued to formulate his methodological approaches in conjunction with his political beliefs.[537] In a few paragraphs at the end of "Style," Schapiro drew attention to the benefits of a Marxist approach, while commenting on its weaknesses as it had been practiced. For Schapiro, different styles corresponded with different economic, political and ideological conditions. He expressed that: "Between the economic relationships and the styles of art intervenes the process of ideological construction, a complex imaginative transposition of class roles and needs, which affects the special field – religion, mythology, or civil life – that provides the chief themes of art."[538] The restrictive atmosphere of the Cold War undoubtedly played a role in how explicit Schapiro chose to be in emphasizing the role of class struggle in stylistic change, yet his comments still express Marxist concerns. After having expressed the significance of economic history and the role of class within it, Schapiro continued:

> The great interest of the Marxist approach lies not only in the attempt to interpret the historically changing relations of art and economic life in the light of a general theory of society but also in the weight given to the differences and conflicts within the social group as motors of development, and to the effects of these on outlook, religion, morality, and philosophical ideas.[539]

Though Schapiro remarked that: "Marxist writing on art has suffered from schematic and premature formulations and from crude judgments imposed by loyalty to a political line," he still

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[537] In 1992, he stated that: "I continue to recommend Marx as a way of discovering conceptual tools for grappling with an analysis of art and society." Craven, Abstract Expressionism 177.

In this regard, his intellectual trajectory differs from many of the group known as the "New York Intellectuals" whose staunch anti-Stalinism had transformed into Cold War liberalism by the 1950s.

[538] Schapiro, "Style," 100.

[539] Schapiro, "Style," 100.

viewed its potential. The difficulty of endorsing a Marxist approach is made exceedingly clear in Schapiro's exchange with Lévi-Strauss.

At the end of his question to Schapiro as to whether style could be understood mathematically, Lévi-Strauss commented that he agreed with Schapiro's assessment of a Marxist approach: " . . . Professor Schapiro suggests that Marxist thought has probably come closest to a true understanding of the relationship between style and the other aspects of social life, and I fully agree with him."[540] In his response to Lévi-Strauss, Schapiro gives a critical assessment of the application of Marxist thought to the theory of style. Schapiro pointed out that " . . . I tried to make clear in the statement at the end of my paper that Marxism has the enormous merit of being the only attempt to create a comprehensive theory which relates art to society, I did not say that the Marxist theory is able to solve these problems."[541] Schapiro shies away from an endorsement of a Marxist approach, yet he continues by praising Marxism's view of the social process: " . . . Marxism attempts to view the social process as a whole in which the way human beings create their means of life, the stratification of society in classes, and the conflicts in the course of which society is transformed all affect the way that people think, their institutions, their religious life, and their arts."[542] He goes on to point out that:

> . . . Marxist writing actually does not have a clear conception of the structural forms and that in only a few exceptions – in a recent book by Arnold Hauser and in a book by a Hungarian scholar, [Friedrich] Antal, now in England, on Florentine art – do we find a serious attempt to observe the relationship between economic and social life, religious life beside it, and the art forms that arise

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[540] Tax, Eiseley, Rouse and Voegelin, eds., <u>Appraisal of Anthropology Today</u> 62. Lévi-Strauss went on to point out that he agreed conditionally: " . . . style must be understood by itself, the grammar of style must be elaborated independently of the grammar of social institutions, such as kinship or technology or economics, and it is not between the raw materials that the correspondence can be found but only between the systematized forms, which should first be abstracted on different levels."

[541] Tax, Eiseley, Rouse and Voegelin, eds., <u>Appraisal of Anthropology Today</u> 65.

[542] Tax, Eiseley, Rouse and Voegelin, eds., <u>Appraisal of Anthropology Today</u> 66.

within the religious sphere and their expressive and psychological
aspects.[543]

Schapiro thus attempts to distance himself from a position that could be perceived as sympathetic to the CP and the Soviet Union, while at the same time acknowledging the potential in Marx's writings for better understanding the relationship between art and society.

Furthermore, Schapiro's formulation of the complex whole also coincides with Marx's view of the social whole. The Marxist philosopher Louis Althusser has distinguished Marx's social whole from the Hegelian social totality. While Hegel's social totality is homogeneous, Marx's social whole is complex, de-centered and uneven. Althusser emphasized that the Hegelian totality is unified by the Idea, or the spiritual essence of the time.[544] In contrast, for Althusser, the Marxist whole " . . . is constituted by a certain type of *complexity*, the unity of a *structured whole* containing what can be called levels or instances which are distinct and 'relatively autonomous', and co-exist within this complex structural unity, articulated with one another according to specific determinations, fixed in the last instance by the level or instance of the economy."[545] While Schapiro wavered in his explicit embrace of a Marxist approach to style in practice, his view of the social whole as heterogeneous and complex corresponded with that of Marx as described by Althusser.

Just as Schapiro viewed aesthetic wholes and cultures as heterogeneous, he also understood group style in terms of a heterogeneous group and individual style in terms of a complex individual. This tendency to regard group style as possibly unhomogeneous emerged in Schapiro's 1939 discussion of the sculpture at Souillac, where he argued that the work is

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[543] Tax, Eiseley, Rouse and Voegelin, eds., <u>Appraisal of Anthropology Today</u> 67.

[544] Louis Althusser and Etienne Balibar, <u>Reading Capital</u>, trans. Ben Brewster (London: NLB, 1970) 94-97.

[545] Althusser and Balibar, <u>Reading Capital</u> 97.

Romanesque although it does not follow the conventional formal or iconographic patterns usually associated with the Romanesque style.[546] In 1953, Schapiro saw the contemporary coexistence of various styles in art as corresponding to greater individual freedoms. He argued that, "While some critics judge this heterogeneity to be a sign of an unstable, unintegrated culture, it may be regarded as a necessary and valuable consequence of the individual's freedom of choice and of the world scope of modern culture, which permits a greater interaction of styles than was ever possible before."[547] For Schapiro, the heterogeneity of style thus corresponded with greater social freedom.

In the style essay, Schapiro also recognized that individual artists could produce work in what are considered to be different styles. For example, he pointed out that Picasso had worked simultaneously in Cubism and a classicizing naturalism.[548] In two lectures, one in 1969 and again in 1973, Schapiro elaborated on his idea of unity in Picasso's art. In 1985, Schapiro prepared a third text based on these two earlier lectures. In this later essay, recently published in 2000 as "The Unity of Picasso's Art," he argued that even though Picasso produced works in a variety of styles, sometimes even contemporaneously, his work still possessed a unity of purpose.

Schapiro contended that Picasso's art was unified by its exploration of art as a means of radical transformation. Schapiro illustrated this by turning to two of Picasso's works. The first was his <u>Painter with a Model Knitting</u> from a series of 12 etchings that illustrate the 19th century French author Honoré de Balzac's short story "The Unknown Masterpiece." In this story, the main character – Frenhofer - is a 17th century painter who is obsessed by his attempt to conciliate

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[546] Schapiro, "Souillac." See chapter four for a thorough discussion of the article.

[547] Schapiro, "Style," 65.

[548] Schapiro, "Style," 73.

the classic struggle between line and color in a painting of his model. When he is tricked into unveiling his unfinished painting on which he has worked for some 10 years, the artists who view it are unable to recognize its subject matter as Frenhofer's model. The one artist, a young Poussin, sees "colors daubed one on top of the other and contained by a mass of strange lines forming a wall of paint."[549] In Picasso's etching, the artist is shown sketching the model. While the model is depicted in a classicizing form, the artist's representation of her is a tangle of lines. Schapiro's other example represents the same formal transformation but in reverse; while the artist and his model are both depicted as abstracted forms in Picasso's Painter and Model, the artist's representation of his model is a "pure classic silhouette of a woman."[550] For Schapiro, Picasso's work was about the exploration of artistic process. Thus, rather than portray Picasso's oeuvre as disunified because he worked in "opposing" styles, his heterogeneous style was unified by "a confidence in art as a process of radical transformation . . ."[551] Schapiro explained that: " . . . the two styles were both available and provided problems that [Picasso] solved in different ways and belonged to two different aspects of his personality."[552] Schapiro thus viewed Picasso as a complex individual, whose work echoed this complexity.[553]

Both Benedict's theorization of "patterns of culture" and Schapiro's concept of style are indebted to theoretical work that was being done in the field of psychology. In Patterns of Culture, Benedict emphasized that her holistic understanding of culture had its roots in Gestalt psychology. She stated:

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[549] Honoré de Balzac, "The Unknown Masterpiece," trans. Richard Howard, The Unknown Masterpiece and Gambara (New York: New York Review Books, 2001) 40.

[550] Meyer Schapiro, "Unity of Picasso's Art," Unity of Picasso's Art (New York: Braziller, 2000) 42.

[551] Schapiro, "Unity of Picasso's Art," 41.

[552] Schapiro, "Unity of Picasso's Art," 29.

[553] Gestalt psychologists similarly recognized the complexity of the Ego. See Koffka, Principles of Gestalt Psychology 333-42.

> The [sic] *Gestalt* (configuration) psychology has done some of the most striking work in justifying the importance of this point of departure from the whole rather than from its parts. *Gestalt* psychologists have shown that in the simplest sense-perception no analysis of the separate percepts can account for the total experience.[554]

Benedict similarly points out that: "The importance of the study of the whole configuration as over against the continued analysis of its parts is stressed in field after field of modern science."[555] Their arguments are taken from the Gestalt psychologists who emphasized the significance of the whole over an analysis of individual parts.

Unlike Benedict, Schapiro did not acknowledge Gestalt psychology as a source of theoretical inspiration in his postwar writings. Schapiro did however point to the possibilities that may be available to the art historian in explorations of psychological theories, including Gestalt psychology, in his previously discussed 1936 review of "The New Viennese School."[556] In "Toward a Rigorous Study of Art," Sedlmayr referred to Gestalt psychology as a basis for much of his intuitive art history. Though Schapiro criticized Sedlmayr for his unsystematic application of Gestalt theory, recall that Schapiro stated that American students of art history could learn from the New Vienna School a "readiness to absorb findings of contemporary scientific philosophy and psychology."[557] Gestalt psychology appears to be one such contemporary scientific and progressive field that Schapiro felt could be useful to art historians.

While Schapiro had recognized the possible applications of Gestalt psychology for a more complex understanding of style, he was also aware of certain limitations, though he did not

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[554] Benedict, <u>Patterns of Culture</u> 51.

[555] Benedict, <u>Patterns of Culture</u> 50.

[556] For more on Schapiro's relationship to the New Vienna School, see chapter four.

[557] Schapiro, "New Viennese School," 462.

specify what these were. In response to a comment regarding how to understand individual artistic behaviors within a group made by cultural anthropologist Margaret Mead at the International Symposium on Anthropology, Schapiro stated that:

> I believe . . . that the future of the investigation of style still depends on the development of psychology, but I do not see that the right kind of psychology exists for it yet. It will have to be along lines which are being developed at present, but I think in a much more refined and subtle way than we can find in the works which are offered to us for use on these problems.[558]

Following Schapiro's discussion of Marxist theory, Schapiro concluded the "Style" essay with a call for future developments in psychology and history, ostensibly a Marxist one:

> A theory of style adequate to the psychological and historical problems has still to be created. It waits for a deeper knowledge of the principles of form construction and expression and for a unified theory of the processes of social life in which the practical means of life as well as emotional behavior are comprised.[559]

Yet even with his misgivings about both current psychological and historical theory, Schapiro found aspects of both Gestalt psychology and Marxism valuable in understanding style.

Gestalt psychology also allowed Schapiro to bypass the conventional status of the Cartesian model of perception, a significant theoretical maneuver for a medievalist who was also interested in modern art. The prominent position of Renaissance art studies in the field of art history was due in large degree to the normative status of figural representations controlled by systems of linear perspective. In contrast, Gestalt psychology developed the idea that perception is organized by the recognition of the figure and the ground. What one perceives to be the figure and the ground depends upon the viewer's focus, and therefore, may be considered subjective.

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[558] Tax, Eiseley, Rouse and Voegelin, eds., <u>Appraisal of Anthropology Today</u> 66.

[559] Schapiro, "Style," 100.

This understanding of perception is radically opposed to the Cartesian model, which is based on a grid system and claims to be objective. While Schapiro moved beyond the accepted unity of Renaissance linear perspective and hypothesized an aesthetic whole based on an understanding of perception developed in the field of Gestalt psychology, Panofsky's approach remained wed to the objectivity of Cartesian perspective.
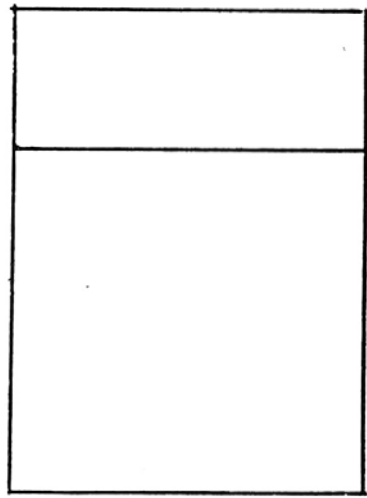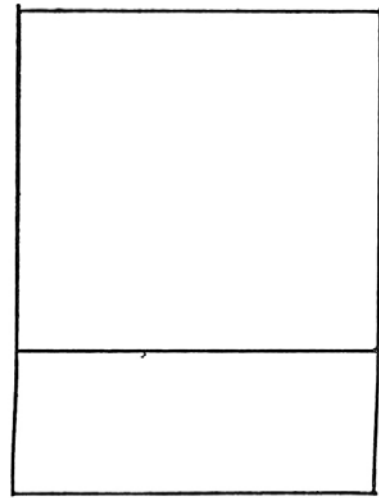
Fig.A   Fig.B

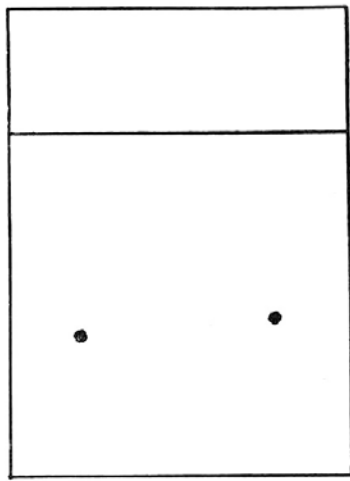**Figure 1** [From <u>Appraisal of Anthropology Today</u>, p. 63]
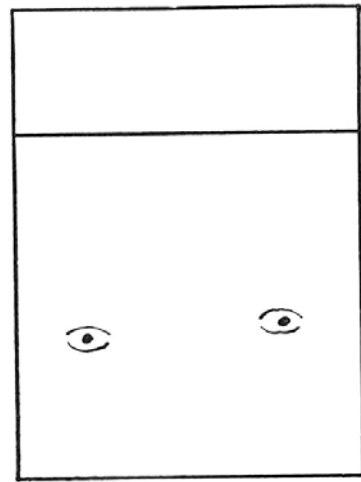
Fig.C

Fig.D

Figure 2 [From <u>Appraisal of Anthropology Today</u>, p. 64]

5.3. THE GERMAN ART HISTORICAL TRADITION, PANOFSKY AND THE CARTESIAN GRID

Though the original audience for "Style" was composed of those in attendance at the Symposium on Anthropology, Schapiro clearly positioned himself vis-à-vis the art historical tradition, particularly the German speaking one, as he systematically explained and subsequently critiqued various readings of style.[560] Certainly, the second portion of his essay, which deals primarily with trends in the art historical tradition, continues to provide methodology courses with a succinct summary of some of the earlier German texts. In his critical analysis, Schapiro laid out what he viewed as the strengths and weaknesses of various theories. Furthermore, rather than see Schapiro's interdisciplinarity as taking him away from the discipline, I understand it to be a continuation of the German art historical tradition. As Kathryn Brush has pointed out, in seeking to give the discipline a secure scholarly basis distinct from connoisseurship, German-speaking art historians drew on various other fields of expertise, including aesthetics, contemporary art theory, philosophy and experimental psychology.[561] Interdisciplinarity could thus be considered as integral to disciplinary practice. In addition, Schapiro's emphasis on the expressive content of style reiterates the understanding common to the German art historical tradition that form was meaningful.

Like Schapiro, Panofsky sought to reconceptualize the art historical notion of style through his theorization of iconology, yet I have recounted how it was iconography under the

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[560] In sections V and VI, Schapiro critiques specific theories of style. In section V, he discusses the theories set forth by the proponents of both a cyclical development of style, like Wölfflin and Paul Frankl, and a continuous and long-term development of style, such as Löwy and Riegl. In section VI, Schapiro addresses theories of style that are neither cyclical nor evolutionary, such as those of Gottried Semper and Franz Boas that favor material factors in determining style. He also discusses theories that state that the content of the work determines the origin of the style, giving no representatives. In section VII, he critiques theories of style that are based on racial and national character.

[561] See, for example, her discussions of Robert Vischer, Wilhelm Vöge and Adolph Goldschmidt. Brush, Shaping of Art History 29-30, 43, 86.

guise of iconology that alone played a critical role in the practice of the discipline in the postwar

years. This success can be largely attributed to the sense of objectivity that an iconographical

approach engendered in many. Initially interested in the broader question of style understood as

both the form and content of a work of art, Panofsky later participated in a maneuver that shifted

the locus of meaning in art historical analysis from style to subject matter.[562] Though he

abandoned explicitly theoretical discussions of style in his later writings, his perspective on style

can be gleaned by considering his relationship with Renaissance art and humanism.[563]

Throughout his career, Panofsky saw Renaissance art as the Archimedean point, or ideal

vantage point, from which to assess all other styles.[564] Take for example his 1927 essay

"Perspective as Symbolic Form" in which he begins by intimating that he is going to undermine

the conventionality of linear perspective as it appeared in the Renaissance.[565] He ends up

viewing linear perspective as a culminating moment in the history of style because of the

objectivity it lends its subject.[566] One of Panofsky's concluding images is Albrecht Dürer's

engraving of Saint Jerome in His Cabinet (1514). Panofsky emphasized how Dürer depicts a

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[562] For a detailed investigation of both Panofsky's early and later work, see Holly, Panofsky.

[563] Though Panofsky did not continue to engage in high-level theoretical debates regarding style, he did lecture to popular audiences on the topic. A collection of three of Panofsky's U.S. publications on style are assembled in Erwin Panofsky, Three Essays on Style (Cambridge, MA: MIT P, 1995). In the introduction to this volume, Irving Lavin points out that even when Panofsky is not specifically discussing style, his writings still have relevance to the topic. Irving Lavin, "Introduction," Three Essays on Style (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1995).

[564] Archimedes observed that with a fixed point and a lever, he could move the earth. Descartes referred to this observation in Meditations 7:23-24: "Archimedes used to demand just one firm and immovable point in order to shift the entire earth; so I too can hope for great things if I manage to find just one thing, however slight, that is certain and unshakeable."

Wayne Dynes has stated that: "To art history students who are oriented toward modern art [Schapiro] has stressed that immersion in another, distant era provides a kind of Archimedean point from which to measure and sharpen our perceptions of our own times." In fact, Schapiro consistently points out that our contemporary perspective allows us to see the past in changed ways. This is not an Archimedean point, as Schapiro realizes that the way we view the past changes, though the historical facts do not. See Wayne Dynes, "The Work of Meyer Schapiro: Distinction and Distance," Journal of the History of Ideas 42.1 (1980): 167.

[565] Erwin Panofsky, Perspective as Symbolic Form 1927 (New York: Urzone, 1991).

[566] For more on Panofsky's understanding of Renaissance linear perspective as an Archimedean point, see Holly, Panofsky 146-147.

"real" space as if the viewer is standing within it. This point of view is suggested by the way that the floor seems to extend beneath the viewer's feet. Yet Panofsky also argued that the odd positioning of the vanishing point, which is off-center, emphasized not the architectural structure, but rather the viewer's subjective viewpoint. As others have noted, the linear perspective of the Northern Renaissance, particularly as it emerged in the art of Dürer, carried a certain allure for Panofsky arguably because he saw it as reconciling the objective with the subjective.[567] Panofsky explained that linear perspective could transform our subjective experience of space into a mathematical space, thus creating distance between human beings and things.[568]

For Panofsky, historical distance helped establish a sense of objectivity that was essential to the development of linear perspective. In his introduction to Studies in Iconology, Panofsky described the Middle Ages as unable to develop the modern system of linear perspective because it lacked the proper historical distance with the Classical past that the Renaissance possessed.[569] While the seeds of linear perspective were sown in the Classical period it was not until the Renaissance that it could come into being. With temporal distance, a system of linear perspective could be realized. Similarly, Panofsky argued that the Middle Ages were unable to develop the modern idea of history, which was "based on the realization of an intellectual distance between the present and the past which enables the scholar to build up comprehensive and consistent

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[567] See especially Moxey, Practice of Theory 65-78. Also see Holly on Panofsky's treatment of perspective in his essay "Perspective as Symbolic Form" (1927). Holly, Panofsky 149-52.

[568] Panofsky stated that linear perspective results in "a translation of psychophysiological space into mathematical space; in other words, an objectification of the subjective." Panofsky, Symbolic Form 66. He further explained, following an idea stated by Albrecht Dürer who was citing Piero della Francesca, that: "Perspective creates distance between human beings and things . . . ; but then it abolishes this distance by, in a sense, drawing this world of things, an autonomous world of confronting the individual, into the eye." Panofsky, Symbolic Form 67.

[569] Panofsky, Studies in Iconology 27-28.

concepts of bygone periods."[570] Not only does the passing of time provide the distance deemed necessary for objectivity, but Panofsky also argued that geographical and cultural distance allowed for objectivity in contemporary art history.

In his 1953 essay "The History of Art" that was republished as "Three Decades of Art History in the United States" in 1955, Panofsky contended that the U.S.'s cultural and geographical distance from Europe allowed for an objective viewpoint of European art inaccessible to Europeans. Yet Panofsky maintained that the privileged viewpoint of the U.S. did not come from distance alone, but it was produced in conjunction with the country's subjective experience of World War I during which "the United States had come for the first time into active rather than passive contact with the Old World and kept up this contact in a spirit both of possessiveness and impartial observation."[571] Panofsky argued that the position of art historians in the U.S. allowed them to see beyond national and regional distinctions in art that had held the attention of Europeans. According to Panofsky, "Where the European art historians were conditioned to think in terms of national and regional boundaries, no such limitations existed for the Americans."[572] The implication is that the U.S. provided an Archimedean point from which European art could be treated objectively rather than subjectively as it had been treated, for example, in Nazi Germany. U.S. art historians were able to avoid a nationalistic art history that subjectively identified particular styles or modes of representation with particular races because of distance.

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[570] Panofsky, Studies in Iconology 28.

[571] Panofsky, "Three Decades," 327-28. This essay was originally published as: Erwin Panofsky, "History of Art," The Cultural Migration: The European Scholar in America, ed. W. R. Crawford (Philadelphia: U of Pennsylvania P, 1953). Subsequent references refer to the 1955 reprint.

[572] Panofsky, "Three Decades," 328.

The unity of style that Panofsky upheld was intimately tied to the Renaissance ideal in which everything is contained by a unifying structure of linear perspective. The resulting image was a coherent, harmonious whole in which the subjective experience of the world was controlled by a consistent, rational system. As I discussed in chapter four, Panofsky's focus in his work on a rational framework that controlled competing subjective and objective tendencies was consistent with his concerns regarding the contemporary political situation. Though Schapiro held similar concerns, his approach to style differed from Panofsky's. Instead, Schapiro sought to emphasize the complexity of the aesthetic whole that did not necessarily gain its unity from the controlling nature of a consistent system.

For Schapiro, in his 1953 essay "Style," the consistency or "homogeneity of a style" may be all one can prove by matching parts, and not a "complex unity in the aesthetic sense."[573] In so arguing, Schapiro denied that aesthetic unity is the privileged domain of the Renaissance. He makes this point, stating that: "The same tendency to coherence (well-ordered) and expressive structure are found in the arts of all cultures."[574] The notion that consistency provides an aesthetically unified whole is understood to be a modern (Renaissance and after) Western conception by Schapiro, who argued instead that aesthetic unity comes from a unique experience of the whole. Schapiro clearly delineated these ideas in "Style."

> In the past, a great deal of primitive work, especially of representation, was regarded as artless even by sensitive people; what was valued were mainly the ornamentation and the skills of primitive industry. It was believed that primitive arts were childlike attempts to represent nature – attempts distorted by ignorance and by an irrational content of the monstrous and grotesque. True art was admitted only in the high cultures, where knowledge of natural forms was combined with a rational ideal which brought beauty and decorum to the image of man. Greek art

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[573] Schapiro, "Style," 61.

[574] Schapiro, "Style," 57.

and the art of the Italian High Renaissance were the norms for judging all art, although in time the classic phase of Gothic art was accepted.[575]

He further stated that: "It is evident . . . that the conception of style as a visibly unified constant rests upon a particular norm of stability in style and shifts from the large to the small forms, as the whole becomes more complex."[576] In emphasizing that opposed parts often constitute a whole, he implicitly refuted Panofsky's position regarding the privileged nature of the Cartesian grid and Renaissance perspective.

Schapiro also set his opinions apart from those of Panofsky more explicitly. While Schapiro never mentioned Panofsky by name in the "Style" essay, he clearly referred to Panofsky's Gothic Architecture and Scholasticism (1951). In this publication, Panofsky drew an analogy between the style of Gothic architecture and the methods of Scholasticism as they were practiced in the region of Paris between 1226 and 1270. Panofsky argued that Scholastic thought had shaped the "mental habits" of Gothic architects and that therefore the same controlling principles of *manifestatio* and *concordantia* that guided Saint Thomas Aquinas in the writing of his Summa Theologica also governed the formal characteristics and historical development of Gothic architecture. Panofsky described the first controlling principle of Scholasticism - *manifestatio* – as the "postulate of clarification for clarification's sake" and the second principle – *concordantia* – as "acceptance and ultimate reconciliation of contradictory possibilities."[577] Schapiro found this practice suspect, arguing in his "Style" essay that:

> The attempts to derive style from thought are often too vague to yield more than suggestive *aperçus*; the method breeds analogical

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[575] Schapiro, "Style," 57.

[576] Schapiro, "Style," 65.

[577] Panofsky, Gothic Architecture and Scholasticism 35, 64.

speculations which do not hold up under detailed critical study. The history of the analogy drawn between the Gothic cathedral and scholastic theology is an example. The common element in these two contemporary creations has been found in their rationalism and in their irrationality, their idealism and their naturalism, their encyclopedic completeness and their striving for infinity, and recently in their dialectical method. Yet one hesitates to reject such analogies in principle, since the cathedral belongs to the same religious sphere as does contemporary theology.

Schapiro referred to Panofsky's recently published <u>Gothic Architecture and Scholasticism</u> both generally, in his reference to studies that draw parallels between the Gothic cathedral and Scholasticism, and specifically, when he referred to the recent study that finds the common element between the philosophical thought and architectural style in their dialectical method. Panofsky had argued that the principle of *concordantia*, or "the acceptance and ultimate reconciliation of contradictory possibilities," guided both Scholastic thought and Gothic architecture. While Schapiro expressed concern here with the vagueness of arguments that find parallels in style and thought, his reactions to Panofsky's argument have been more thoroughly captured in a letter that Schapiro wrote to Panofsky after reading a copy of <u>Gothic Architecture and Scholasticism</u> that Panofsky had sent him.

In his letter, Schapiro made six interrelated objections to Panofsky's general theory. Schapiro first doubted whether the Gothic style is in fact characterized by clarification. The first of the guiding principles of Scholasticism was "clarification for clarification's sake." Panofsky maintained that Gothic architecture was governed by the "principle of transparency," arguing that the structure of Gothic architecture is made clear in the composition of its various architectural elements. Rather than see Gothic architecture as clearer or more clarified than Romanesque, Schapiro viewed Gothic architecture as just the opposite, less clear than Romanesque. He argued that in addition to the "powerful impulse towards infinite subdivision,

there is also one towards continuity and fusion, which is unintellectual (non-rationalistic) and corresponds rather to mystical illumination. These two features of Gothic – subdivision and continuity – work together."[578]

In his response to Schapiro, Panofsky admitted that he agreed with Schapiro's assessment that "Gothic is dominated by a tension between a tendency toward articulation . . . and continuity or fusion . . ." Panofsky further explained that he saw a balance between the rational and irrational in Gothic architecture that was ultimately controlled by reason: "But my contention is that during the phase to which I limit myself in this little screed . . . these two tendencies are so perfectly balanced that the result achieves a maximum of completeness plus a maximum of perspicuity."[579] For Panofsky, Gothic architecture thus held similar qualities to that of the Northern Renaissance; it exemplified his continued concern with styles that might specifically counter uncontrolled irrationalism.

Schapiro continued in his letter expressing his doubt regarding Panofsky's assessment of the legibility of Gothic architecture, which relates to the principle of transparency: "In what sense are pinnacles and crockets a 'self-analysis and self-explication of architecture?' what [sic] functions do they clarify?"[580] Schapiro was referring to Panofsky's statement that:

> To [a man imbued with the Scholastic habit], the panoply of shafts, ribs, buttresses, tracery, pinnacles, and crockets was a self-analysis and self-explication of architecture much as the customary apparatus of parts, distinctions, questions, and articles was, to him, a self-analysis and self-explication of reason.[581]

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[578] Meyer Schapiro. Letter to Erwin Panofsky. 30 September 1951. Microfilm roll 2121. PP.

[579] Erwin Panofsky. Letter to Meyer Schapiro. 8 October 1951. Microfilm roll 2121. PP.

[580] Meyer Schapiro. Letter to Erwin Panofsky. 30 September 1951. Microfilm roll 2121. PP.

[581] Panofsky, Gothic Architecture and Scholasticism 59.

Schapiro was not convinced that the elements of Gothic architecture clarify its structure, as Panofsky argued. Further, Schapiro did not agree that the interior elevations and plans of Gothic cathedrals are visible from the exteriors. Panofsky had stated that: " . . . High Gothic architecture delimit[ed] interior volume from exterior space yet insist[ed] that it project itself, as it were, through the encompassing structure; so that, for example, the cross section of the nave can be read off of the façade."[582] Quite simply, Schapiro demanded a more detailed, and thus more convincing, explanation of Panofsky's formal characterizations.[583]

In addition, though Schapiro recognized that "scholastic philosophy and architecture show a remarkable parallelism in certain aspects" he was not convinced that "philosophy is the independent variable."[584] He stated his skepticism that conscious thoughts directly influence style, a concern he also expressed in the "Style" essay. Furthermore, Schapiro also objected to the way in which Panofsky saw the dialectical method in both the style of Gothic architecture and Scholastic theology. In Gothic Architecture and Scholasticism, Panofsky explained that Scholastic thought, as expressed for example in a *summa*, is characterized by the following dialectical pattern: *videtur quod*, *sed contra* and *respondeo dicendum*, or, "It seems that," "on the contrary" and "I answer that."[585] Schapiro questioned Panofsky: "If all development and all creation are dialectical processes, how can one show that the Gothic architect is more consciously dialectical than others?"[586] Panofsky's response indicates that he believed that

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[582] Panofsky, Gothic Architecture and Scholasticism 44.

[583] Panofsky attempted to provide further examples in his response.

[584] Meyer Schapiro. Letter to Erwin Panofsky. 30 September 1951. Microfilm roll 2121. PP.

[585] Panofsky, Gothic Architecture and Scholasticism 68.

[586] Meyer Schapiro. Letter to Erwin Panofsky. 30 September 1951. Microfilm roll 2121. PP.

Scholastic thought had been taught in schools, thereby becoming a part of their mental habits, which were then realized in architecture.[587]

In the opening of Panofsky's response to Schapiro's letter, Panofsky makes clear that he recognizes weaknesses in his argument.

> I admit without blushing that the whole little thing is an attempt to link up what everyone feels is somehow akin in such a way that the connection is at least debatable (as you have brilliantly confirmed) even though hardly ever verifiable. And I also admit that I may have overstated the case as most people would if they are struck by what appears to them as an idea. So your distrust in toto and on methodical grounds can hardly be effectively dispelled. I can only try to explain myself a little and to meet at least some of your objections to particulars.[588]

Though he admits that his argument is not verifiable, he presented it in Gothic Architecture and Scholasticism with an air of certainty. While Panofsky attempted to present a unified argument Schapiro consistently drew attention to the weaknesses in various arguments as he presented conflicting points in order to obtain a complex understanding of the work. Panofsky and Schapiro thus viewed different means of structuring art as a way to structure their art historical arguments.[589]

Furthermore, the distinct areas of art historical interest that Panofsky and Schapiro held were clearly linked to their backgrounds and broader interests. Panofsky had no reason to look beyond the rationalism of Renaissance perspective in his aesthetic considerations. Panofsky, unlike Schapiro, had no interest in modern art or in the application of the social sciences to art

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[587] He stated that: "My assumption that scholastic thought influenced art is based on the quite naive but, I believe, not improbable supposition that not so much the content as the methods were taught to everybody, from his first school day, and thus induced a 'habit' which was slowly undermined and finally broken only at the end of the period which I have in mind." Erwin Panofsky. Letter to Meyer Schapiro. 8 October 1951. Microfilm roll 2121. PP.

[588] Erwin Panofsky. Letter to Meyer Schapiro. 8 October 1951. Microfilm roll 2121. PP.

[589] Michael Ann Holly has made a somewhat similar argument relating to Schapiro's art history. See Holly, "Schapiro Style."

history. In 1935, Schapiro proposed "the formation of a group for the discussion of modern, and especially contemporary, art" to Alfred H. Barr, director of MoMA.[590] Panofsky is among those who Schapiro proposed to invite to the meetings and it appears in a letter from Schapiro to Panofsky from 1937, in which Schapiro proposed "to resume our monthly meetings at the Museum," that Panofsky had indeed been in attendance at those meetings in the past.[591] In this same letter, Schapiro wondered whether Panofsky would be willing "to read a paper or to present some problem for discussion." Panofsky responded that while he would like to attend the meetings, he could only come the second term due to scheduling conflicts the first. Interestingly, though all the previous topics for the meetings that Barr and Schapiro discussed in their correspondence dealt primarily with modern and contemporary art, in responding to Schapiro's request that he present a paper, Panofsky stated:

> As to a paper, I am afraid that I can't meet the sociological requirements of the Club. If the members would be interested in Renaissance Neoplatonism or the Reconstruction of the Tomb of Julius II I could supply them with the materials and they could interpret them sociologically afterwards. If this would be all right it would have to be, of course, the second term.[592]

Panofsky's response to Schapiro's request suggests that though Schapiro attempted to draw him into dialogue regarding modern art, he resisted.[593]

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[590] In his letter, Schapiro proposed that they meet informally in New York once a month. He stated: "I have in mind the following persons – yourself, Sweeney, Panofsky, Goldwater, Jerome Klein, myself, Tselos, Lozowick, Abbot, and others whom you might suggest. Mumford would probably be interested, and there are perhaps several people in Philadelphia and New Haven who might be desirable members of such a group." Meyer Schapiro. Letter to Alfred H. Barr. 8 March 1935. Alfred H. Barr, Jr. Papers, 1.6 mf 2165:981, The Museum of Modern Art Archives, New York.

[591] Meyer Schapiro. Letter to Erwin Panofsky. 6 October 1937. Microfilm roll 2121. PP.

[592] Erwin Panofsky. Letter to Meyer Schapiro. 7 October 1937. Microfilm roll 2121. PP.

[593] It is unclear whether the Club reconvened in 1937, and if so, whether Panofsky ever returned.

Panofsky's only in-depth publication on a modern topic dealt with popular film, a genre that Schapiro never gave much attention.[594] Originally published in 1936 and again in 1937, the definitive version – "Style and Medium in the Motion Pictures" – was published in 1947.[595] The essay points to Panofsky's supporting role in the development of the Film department at MoMA.[596] In his essay, Panofsky praised popular film, comparing it to medieval architecture, Dürer's etchings and Jan van Eyck's painting. For Panofsky, " . . . in modern life the movies are what most other forms of art have ceased to be, not an adornment but a necessity."[597] Panofsky argued that film, like most other past arts, is a commercial art and thus requires communication.[598] In his 1957 essay "The Liberating Quality of Abstract Art," Schapiro made a clear distinction between painting and those arts whose primary purpose is to communicate, such as "the newspaper, the magazine, the radio and TV."[599] While the latter aim to communicate a message that is readily understood, "[the] painter aims rather at such a quality of the whole that,

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[594] I am only aware of one other publication in which Panofsky dealt with modern art. It was a review of James Johnson Sweeney's Plastic Redirection in 20th Century Painting that Panofsky wrote in 1934. The exceptional nature of this review in Panofsky's oeuvre is apparent in its first line: "It is not customary for a man professionally engaged in the art of the past to recommend a publication on contemporary art." His motivation is methodological clarification. He continues: "Yet in the present case it is permissible because Mr. Sweeney's book is one of the few attempts at approaching the problems of contemporary art from the standpoint of scholarly art history." Erwin Panofsky, Rev. of Plastic Redirection in 20th Century Painting, by James Johnson Sweeney. Bulletin of the Museum of Modern Art 2.2 (1934). As cited in: Wuttke, ed., Panofsky: 1910 bis 1936 965-66.

[595] The essay was first published as: Erwin Panofsky, "On Movies," Bulletin of the Department of Art and Archaeology of Princeton University (1936). A second version was published soon after as: Erwin Panofsky, "Style and Medium in the Moving Pictures," Transition 26 (1937). The most commonly cited version is: Erwin Panofsky, "Style and Medium in the Motion Picture," Critique 1.3 (1947). All citations refer to the recent reprint of the 1947 version: Erwin Panofsky, "Style and Medium in the Motion Pictures," Three Essays on Style, ed. Irving Lavin (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1995).

[596] Thomas Y. Levin provides a detailed discussion of this essay and its origins. See: Thomas Y. Levin, "Iconology at the Movies: Panofsky's Film Theory," Yale Journal of Criticism 9.1 (1996).

[597] Panofsky, "Style and Medium in the Motion Pictures," 120.

[598] Panofsky, "Style and Medium in the Motion Pictures," 120.

[599] Meyer Schapiro, "Recent Abstract Painting," Modern Art: 19th and 20th Centuries (New York: George Braziller, 1978) 222. Originally published as: Meyer Schapiro, "The Liberating Quality of Avant-Garde Art " Art News 56.4 (1957). Subsequent references will refer to the 1978 reprint.

unless you achieve the proper set of mind and feeling towards it, you will not experience anything of it at all."[600]

5.4. THE UNITY OF ART AND MANKIND

Art is now one of the strongest evidences of the basic unity of mankind.[601]

Schapiro, 1953

With the change in Western art during the last seventy years, naturalistic representation has lost its superior status. Basic for contemporary practice and for knowledge of past art is the theoretical view that what counts in all art are the elementary aesthetic components, the qualities and relationships of the fabricated lines, spots, colors, and surfaces.[602]

Schapiro, 1953

Schapiro believed that the experience of modern art would allow for a broader acceptance of arts of other times and places, the Romanesque included. Those styles that did not strive for a naturalistic representation were often considered style-less. With no system of perspective to bring a sense of aesthetic unity to the whole, these so-called more primitive styles were often understood as lacking coherence. I have already made clear Schapiro's concern to justify the coherence of an aesthetic whole composed of seemingly conflicting parts, for example in his discussion of the sculptures at Souillac. His discussions of modern art go hand-in-hand with his earlier considerations of medieval art, particularly the Romanesque. Neither modern nor medieval art used a system of linear perspective to structure the composition, yet Schapiro found in both a well-ordered, coherent structure. If modern art could be understood as an aesthetic

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[600] Schapiro, "Recent Abstract Painting," 223.

[601] Schapiro, "Style," 58.

[602] Schapiro, "Style," 57.

unity, then so could art that had previously been considered primitive due to its abstract nature or unconventional means of composition. As Schapiro made clear in his essay "Style," the appreciation of the stylistic variability of modern art could broaden an understanding of style and thus of art itself.

For Schapiro, the theorization of modern art as a coherent period style was based on the social conditions of its production, i.e. modernity, rather than on a particular set of formal characteristics. In "The Value of Modern Art," " a lecture given at Columbia in 1948 and again at Dartmouth in 1950, Schapiro concluded that " . . . what appears at first sight a chaotic and utterly individualistic projection of fantasies and eccentric production of modern artists, constitutes a style or mode of our period, like older art."[603] According to Schapiro, both the subject matter and formal characteristics of modern art were produced under the social conditions of modernity. Just as in 1936, Schapiro summarized the modern artist's preferred themes, which included subjects that pertain to "the direct experience of the eye," "the world of the artist," "the consciousness of art itself," and "the interior world of the artist."[604] The subject matter pertained to the modern individual and was a part of a coherent modern style.

Schapiro also described the formal coherence of modern art in "The Value of Modern Art." He began by pointing out that: "Modern artists by and large . . . wish to produce a work of art in such a way that the finished product gives you a most vivid sense of its making, its becoming, the intensity and immediacy of the artist's inspiration or response to some perception or feeling. Hence . . . the touch or stroke is very pronounced."[605] Schapiro sees this quality of the

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[603] Meyer Schapiro, "The Value of Modern Art," Worldview in Painting - Art and Society (New York: Braziller, 1999) 142.

[604] Schapiro, "The Value of Modern Art," 134, 135, 136.

[605] Schapiro, "The Value of Modern Art," 138.

mark, which pervades the whole, to be "a basic aspect of contemporary art."[606] Another

important feature of modern art was the way the surface of the canvas was approached. Schapiro

pointed out that: "Instead of looking through [the surface of the canvas] in order to view an

imaginary scene, you look at it in order to experience the artist's action on the plane of the

canvas, his pigment and fabric of colors and forms."[607] In rejecting illusionism, this art "gives

way to a new frankness and directness of expression."[608] Further, rather than seek a composition

based on:

> . . . symmetry or a legible pattern . . . [the artist] seeks a form that,
> in its aspect of contingency, randomness, and the accidental and
> concealed relationships in its frequent discontinuity, and in its
> many partial, segmented elements, gives us the most vivid sense of
> an order built out of unordered elements that in the end look only
> precariously ordered.[609]

Lastly, Schapiro emphasizes how all of these formal characteristics related to what he calls

"transformation;" that is to say, they all communicate the process of artistic production to the

viewer.

Schapiro argued in his 1957 lecture "The Liberating Quality of Avant-Garde Art" that

modern art and its characteristic formal arrangements are inextricably linked to the social

conditions of modernity.[610] He first explained the unique characteristics of modern art: "Modern

painting is the first complex style in history which proceeds from elements that are not pre-

ordered as closed articulated shapes. The artist today creates an order out of unordered variable

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[606] Schapiro, "The Value of Modern Art," 139.

[607] Schapiro, "The Value of Modern Art," 139.

[608] Schapiro, "The Value of Modern Art," 139.

[609] Schapiro, "The Value of Modern Art," 139-40.

[610] In the 1978 reprint, Schapiro erased the political undertones of this lecture's title by renaming it "Recent Abstract Painting."Schapiro, "Recent Abstract Painting."

elements to a greater degree than the artist of the past."[611] He then went on to emphasize the

relationship of elements of chance and the accidental in the artist's sense of ordering to social

historical conditions of modernity.

> This art is deeply rooted, I believe, in the self and its relation to the surrounding world. The pathos of the reduction or fragility of the self within a culture that becomes increasingly organized through industry, economy and the state intensifies the desire of the artist to create forms that will manifest his liberty in this striking way – a liberty that, in the best works, is associated with a sentiment of harmony and achieves stability, and even impersonality through the power of painting to universalize itself in the perfection of its form and to reach out into common life. It becomes then a possession of everyone and is related to everyday experience.[612]

Significantly, modern art's aesthetic deviations from the art of the past are related to the artist's

desire to express his freedom in the face of modern culture.

In his 1948 lecture, Schapiro argued that the value of modern art stemmed from its social

nature; the deep awareness of the artist with his inner self as expressed in his peculiar form and

content communicated his freedom from the capitalist means of production. Schapiro made a

similar point in his "Rebellion in Art" of 1952. The social character of art is revealed through the

expressive freedom of the individual artist. Through the artist's inner expression, Schapiro

argued that the individual artist expresses new social values of modernity that are actually

collective, for as he states "individuality is a social fact."[613] Likewise, Schapiro emphasized in

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[611] Schapiro, "Recent Abstract Painting," 221. In the 1978 reprint, Schapiro refers here to Jackson Pollock's <u>No. 26A: Black and White </u>(1948).

[612] Schapiro, "Recent Abstract Painting," 222.

[613] Meyer Schapiro, "The Introduction of Modern Art in America: The Armory Show," <u>Modern Art: 19th and 20th Centuries</u> (New York: Braziller, 1978) 154. Originally published as: Meyer Schapiro, "Rebellion in Art " <u>America in Crisis</u>, ed. Daniel Aaron (New York: Knopf, 1952). Subsequent references will refer to the 1978 reprint.

In a warm memorial to the German-Jewish neurologist, Kurt Goldstein, Schapiro makes clear that he was not only friends with Goldstein, but also familiar with his work. Goldstein is known for his holistic approach to the individual, which he developed through contact with Gestalt psychologists, among others. In his memorial, Schapiro

1957 that: "[The shift to abstraction] was not a simple studio experiment or an intellectual play with ideas and with paint; it was related to a broader and deeper reaction to basic elements of common experience and the concept of humanity, as it developed under new conditions."[614] In 1948, 1952 and 1957, Schapiro thus emphasized a broader social meaning of modern art's aesthetic qualities.

By defining modern art as a coherent style, Schapiro sought not only to broaden the concept of style, but also to articulate modern art's democratic and internationalist character. His contention in "The Value of Modern Art" is that "[The] conception [of modern art as an expression of freedom] is associated with a democratic, internationalist conception of art."[615] In the 1950's, Schapiro saw the modern artist as one of the few individuals whose work was unaffected by the division of labor. He thus believed modern artistic expression to be free and independent of capitalist means of production. His conviction in the expressive potential of modern art is related to the correlation he saw between artistic freedom and political engagement. In a 1957 discussion of the Abstract Expressionists, Schapiro stated that "The object of art is . . . more passionately than ever before, the occasion of spontaneity or intense feeling. The painting symbolizes an individual who realizes freedom and deep engagement of the self within his work."[616] Schapiro's continued support of a Marxist viewpoint is evident in his writings on the work of the Abstract Expressionists, with whom he was in active contact.[617] As

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remarks on the fact that "[Goldstein] saw the immense import of the social character of individual life . . ." Meyer Schapiro, "In Memoriam - Kurt Goldstein," Philosophy and Phenomenological Research 26.2 (1965): 303.

[614] Schapiro, "Recent Abstract Painting," 217.

[615] Schapiro, "The Value of Modern Art," 144.

[616] Schapiro, "Recent Abstract Painting." The essay was first given as a lecture at the Annual Meeting of the American Federation of Arts in Houston, Texas, April 5, 1957, on "The Liberating Quality of Avant-Garde Art."

[617] In 1940, for example, Robert Motherwell attended Schapiro's graduate courses at Columbia. Schapiro put Motherwell in touch with Seligmann with whom Motherwell subsequently studied, as well as with Breton and Matta. Many artists also attended Schapiro's lectures at the New School for Social Research and NYU in the late

art historian David Craven has noted, Schapiro viewed much of their work as exemplifying a process of artistic production that operated as a critique of the capitalist means of production.[618] With each expressive mark on the canvas, the artists recorded their freedom. Referring to "the mark, the stroke, the brush, the drip, the quality of the substance of the paint itself, and the surface of the canvas as a texture," Schapiro stated: "All these qualities of painting may be regarded as a means of affirming the individual in opposition to the contrary qualities of the ordinary experience of working and doing."[619]

In "The Value of Modern Art," Schapiro also emphasized the role of modern art as an opposing force to both dictatorial and capitalist societies.[620] Schapiro began this lecture by pointing out how many had condemned modern art, predictably citing Hitler and Stalin's regimes. He continued, however, less predictably situating modern art in opposition to significant capitalist institutions. He reported that:

> The director of the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York, the greatest museum in the United States, has written an article in a very respectable magazine, *The Atlantic Monthly*, saying that modern art is characterized by two things: it is meaningless and it is pornographic . . . The president of our country too has condemned modern art as unhealthy.[621]

The director of the Metropolitan at the time was Francis H. Taylor and the U.S. President was Harry S. Truman. Schapiro had reviewed Taylor's book Babel's Tower in 1945 attacking

1940s and early 50s. Thomas B. Hess recalled attending these with Willem and Elaine de Kooning, Philp Guston and Franz Kline. According to Hess, Schapiro had known de Kooning since the 1940s. These are only a few examples of Schapiro's connections with the New York art world. Hess provides a preliminary account of Schapiro's relationships with artists. No detailed account yet exists. Hess, "Sketch for a Portrait of the Art Historian among Artists."

[618] For a consideration of Abstract Expressionism that considers Schapiro's writings and activities, see Craven, Abstract Expressionism.

[619] Schapiro, "Recent Abstract Painting," 218.

[620] Schapiro, "The Value of Modern Art."

[621] Schapiro, "The Value of Modern Art," 133.

Taylor's assertion that German scholarship and iconology were responsible for the failure of museums to attract visitors.[622] Schapiro thus situated his support of modern art in contrast to dictatorial and capitalist regimes alike.

"The Value of Modern Art" is also notable for Schapiro's declared support of democratic socialism and his contention that the individualism of modern art would continue under socialism:

> In conclusion, let me say, however, that if a truly democratic society were realized (and by that I mean the kind of society that was foreshadowed and sketched already at the time of the French Revolution and shortly after), a society in which no man has power over another, and the peculiarity of individuals is really respected in their everyday life and in their work, and not only in formal courtesies, I believe that under such conditions, the individualism of modern art would be maintained, but it would be another kind of individualism – with altogether new motives, motives arising from a genuine achievement of those values of love, of comradeship and joy that cannot exist unless these original social ideals are fulfilled.[623]

In "The Arts Under Socialism," an unpublished essay from 1937, Schapiro had expressed his belief that under socialism "there will be either a persistence of the most radical modern style or a gradual disappearance of painting and architecture." In contrast, Schapiro now singularly viewed modern art as the art of the future. Schapiro's argument in "The Value of Modern Art" was in some respects a reiteration of that which he made in "The Social Bases of Art." The most prominent difference was Schapiro's now unwavering support of modern art. While Schapiro described the common themes of modern art as socially based in both essays, in 1936 he only gestured towards the value that he later celebrated in the active nature of modern art's formal

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[622] See chapter four for a detailed discussion of Schapiro's review.

[623] Schapiro, "The Value of Modern Art," 157. Craven has also pointed to Schapiro's support of democratic socialism in relation to his views of Abstract Expressionism: Craven, Abstract Expressionism.

qualities. While in 1936 Schapiro noted that: "This plastic freedom should not be considered in itself an evidence of the artist's positive will to change society or a reflection of real transforming movements in the everyday world," in 1948 this was his very argument.[624] In 1936 Schapiro wanted to convince artists of the social nature of their art, in 1948 he was more interested in convincing people that modern art was valuable because of its social nature.

In order to establish the humanity of modern art in the postwar years, Schapiro argued that abstraction had a common human basis in the way that it affirms the value of human feelings.[625] According to Schapiro, a universal human condition – a common experience of humanity – could be found primarily in modern art's rejection of figuration.[626] Rather, he argued that abstract art shows its humanity through its expressive character.[627] Furthermore, he contended that the variability of modern art required a greater inner freedom and openness to others that would foster a greater sense of humanity as a whole.[628] While Schapiro saw the rejection of illusionism as an important step in developing an art that expressed our essential humanity, he did not limit his understanding of the humanity in art to abstraction.

In the illustrations of the bible by Marc Chagall, Schapiro saw "a revelation of essential humanity."[629] In place of the expressive character of abstraction, Schapiro emphasized the bible as a "living book" that has moral implications for the current moment.[630] Additionally, even

[624] Schapiro, "Social Bases of Art," 126.

[625] Schapiro, "Armory Show," 145, 147-48.

[626] Schapiro, "Recent Abstract Painting," 217.

[627] Meyer Schapiro, "On the Humanity of Abstract Painting," Proceedings of the American Academy of Arts and Letters 10 (1960): 227.

[628] Schapiro, "Armory Show," 150.

[629] Meyer Schapiro, "Chagall's Illustrations for the Bible," Modern Art: 19th and 20th Centuries (New York: Braziller, 1978) 121. Originally published as: Meyer Schapiro, "Introduction," Illustrations for the Bible by Marc Chagall (New York: Harcourt, 1956). Subsequent references will refer to the 1978 reprint.Panofsky, Three Essays on Style.

[630] Schapiro, "Chagall's Illustrations for the Bible," 121.

though Chagall pictured images from the bible, Schapiro argued that Chagall did so with a sense of freedom uninhibited by knowledge of history.[631] As a Jewish artist, Chagall had been forced to emigrate to the U.S. from Vichy France in 1941. Schapiro saw the conjunction of Chagall's Jewish culture and modern art as contributing to the success of his Bible illustrations.[632] The broader world experiences of the brutality of World War II had made the "oneness of humanity and the common need for justice, good will, and truth" more apparent.[633] Thus, even though Chagall's subject matter – biblical events – goes against the trend in modern art towards abstraction, it still communicates a similar meaning as that of the best painters of abstraction. The emphasis on the oneness of mankind is the key for Schapiro in determining the intrinsic value of modern artistic expression.

Not only did Schapiro view the expression of humanity as an essential characteristic of modern art, but he also emphasized its internationalism and how that countered nationalist movements in art. In "Rebellion in Art," Schapiro discussed what he saw as the two lessons for U.S. artists in the Armory Show, the first large-scale international exhibition of modern art in the U.S.:

> The plan of the Show contained then a lesson and a program of modernity. It was also a lesson of internationalism . . . Since the awareness of modernity as the advancing historical present was forced upon the spectator by the art of Spaniards, Frenchmen, Russians, Germans, Englishmen and Americans, of whom many were working in Paris, away from their native lands, this concept of time was universalized; the moment belonged to the whole world; Europe and America were now united in a common cultural

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[631] Schapiro, "Chagall's Illustrations for the Bible," 127-28. Interestingly, Schapiro compared the freedom that Chagall achieved with that which Schapiro found in the work of medieval artists.

[632] "Chagall is the chosen master for [the illustration of the Bible]. The result owes much to the happy conjunction of his Jewish culture – to which painting was alien – and modern art – to which the Bible seemed a finished task." Schapiro, "Chagall's Illustrations for the Bible," 121.

[633] Schapiro, "Chagall's Illustrations for the Bible," 122.

destiny, and people here and abroad were experiencing the same
modern art that surmounted local traditions.[634]

His comments here coincide with those that he made in his lecture, "The Value of Modern Art,"
regarding a democratic and internationalist conception of art, where he argued that the growing
internationalism of the art world and the breaking down of barriers originally constructed due to
differences of language and nationality had coincided with a newfound internationalism. "It is
only in modern times that the sentiment of the international aspect of culture, of the creation of
value as being really human in a final and universal sense has become established."[635]

Similar ideas regarding the humanity and internationalism of modern art percolated
amongst the Abstract Expressionists in these years, especially those with a Jewish background.
For example, abstract expressionist Adolph Gottlieb stated that: "The idea of being a Jewish
artist is like being a professional Jew. I think art is international and should transcend any racial,
ethnic, religious, or national boundaries."[636] Rather than view himself as a Jewish artist
producing Jewish art, Gottlieb identified himself as an artist who produced an international art.
In highlighting the internationalism of his art, Gottlieb was interacting with the social conditions
of his time from his individual point of view, of which his Jewishness was a part. Likewise,
Schapiro's own Jewish background contributed to his concern to theorize modern art as a valid
art historical style with the potential to express the oneness of mankind as an international style.
Yet Schapiro did not agree with all of the ideas expressed by artists regarding modern art's
humanity.

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[634] Schapiro, "Armory Show," 139-40.

[635] Schapiro, "The Value of Modern Art," 145.

[636] As cited in Matthew Baigell, <u>Jewish Artists in New York: The Holocaust Years</u> (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers UP, 2002) 98.

In 1943, a <u>New York Times</u> critic had accused Gottlieb and Mark Rothko's work of being meaningless. In response, Gottlieb and Rothko with Barnett Newman wrote a letter to the *Times* published 12 June 1943 in which they stated that they were committed to a subject matter that was "tragic and timeless."[637] "Since art is timeless, the significant rendition of a symbol, no matter how archaic, has as full validity today as the archaic symbol had then."[638] And further that: "We assert that the subject is crucial and only that subject-matter is valid which is tragic and timeless. That is why we profess spiritual kinship with primitive and archaic art."[639] Gottlieb, Rothko and Newman, like Schapiro, emphasized abstract art's humanity and the significance of its subject matter, but Schapiro raised concerns with simplistic correspondences that ignored cultural and historical differences.

In "Fine Arts and the Unity of Mankind," a posthumously published essay originally written in the 1940s, Schapiro argued that "[The experience of art] contributes to the real fraternity and mutual understanding of mankind." Yet in order to understand the meaning of a work of art Schapiro believed it was essential to understand its relation to the social conditions under which it was produced. Thus, those who choose to appreciate so-called primitive and non-Western art solely through formal qualities are not forwarding an understanding of the unity of mankind through art. The openness of Westerners to the art of various times and places is in fact due to the social conditions of modernity and the artistic responses to these, but by not recognizing the differences that exist between our own art and the art of different times and

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[637] Though only Gottlieb and Rothko signed the letter, Newman helped to write it. The letter has been reproduced in "Adolph Gottlieb (1903-1974) and Mark Rothko (1903-1970) with Barnett Newman (1905-1970) Statement," <u>Art in Theory 1900-2000: An Anthology of Changing Ideas</u>, eds. Charles Harrison and Paul Wood (Malden, MA: Blackwell, 2003).

[638] "Adolph Gottlieb (1903-1974) and Mark Rothko (1903-1970) with Barnett Newman (1905-1970) Statement," 568.

[639] "Adolph Gottlieb (1903-1974) and Mark Rothko (1903-1970) with Barnett Newman (1905-1970) Statement," 569.

places, "we are stylizing their arts into analogs of our own."[640] In so doing, Schapiro argues that the contemporary Western viewer fails to see the "original content and function" of non-Western or so-called primitive works.[641] Thus, while Gottlieb, Rothko and Newman believed in the universal trans-historical nature of mythological symbolism, Schapiro believed that meaning was shaped by social-historical context. Schapiro's concern was that: "In obliterating the real differences between these remote cultures and the modern, we are stylizing their arts into analogs of our own."[642]

Of the abstract expressionists, Robert Motherwell perhaps understood the significance of modern art in terms most similar to Schapiro's. The similarity in their views is attributable to their fairly close relationship. While Motherwell had moved to New York to study art history with Schapiro at Columbia in 1940, he soon gave up his studies to become a practicing artist. Schapiro aided Motherwell along the way, for example, introducing him to practicing artists like his Surrealist friend Kurt Seligmann. By comparing selected writings of Motherwell and Schapiro, David Craven has concluded that Motherwell's ideas were much closer to those of Schapiro than Greenberg. For example, Craven points out that Motherwell echoed Schapiro's point of view when he stated in 1950 in "The New York School" that: "I believe all art to be historical, that there is no such thing as an eternal art."[643] In this regard, Motherwell diverged from the ideas of some of his fellow abstract expressionists. Craven's discussion of Motherwell's opposition to ethnocentrism and nationalism is particularly useful to my argument. For example,

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[640] Meyer Schapiro, "Fine Arts and the Unity of Mankind," Worldview in Painting - Art and Society (New York: Braziller, 1999) 235.

[641] Schapiro, "Fine Arts and the Unity of Mankind," 237.

[642] Schapiro, "Fine Arts and the Unity of Mankind," 235.

[643] As cited in David Craven, "Commentary: Aesthetics as Ethics in the Writings of Robert Motherwell and Meyer Schapiro," Archives of American Art Journal 36.1 (1996): 27. Originally cited in: Stephanie Terenzio, The Collected Writings of Robert Motherwell (New York: Oxford UP, 1992) 79.

Craven cites Motherwell in a letter to French art critic Christian Zervos from June 13, 1947, regarding the formation of the magazine possibilities: "Some of us artists are beginning a small review to combat the indifference to, and reaction against, modern art in the United States . . . We are trying as hard as possible to make a magazine which is international in character, and in a moment in which the entire world is becoming chauvinistic, the task is not easy."[644] Furthermore, Craven points out that in the 1960s Motherwell became associated with the journal *Dissent*, the democratic socialist journal of which Schapiro was an editor from 1954 until his death in 1996.[645]

Ad Reinhardt was another artist who made his condemnation of racism explicit by contributing illustrations to several publications dedicated to anti-racism.[646] For example, Reinhardt did some illustrations for a 1948 pamphlet entitled The Truth About Cohen, which was put out by the American Jewish Council and which condemned all racism, not just anti-Semitism.[647] Even more pertinent for my argument, Reinhardt contributed a series of twelve drawings for a 1944 pamphlet entitled The Races of Mankind, written by Ruth Benedict and Gene Weltfish.[648] In this publication, Benedict and Weltfish argued against racism by appealing to science, as they emphasized the concept of a universal human race. Thus, even if the particulars were not always agreed upon, Schapiro's ideas regarding both the humanity and the

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[644] As cited in Craven, "Commentary: Aesthetics as Ethics in the Writings of Robert Motherwell and Meyer Schapiro," 28. Originally cited in: Terenzio, The Collected Writings of Robert Motherwell 44.

[645] Craven, "Commentary: Aesthetics as Ethics in the Writings of Robert Motherwell and Meyer Schapiro," 28, 32 n. 21.

[646] David Craven has pointed this out. David Craven, "New Documents: The Unpublished F.B.I. Files on Ad Reinhardt, Mark Rothko, and Adolph Gottlieb," American Abstract Expressionism, ed. David Thistlewood (Liverpool: Liverpool UP, 1980).

[647] Craven, "New Documents: The Unpublished F.B.I. Files on Adx Reinhardt, Mark Rothko, and Adolph Gottlieb," 43.

[648] Craven, "New Documents: The Unpublished F.B.I. Files on Ad Reinhardt, Mark Rothko, and Adolph Gottlieb," 45.

internationalism of modern art were shared by members of the Abstract Expressionists as well as by certain cultural anthropologists.

5.5.   CONCLUSION

Yet what are we to make of Schapiro's conception of the "whole world" in his "Rebellion in Art" as being Europe and America?[649] In his discussion on the significance of the Armory Show, Schapiro saw both a lesson of internationalism and modernity as its legacy. His conception of internationalism in this essay though seems limited to artists from a variety of mostly European and American nations who were working in Paris and his conception of modernity seems tied to Europe and the U.S. Schapiro did limit his views on the internationalism of modern art to those who were producing abstract art under the same social conditions of modernity, which at the time, Schapiro saw as existing solely in Europe and the U.S. Though Schapiro was concerned with the expression of the unity of humanity in the art of all times and places, his focus was undeniably on Western art.[650]

While Schapiro argued that the art of all cultures has a tendency to coherence, he was careful to defend his understanding of art and cultures against relativism, as he remained faithful to a canon of great works that he expanded to include both modern and medieval art. Again, his art history remained firmly ensconced within its modernist mindset. He seems to deny *and* uphold the existence of a qualitative hierarchy in the same breath in his essay "Style," as he states that: "There is no privileged content or mode of representation (although the greatest

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[649] Schapiro, "Armory Show," 139-40.

[650] While this is overwhelmingly true, a few exceptions do exist. For example, he reviews several books that deal with non-Western art, these include: Meyer Schapiro, Rev. of Neue Streifzügedurch die Kirchen und Klöster Ägyptens, Klio 26.1 (1932); Schapiro, "Rev. of Early Muslim Architecture."; Meyer Schapiro, New York Herald Tribune Books 4 August 1935 1935; Meyer Schapiro, Rev. of A Survey of Persian Art, edited by Arthur Upham Pope. Art Bulletin 23.1 (1941).

works may, for reasons obscure to us, occur only in certain styles.)"[651] He further remarks that: "This approach is a relativism that does not exclude absolute judgments of value; it makes these judgments possible within every framework by abandoning a fixed norm of style."[652] While Schapiro *did* broaden his discussion beyond the classical and Renaissance artistic traditions to both Romanesque and modern art, he chose not to focus on many other areas of so-called primitive art.[653] And again, although he discussed popular, children's and primitive art in relationship to modern art, he limited his expanded canon to easel painters and architects. His regular praise of French modernists, including Gustave Courbet, Paul Cézanne, Vincent Van Gogh, Le Corbusier and others, drew them into his enlarged canon of the aesthetically valid. Schapiro remained a modernist at heart, only expanding the canon to accommodate his political and aesthetic commitments.

Furthermore, what are we to make of art historian Allan Wallach's comments on the "dated" and "curiously idealistic" nature of some of Schapiro's comments? In his essay on Schapiro's "Style," Wallach remarked that: "Inevitably, Schapiro's essay now appears dated. There are passages containing rhetoric reminiscent of the founding of the United Nations ('art is now one of the strongest evidences of the basic unity of mankind') that seem curiously idealistic."[654] While Wallach is correct in comparing Schapiro's modernist rhetoric to the founding of the UN, he fails to contextualize adequately Schapiro's comments. What were Schapiro's options at the time that he was writing? In this chapter I have argued that Schapiro's

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[651] Schapiro, "Style," 57.

[652] Schapiro, "Style," 58.

[653] This omission is remarkable given his exposure to Native American art through anthropologists Claude Lévi-Strauss and Franz Boas, and Surrealists André Breton and Kurt Seligmann. Yet, he did firmly believe that a scholar needed to have a solid background in an area before he/she could fully understand it. He expressed such concerns in his posthumously published essay: Schapiro, "Fine Arts and the Unity of Mankind."

[654] Wallach, "Falling into the Void," 13.

continued concern with both capitalist and dictatorial regimes lead Schapiro to support a broader understanding of style that fully embraced modern artistic practice.

Schapiro's rhetoric concerning the freedom and internationalism of modern art sounds oddly reminiscent of the U.S.'s Cold War rhetoric. During the 1950s, the CIA and the State department promoted the work of abstract expressionists abroad as propaganda in the fight against Communism. While artists in Stalin's Soviet Union were forced to adopt a representational style that depicted scenes that glorified the nation, proponents of the Cultural Cold War argued that the expressive freedom in the work of the abstract expressionists communicated the freedom of the individual in a democratic society. Schapiro's argument is distinguished from this Cold War rhetoric by the fact that he saw modern art as defying both the capitalist system of labor through its handcrafted nature and the capitalist system of value through its rejection of use value. Not a Cold War warrior, Schapiro remained committed to Marxism and its belief in a forthcoming international socialist society.

6. SCHAPIRO'S LINGUISTIC TURN: SEMIOTICS AND THE UNITY OF FORM AND CONTENT

6.1. INTRODUCTION

> I shall turn now to the unity of form and content, a more subtle and elusive concept. As a ground of value, it is sometimes understood as a pronounced correspondence of qualities of the forms to qualities and connotations of a represented theme – a stimulating kind of generalized onomatopoeia . . . This concept of unity must be distinguished from the theoretical idea that since all forms are expressive and the content of a work is the meaning of the forms both as representations and expressive structures, therefore content and form are one . . . Conceived in this . . . way, the unity of form and content holds for all works, good and bad, and is no criterion of value.[655]

Schapiro, 1966

In 1966, Schapiro first presented "On Some Problems in the Semiotics of Visual Art: Field and Vehicle in Image-Signs" at the Second International Colloquium on Semiotics in Kazimierz, Poland. As with the essay "Style" in 1953, the initial reception of this essay lay outside the realm of art history proper and emphasizes his interdisciplinary reach. With plans to publish the paper already underway, Schapiro wrote the linguist Roman Jakobson (1896-1982) in 1969 that "I have had so many requests for copies of my article for the Kazimierz conference, that I must consider publishing it now in a periodical without waiting for the Mouton volume . . ." He further expressed his uncertainty as to the best place to publish it: "I shall have to consider also in what kind of magazine to publish it here – whether in an art magazine or one more likely to reach

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[655] Meyer Schapiro, "On Perfection, Coherence, and Unity of Form and Content," <u>Theory and Philosophy of Art: Style, Artist, and Society</u> (New York: Braziller, 1994) 41-42. Originally published as: Meyer Schapiro, "On Perfection, Coherence, and Unity of Form and Content," <u>Art and Philosophy: A Symposium</u>, ed. Sidney Hook (New York: NYU P, 1966). Subsequent references will refer to the 1994 reprint.

people interested in semiotics."[656] His indecision reveals his truly interdisciplinary character. Not content to engage the art historical community exclusively, he was compelled to bring the theoretical advances of other disciplines to bear on the realm of art history. Schapiro was beset by the question of how to best accomplish this task.

"Field and Vehicle in Image-Signs" was published in English in 1969 in the first issue of Semiotica, the official journal of the International Association for Semiotic Studies.[657] This journal was published by Mouton and was hence the "Mouton volume" of which Schapiro spoke in his letter to Jakobson. While its place of publication thus does not indicate Schapiro's preference for a periodical geared towards semiotics as opposed to art, it does however demonstrate his close involvement with this newly emerging field. During the late 60s and early 70s, Schapiro was actively involved in establishing the field of semiotics in the U.S. For example, in the early 1970s he served as chair of the planning committee for an unrealized symposium on semiotics that was intended "to focus scholarly attention both here and abroad on American studies and results of research in semiotics."[658] In addition to Schapiro's best known publications in semiotics – the aforementioned "Field and Vehicle in Image-Signs" and his *Words and Pictures* of 1972 – Schapiro's interest in the intersection of semiotics and art history

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[656] Meyer Schapiro. Letter to Roman Jakobson. 1 February 1969. Roman Jakobson Papers, MC 72. Institute Archives and Special Collections, MIT Libraries, Cambridge, Massachusetts. Referred to hereafter as Jakobson Papers.

[657] Meyer Schapiro, "On Some Problems in the Semiotics of Visual Art: Field and Vehicle in Image-Signs," Semiotica 1.3 (1969).

[658] Schapiro and Thomas Sebeok, the well-known semiotician who was Secretary-General of the Planning Committee, were co-signees of a letter to Roman Jakobson regarding a colloquium on semiotics, which had been planned to take place in Washington, D.C. in March of 1973. The Center for Applied Linguistics in Washington, D.C. had appointed the committee. Schapiro and Sebeok's letter stated that the first American Colloquium will bring interdisciplinary attention to the theoretical work being done in semiotics both in the U.S. and abroad. Meyer Schapiro and Thomas Sebeok. Letter to Roman Jakobson. 4 May 1972. Jakobson Papers. A later memo, dated 17 July 1973, from John Hammer of the Center for Applied Linguistics requests that the committee indefinitely delay their symposium until after the European symposiums of 1974. John Hammer. Letter to Planning Committee on the Semiotics Symposium. 17 July 1973. Jakobson Papers.

is apparent in the recent posthumous publications of two separate lecture series, the Charles Eliot Norton Lectures given at Harvard in 1967 and the Franklin Jasper Walls Lectures, also referred to as the Morgan Lectures, given at the Pierpont Morgan Library in 1968.[659] Furthermore, his correspondence with Jakobson between the years of 1966 and 1979 also provides a glimpse of both Schapiro's broader involvements in semiotics and the particular concerns he shared with Jakobson.

Though closely affiliated with semiotics, Schapiro's art history from these years does not conform to many of the preconceived notions of the field. Because Ferdinand de Saussure's structuralism analyzes so-called universal structures that are evident in language, semiotics has often been viewed as a way to bypass discussions of context.[660] Yet Schapiro's entire oeuvre focuses on understanding both form and subject matter in relationship to social historical context. Schapiro did not see the practice of semiotics as antithetical to a historical understanding of the art object and thus his turn to semiotics does not signal a change in his opinion regarding the significance of the social bases of art. Furthermore, post-structuralism has often been understood to focus attention away from the object and towards the individual viewer's interpretation of a work of art. Again, Schapiro remained committed to the primacy of the art object in the work of the art historian, even in the work of interpretation. Thus, while Schapiro remained interested in certain universal qualities of art, he also continued to argue for a historically situated context in which to understand the art object. And though he continued to recognize that the individual

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[659]Meyer Schapiro, Language of Forms: Lectures in Insular Manuscript Art (New York: Pierpont Morgan Library, 2005); Schapiro, Romanesque Architectural Sculpture.

Extant correspondence between Jakobson and Schapiro exists in the Jakobson archive held at the MIT archive. Correspondence ranges in date from 1966 to 1981. See Roman Jakobson Papers. MC 72. Institute Archives and Special Collections, MIT Libraries, Cambridge, Massachusetts. Hereafter referred to as Jakobson papers.

[660] Mieke Bal and Norman Bryson have addressed the concern that a semiotics of art results in an ahistorical analysis of art in Mieke Bal and Norman Bryson, "Semiotics and Art History," Art Bulletin 73.2 (1991); Norman Bryson, "Art in Context," Studies in Historical Change, ed. Ralph Cohen (Charlottesville: UP of Virginia, 1992).

viewer's social historical context affected interpretation, he maintained that interpretation must not forego a thorough understanding of the art object and the specific social historical conditions of its production. Neither a structuralist nor a post-structuralist per se, Schapiro was interested instead in how semiotics might allow him to ground theoretically his discussions of art historical meaning.

Most scholars who have addressed Schapiro's semiotics have considered his work in terms of its relationship to the two most widely discussed "fathers" of structuralism: Ferdinand de Saussure and Charles S. Peirce.[661] Characteristically, Schapiro did not adopt any one particular theorist's notion of semiotics, but instead explored how various ideas might allow him to continue to discuss a traditional art historical notion of style that included both form and content. Attempting to view his work as the result of the application of either solely Saussurean or Peircean thought to the interpretation of visual art would deny the complexity of his ideas. Rather than consider the relationship of Schapiro to these already discussed semioticians, I turn my attention to the work of Roman Jakobson on poetics. My intention is not to suggest that Schapiro did not draw from the work of Peirce or Saussure or that Schapiro looked to Jakobson exclusively, but rather to draw attention to this overlooked intersection.

In this chapter, I limit my consideration of Schapiro's semiotics of art to the themes that I have thus far developed in previous chapters of this dissertation. I focus specifically on how Schapiro's publications on semiotics relate to his ongoing emphasis on the expressive nature of

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[661] For example, Margaret Iversen explicitly explores how Schapiro's discussion of frontal and profile in <u>Word and Pictures </u>is Saussurean: Margaret Iversen, "Meyer Schapiro and the Semiotics of Visual Art," <u>Block</u> 1 (1979); Margaret Iversen, "Saussure v. Pierce: Models for Semiotics of Art," <u>The New Art History</u> (Atlantic Highlands: Humanities, 1986) 87-89. David Craven explores how Schapiro's work is indebted to Peirce, and not to Saussure. See David Craven, "Meyer Schapiro," <u>Key Writers on Art: The Twentieth Century</u>, ed. Chris Murray (London: Routledge, 2003) 243. Michael Hatt and Charlotte Klonk consider Schapiro's semiotics in relation to both Peirce and Saussure: Michael Hatt and Charlotte Klonk, <u>Art History: A Critical Introduction to its Methods</u> (Manchester: Manchester UP, 2006) 212-14.

both form and subject matter in understanding meaning within a social historical context. I am also concerned with how his semiotics relates to his interest in Panofsky's iconology. In the first section entitled "Form," I concentrate on Schapiro's treatment of the expressive qualities of the non-mimetic aspects of the visual arts in his essay "Field and Vehicle in Image-Signs" as well as in his Morgan Lectures. My goal is to explore the correspondences between Schapiro and Jakobson's semiotics. The second section, "Word and Image," addresses Schapiro's consideration of both form and subject matter in his writings on semiotics. I focus primarily on Schapiro's Word and Pictures in which he addresses how the historical meaning of a text and the means of representation change through time. While this text has previously been considered in relation to Peirce and Saussure, my aim is to reconsider the theoretical framework Schapiro develops here as it relates to Panofsky's iconology. While the first section deals with the non-mimetic alone, the second section addresses Schapiro's consideration of the symbolic, which also includes symbolic form. In the concluding section, "The Ethnic Argument," I explore how Schapiro continues to address explicitly arguments that attribute the expressive elements of art to racial or national essences. His response is still to socially-historically situate the work of art, but his framework is now semiotics and his focus is the relationship of word to image.

6.2.   FORM

> My theme is the non-mimetic elements of the image-sign and their
> role in constituting the sign.[662]

<div align="right">Schapiro, 1969</div>

> Meaning and artistic form are not easily separated in
> representation; some forms that appear to be conventions of a local

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[662] Meyer Schapiro, "On Some Problems in the Semiotics of Visual Art: Field and Vehicle in Image-Signs," Theory and Philosophy of Art: Style Artist, and Society (New York: Braziller, 1994) 1.

period style are not only aesthetic choices but are perceived as attributes of the represented objects.[663]

<div align="right">Schapiro, 1969</div>

In his essay, "On Some Problems in the Semiotics of Visual Arts: Field and Vehicle in Image-Signs," Schapiro specifically addresses how the non-mimetic aspects of art affect its meaning.[664] He divides the non-mimetic into two categories: field and vehicle. In his discussion, Schapiro focuses on the expressive qualities of these non-mimetic elements and is concerned with whether they are conventional or inherent. The answer to this question is typically complex, as they are neither solely one nor the other. For example, in considering the field, he calls attention to how the rectangular plane with its smooth surface and definite boundary – a field with which 20th century Western viewers are quite familiar – is linked to the emergence of the three-dimensional picture space. He thus emphasizes the conventional nature of this field, and with it the conventional nature of linear perspective. Yet he also discusses the "latent expressiveness" of the field.[665] For example, he points out that: "That qualities of upper and lower are probably connected with our posture and relation to gravity and perhaps reinforced by our visual experience of earth and sky."[666] He thus emphasizes at once both the historical (conventional) and the universal (inherent) aspects of the expressive significance of the field.

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[663] Meyer Schapiro, "Words and Pictures: On the Literal and Symbolic in the Illustration of a Text," <u>Words, Script, and Pictures: Semiotics of Visual Language</u> (New York: Braziller, 1996) 69.

[664] Treatments of this essay in the scholarly literature have been uneven, and have primarily occurred during the late 70s or following the 1994 publication of Schapiro's fourth volume of selected papers, <u>Theory and Philosophy of Art: Style, Artist and Society</u>, in which the essay appeared. See for example Kimmelman, "Detailing a Masterly Point of View."; Koerner, "The Seer," XX. Some reviews of <u>Theory and Philosophy of Art</u> do not even mention "Field and Vehicle." See for example: Mitchell, "Schapiro's Legacy." Sauerländer only makes a brief mention of the essay, calling it "a remarkable article from 1969 on semiotics." Willibald Sauerländer, "The Great Outsider," <u>New York Review of Books</u> 2 February 1995: 31.

[665] Schapiro, "Field and Vehicle," 12.

[666] Schapiro, "Field and Vehicle," 12.

In discussing the vehicle, Schapiro shifts his attention to the qualities of the "sign-bearing matter." Again, the expressive significance of the "image-substance" is both conventional and inherent.[667] Here he emphasizes that the image-substance has an expressive quality that goes beyond its relation to its semantic function in the image-sign. While he recognizes that a relationship exists between the image-substance and the mimetic image, he stresses the arbitrariness of the means of representation. For example, the Impressionist method with its "visible strokes of paint and the relief of crusty pigment" represents the visible world no more truly than "the firm black outline of the primitives and the Egyptians." Instead, these qualities "enter into the visual manifestation of the whole and convey peculiarities of outlook and feeling as well as subtle meanings of the sign."[668] Thus, Schapiro is concerned with both aesthetic and art historical issues in his discussion of the expressive qualities of the non-mimetic. His primary concern remains the art historical question of style: why art produced by particular people at particular times and places looks the way it does and what it means.[669]

In discussing the historical development of the field, Schapiro makes clear the conventional status of the rectangular form and smooth surface. While prehistoric cave painting was executed on an unbounded, rough surface, the historical development of the rectangular, smooth surface allowed the image to acquire a sense of space distinct from the observer's space: "The new smoothness and closure made possible the later transparency of the picture plane without which the representation of three-dimensional space would not have been successful."[670] Schapiro points to the frame's role in establishing the depth of the pictorial space; it serves as a

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[667] Both "sign-bearing matter" and "image-substance" are Schapiro's terms. See Schapiro, "Field and Vehicle," 26-27.

[668] Schapiro, "Field and Vehicle," 29.

[669] Art historian Jonathan Harris has discussed this aspect of Schapiro's work in Jonathan Harris, The New Art History: a Critical Introduction (London: Routledge, 2001) 166-170.

[670] Schapiro, "Field and Vehicle," 3.

mediator between the space of the observer and that of the image. While emphasizing the conventional nature of this type of field and frame, which cooperate in the production of perspectival images, Schapiro demonstrates that historically the frame has not always separated the viewer's space from that of the image. Schapiro thus questions the primacy of linear perspective as developed in the Renaissance.[671] Not surprisingly then, the examples that Schapiro provides of deviations from this convention correspond with his research interests in medieval and modern art.

For example, Schapiro focuses on a transgression of the conventional relationship between field and frame as established in the Renaissance, which is common within medieval art. While the image is contained by the frame in Renaissance art, Schapiro provides examples from medieval art where pictorial elements seem to "cross the frame," pushing the pictorial space of the field beyond the frame. Schapiro cites the example of Souillac where the animals seem to deform the architectural space of the trumeau that they occupy.[672] In his 1939 essay, "The Sculptures of Souillac," Schapiro had already pointed out this unusual quality of the trumeau: "The vertical colonettes are bent inward at four levels by the lateral pull or tension of the excited beasts; the latter's force, greater than the architectural load, deforms the supporting colonnettes. Another pull, and the whole structure will topple down into a shapeless heap."[673] In his 1966 lecture, Schapiro stressed that: "Such crossing of the frame is often an expressive

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[671] In so doing, he enters into dialogue with Panofsky, as well as Ernst Gombrich. Rather than see illusionism as the ultimate style, Schapiro finds it to be simply one of many valid styles. This was purportedly Panofsky's argument in <u>Perspective as Symbolic Form</u>, however, as I maintained in chapter three, Panofsky in fact upheld the primacy of linear perspective as developed in the Renaissance.

[672] In the original 1969 publication he cites the image in the text: Schapiro, "On Some Problems in the Semiotics of Visual Art: Field and Vehicle in Image-Signs," 228.; in the 1994 reprint, an image of the trumeau accompanies the text: Schapiro, "Field and Vehicle," 9.

[673] Schapiro, "Souillac," 116.

device; a figure represented as moving appears more active in crossing the frame, as if unbounded in his motion."[674]

Unlike others, who continued to see little of artistic merit in imagery that deviated from the norm of linear perspective, Schapiro found a sense of realism in the expressive quality of the artist's formal choices. Again, in the Souillac article, Schapiro argued that: "The beast is not unstable because the sculptor wishes an unstable figure. This realism of design corresponds to the powerful reality of representation in the animals, and to the rich variety in the repeated units, which transcends the norms of ornament."[675] In the last of his Norton Lectures, Schapiro elaborates on this idea. According to Schapiro, in the depiction of a lion devouring a human figure the Romanesque artist actualizes the lion's voracity. He states that: "the Romanesque exhibits another spirit of reality, of awareness of the victim, and a desire to realize as fully as possible the power, or the destructive force, of the beasts."[676] The expressive quality of the beast is not a reflection of nature in an illusionistic manner. Neither are the repeated formal elements an example of simple ornament. Rather, Schapiro sees an expressive significance in what has often been mistook for mere ornament.[677] This expression is above all a result of artistic agency and the creativity of the individual artists apparent in the Romanesque period.

Schapiro emphasized this connection between the creative artist and the expressive quality of the non-mimetic aspects of a work of art in his Morgan Lectures. In his first lecture

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[674] Schapiro, "Field and Vehicle," 8.

[675] Schapiro, "Souillac," 116.

[676] Meyer Schapiro, "Animal Imagery in Romanesque Sculpture," <u>Romanesque Architectural Sculpture</u> (Chicago: U of Chicago P, 2006) 191.

[677] Schapiro made the same argument in the last of his Norton Lectures. He made clear that: "the alternatives in the interpretation of animal imagery are not religious symbolism or pure decoration, but rather decoration which has religious meaning, decoration which has an expressive value and quality, which has a poetic character through its relation to human feelings, impulses, the embodiment of instincts and passions – not necessarily in terms of theological polarities of good and evil." Schapiro, "Animal Imagery," 191.

entitled "Frame, Field, and Figure," Schapiro again discussed the interaction between figure and frame.[678] In considering an image of the Lion (a symbol for Saint John) from the Book of Durrow, Schapiro stressed that the composition – a horizontal figure in a vertical frame – is a result of artistic choice. Rather than see the manuscript illumination as poorly composed, as some might, he sees the artist's choice as "purposive and a necessary artistic solution with a particular aesthetic value and expressiveness."[679] In this lecture, he considers several examples of Insular manuscript painting that instantiate the artist's inventiveness in his expression through the interplay of field, figure and frame. He refers to "the artist's freedom in the imaginative handling of the frame independent of an illustrative or symbolic purpose, yet highly expressive in effect and no less significant than the message of a canonical symbol."[680] His argument emphasizes that the formal elements of Insular manuscript painting are highly expressive and meaningful, rather than simply ornamental.[681] They are the result of the artist's conscious choice. Schapiro's description of the compositions as "discoordinated," and not "disordered," also refers to an artist who has consciously chosen this particular composition, as opposed to an artist who is incapable of making such decisions.

Evidence that early in his career Schapiro understood the frame as an element with certain inherent features that could be manipulated by the artist can be found in his 1932 review

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[678] Schapiro, <u>Language of Forms</u>. Schapiro again returned to this topic from the Morgan lectures in: Meyer Schapiro. "An Experiment with Forms in Art." Lecture given at Columbia University, 2 April 1973. I am grateful to David Rosand for making this text available to me.

[679] Schapiro, <u>Language of Forms</u> 8.

[680] Schapiro, <u>Language of Forms</u> 19.

[681] In the second of his Morgan lectures, Schapiro begins by pointing out that while ornament is "so elementary in its structure that it can be described by a mathematician" the "ornament" of mature Insular manuscript painting cannot be. Schapiro, <u>Language of Forms</u> 29. This statement recalls Schapiro's debate with Claude Lévi-Strauss that I discussed in chapter five regarding the possibility of describing style in mathematical terms that took place at the First International Symposium on Anthropology in 1953.

of Jurgis Baltrusaitis' book <u>La Stylistique ornamentale dans la sculpture romane</u> of 1931.[682] Here, Schapiro rejected Baltrusaitis' proposal that the formal qualities of Romanesque art are determined by the antagonistic relationship between the forms of the objects and predetermined schema, such as the frame. Schapiro explained that for Baltrusaitis, "the frame is a generating, ordering principle."[683] The schema imposed itself on the forms of the objects thereby creating what Baltrusaitis viewed as the distorted images of Romanesque art. Rather than distorted, Schapiro here also saw Romanesque images as "deeply ordered."[684] As art historian David Rosand has pointed out, rather than see the frame as controlling the work, Schapiro sees an interaction between the two.[685] While Schapiro clearly emphasized the interrelations between content and frame in his review of Baltrusaitis, he also referenced the role of the artist. For example, he argued that "[Baltrusaitis] assumes a formative compulsion in the frame which forces the artist's hand and mind, dictating both the shapes and the sense."[686] For Schapiro, the artist's agency in producing expressive qualities and meaning was already important in understanding the relationship of field to frame.

The expressive possibility of non-mimetic forms was a common theme in Schapiro's discussions, not only in his semiotics of the 60s and 70s and his medieval essays from the 30s, but also in his work from the 50s. For example, recall his emphasis on the qualitative aspects of style in his 1953 essay "Style." His definition of style here gives a sense of the importance he attributes to the expressive qualities of a work of art: in this essay, he defined style as "a system of forms with a quality and a meaningful expression through which the personality of the artist

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[682] Schapiro, "Geometrical." See chapter three for a detailed discussion of this review.

[683] Schapiro, "Geometrical," 265.

[684] Schapiro, "Geometrical," 270. See chapter two for a more detailed treatment of this review.

[685] Rosand, "Semiotics and the Critical Sensibility: Observations on the Lessons of Meyer Schapiro," 46.

[686] Schapiro, "Geometrical," 281.

and the broad outlook of a group are visible."[687] Or recall his discussion with Lévi-Strauss at the First International Symposium on Anthropology in 1953 where "Style" was first presented in which Schapiro emphasized the importance of the qualitative as compared to the quantitative in discussions of style.[688] Schapiro illustrated his point with the use of two simple figures that are strikingly similar to those he uses in his 1966 "Field and Vehicle in Image-Signs." In both instances, he argues that a change in orientation of the two boxes greatly affects their expressive significance.

Even though Schapiro has insisted on the qualitative aspects of art over the decades, those commenting on his semiotics have rarely addressed this feature of his work.[689] Perhaps this trend in the scholarship is because the expressive nature of non-mimetic aspects of a work of art is not crucial to the work of Peirce or Saussure, the two linguists to whom Schapiro's work has most often been compared. In an effort to help fill this gap in the scholarship, I turn to the work of Jakobson who has focused on the expressive significance of structural elements in poetry. To my knowledge, philosopher Robert E. Innis is the only scholar to have acknowledged the crucial relationship between Jakobson and Schapiro's thought.[690]

Extant correspondence between the two scholars makes clear that both Jakobson and Schapiro were aware of the interests of the other, making the parallels in their published works all the more significant. As a Jew, Jakobson fled Europe for the U.S. in 1941. He quickly found a

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[687]Schapiro, "Style," 51.

[688] For a more detailed discussion, see my comments in chapter four.

[689] For example, art historian Joseph Koerner in referring to Schapiro's focus on the non-mimetic aspects of the image- sign has stated that: "These are curious subjects for an essay on the 'semiotics' of art, if we mean, by semiotics, the study of images as signs for something else." Koerner, "The Seer," 36. Here, Koerner indirectly questions the relationship of Schapiro's semiotics to that of Peirce, who defines a sign as "something which stands to somebody for something in some respect or capacity." Chales S. Peirce, "Logic as Semiotic: the Theory of Signs," Semiotics: an Introductory Anthology (Bloomington: Indiana UP, 1985) 5.

[690] Innis discusses Schapiro's semiotics in an introduction to a reprint of Schapiro's essay "Field and Vehicle in Image-Signs" that appears in a reader of key semiotic texts. Robert E. Innis, ed., Semiotics: An Introductory Anthology (Bloomington: Indiana UP, 1985) 206-8.

position at Columbia and later moved to Harvard, remaining there for the rest of his career. Sometime after his arrival in the U.S., Schapiro made Jakobson's acquaintance, most likely during his years at Columbia. In their letters, Schapiro recommended books to Jakobson that address meaning and sounds in poetry, as well as conveyed the inspiration he found in Jakobson's ideas.[691] In one letter, Schapiro expressed to Jakobson his admiration: "I enjoyed immensely our few hours together in Washington. Your untiring interest in problems and your fresh ideas excite me dangerously, taking me away from what I'm doing and should be doing; but how can I regret the marvelous stimulus of your example."[692] This letter indicates, as do others, that the two met on occasion allowing them to share their ideas.

As Innis has pointed out, the similarities in the work of Schapiro and Jakobson are apparent in the parallel between Jakobson's consideration of verbal structure in his discussion of poetics and Schapiro's discussion of pictorial structure. Both Schapiro and Jakobson recognize that a relationship exists between painting and poetry. In his famous "Closing Statement: Linguistics and Poetics" of 1960, Jakobson makes the analogy that: "Poetics deals with problems of verbal structure, just as the analysis of painting is concerned with pictorial structure."[693] Likewise, in "Field and Vehicle in Image-Signs," where he is specifically concerned with the concept of pictorial structure, Schapiro also acknowledges the parallel between the expressive qualities of the visual imagery and those of poetry. He comments that: "These variations of 'medium' constitute the poetry of the image, its musical rather than mimetic aspect."[694] Schapiro

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[691] Schapiro recommends that Jakobson look at George Campbell's The Philosophy of Rhetoric, a book in which, according to Schapiro: "there's a most interesting discussion "Words Considered as Sounds" on the relations of sounds + sense in poetry." Meyer Schapiro. Letter to Roman Jakobson. 22 July 1966. Jakobson Papers.

[692] Meyer Schapiro. Letter to Roman Jakobson. 31 October 1971. Jakobson Papers.

[693] Roman Jakobson, ""Closing Statement: Linguistics and Poetics"," Semiotics: An Introductory Anthology, ed. Robert E. Innis (Bloomington: Indiana UP, 1985) 148.

[694] Schapiro, "Field and Vehicle," 29.

views the non-mimetic aspects of visual art – its pictorial structure – as a parallel to the non-mimetic aspects of poetry – its verbal structure.[695]

Schapiro and Jakobson were not the first to compare visual art and poetry; perhaps the most famous comparison comes in the Latin phrase "Ut Pictura Poesis" which appears in the ancient Roman poet Horace's Ars Poetica and translates: "as is painting, so is poetry."[696] Yet while both Schapiro and Jakobson were interested in the expressive qualities of the non-mimetic, traditional comparisons between painting and poetry focused primarily on the mimetic. Moreover, not all who compared the two found similarities; Gotthold E. Lessing in his "Laocoön: An Essay on the Limits of Painting and Poetry" (1853) sees them "as two equitable and friendly neighbors."[697] While Lessing sees painting as an art of space, he views poetry as an art of time. This characterization corresponds with the more recent work of Schapiro's contemporary, philosopher Susanne K. Langer (1895-1985), who based her argument against the application of semiotics to the visual arts on just such an understanding of the synchronic nature of painting versus the diachronic nature of language. In Philosophy in a New Key: A Study in the Symbolism of Reason, Rite and Art (1942), Langer distinguished the presentational symbolic mode of the image from the discursive mode of language.[698] In opposition to Langer, both Jakobson and Schapiro find the application of semiotics to the visual arts valid because they understand the structure of most images to surpass the complexity of a symbol that can be understood through simple presentation.

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[695] For example, Schapiro states: ". . . even that formal structure that appeals to us today is misread in reproductions and descriptions that falsify these works by incorrect or incomplete quotations of passages like the omitted phrases or simple words essential to the rhythm, meter and color of a poetic text." Schapiro, Language of Forms 8.

[696] For more on the concept, see The Grove Dictionary of Art entry, "Ut Pictura Poesis."

[697] Gotthold E. Lessing, Laocoön: An Essay on the Limits of Painting and Poetry (New York: Bobbs-Merrill, 1984) 91.

[698] See Susanne Langer, Philosophy in a New Key: a Study in the Symbolism of Reason, Rite, and Art, 3rd ed. (Cambridge, MA: Harvard UP, 1957).

Schapiro's affinity for Jakobson's work on poetics also stems from the conception that poems are more complex than sentences; while most linguists tended to work with clauses, Jakobson was interested in the poem as a larger whole. Art historian Terry Smith has recorded in his notes from Schapiro's lectures in "Art History Theory and Methods" given at Columbia University in the spring of 1973 that Schapiro stated: "Linguists study phonemes, morphemes, sentences, phrases and clauses. But a poem is larger than these, and is subject to constraints and closed forms." In addition, Schapiro went on to cite Jakobson's "On the Verbal Art of William Blake and Other Poet Painters," an essay which Jakobson had dedicated to Schapiro. In describing this essay, Schapiro stated that Jakobson "has seen structural categories in Blake's poems and paintings, treating the artwork as a stylistic ensemble of tiny elements."[699] Schapiro thus remarked on Jakobson's consideration of poems and paintings as stylistic wholes.

Jakobson's interest in the relationship between sound and meaning similarly paralleled Schapiro's concern with the relationship between form and meaning. In his "Linguistics and Poetics," Jakobson states that: "Any attempts to confine such poetic conventions as meter, alliteration, or rhyme to the sound level are speculative reasonings without any empirical justification."[700] Jakobson finds an expressive element in these poetic conventions that is essential to the meaning of the text. Schapiro likewise recognized the essential character of "the rhythm, meter and color of a poetic text."[701] Shortly thereafter, Jakobson continues: "Although rhyme by definition is based on a regular recurrence of equivalent phonemes or phonemic groups, it would be an unsound oversimplification to treat rhyme merely from the standpoint of

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[699] I am grateful to Professor Terry Smith for sharing these with me. Terry Smith, Notes taken from lectures delivered by Meyer Schapiro in course G6001Y: Art History Theory and Methods, Columbia University, New York, 23 January 1973, manuscript. Hereafter referred to as Smith's notes from Schapiro's Theory and Methods course.

[700] Jakobson, ""Closing Statement: Linguistics and Poetics"," 163.

[701] Schapiro, Language of Forms 8.

sound. Rhyme necessarily involves the semantic relationship between rhyming units."[702] For Jakobson, the formal characteristics of language help shape meaning through their expressive qualities.

Schapiro's understanding of the expressive aspects of formal qualities in visual art closely paralleled Jakobson's ideas on poetics. In fact, Schapiro buttressed his approach by appealing to the comparison of poetry. Schapiro believed that painting could be "read" like poetry; in his Morgan Lectures on Insular manuscript painting, he states that the "lengthy analysis of one carpet page" is defensible, comparing it to "the close reading of a poem."[703] Schapiro argued that through such a close reading the expressive qualities of the non-mimetic aspects of a work of art might be discerned. He maintained that by considering the

> . . . syntactical as distinct from the lexical aspect of the ornament – we shall discover some inventions of form that are not obvious or inherent in the familiar concepts of ornament as a regular expansion of a small repeated unit in a definite enclosed field and as a subordinate means of embellishing a larger valued object.[704]

By dealing with structure (syntax) apart from subject matter (lexicon), Schapiro contends that the analysis of the most detailed formal elements in Insular manuscript ornamentation might reveal their significance to the overall meaning of the work of art.

Schapiro was no stranger to detailed formal descriptions; the reader need only recall Schapiro's groundbreaking essays on Romanesque art from the 1930s. Most notable in this regard is "The Sculptures of Souillac" with its lengthy formal analysis of both the tympanum and trumeau. In his work of the late 1960s, Schapiro continued to take great care to explain how the intricate formal details of a work come together in order to construct a coherent and expressive

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[702] Jakobson, ""Closing Statement: Linguistics and Poetics"," 163-64.

[703] Schapiro, Language of Forms 34.

[704] Schapiro, Language of Forms 29-30.

whole. He explicitly addressed the issue of coherence, reiterating many of his earlier ideas, in his 1966 lecture "On Perfection, Coherence, and Unity of Form and Content."[705] Jakobson's semiotics provided Schapiro with a new means by which to support his long held belief in the expressive meaning of formal elements.

Schapiro continued to argue that a coherent whole could be composed of various, even conflicting elements and need not be accomplished through the use of linear perspective.[706] For example, in 1966 he argued that "[Judgements of incoherence and incompleteness] are often guided by norms of style which are presented as universal requirements of art and inhibit recognition of order in works that violate new canons of form in that style."[707] Schapiro thus emphasized perspective's conventional status. He implemented the concept of discoordination, a term that he used to refer to an unconventional formal arrangement, in order to address works that violated the rules of perspective in both his 1939 Souillac article and in the 1968 Morgan Lectures.[708] In 1939, Schapiro explained: "By discoordination I mean a grouping or division such that corresponding sets of elements include parts, relations, or properties which negate that correspondence."[709] Similarly, in the first of his Morgan Lectures, he states that:

> To characterize this mode of composition in which there appears a conflict among the major axes of figure, field, and frame, but in which some elements are paired or grouped with an effect of strong cohesion and mutual reinforcement, I shall use the term *discoordinated*, as opposed to *coordinated* but also as distinguished from *disordered* or *dissonant*. It is a type of order in which two or more systems of forms are juxtaposed, yet at specific points are in striking accord or continuity with each other.[710]

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[705] Schapiro, "Unity of Form and Content."

[706] For a thorough discussion of this topic, see chapter five.

[707] Schapiro, "Unity of Form and Content," 38.

[708] For a more thorough treatment of this term in Schapiro's work, see: Kuspit, "Dialectical Reasoning."

[709] Schapiro, "Souillac," 104.

[710] Schapiro, Language of Forms 11-12.

Though Schapiro's old arguments seem to slip easily into his new theoretical framework of semiotics, he must leave Gestalt psychology behind and his Marxism becomes veiled.

While in the Souillac article Schapiro marries his thorough formal description with a Marxist approach, in the Morgan Lectures he justifies his careful consideration of these non-mimetic elements through an analogy with poetry.[711] His turn to semiotics coincides with a retreat from an explicitly Marxist art history. Furthermore, in the fifth of his Morgan Lectures, he states that: "we are comparing syntactical forms – the principles of grouping, their phrasing and assembly into a large ordered whole."[712] In his discussion of the coherence of formal compositions, Schapiro has now substituted the theoretical framework of semiotics, particularly that being developed by Jakobson on poetics, for the theories of Gestalt psychology, which marked his work in the 1950s.

I would like to return to Schapiro's question of whether the expressive formal elements of a work of art need to be understood historically or whether they are universal. In his article on Schapiro, Moshe Barasch compares two different ways through which a viewer makes sense of a work of art: the iconographic symbol and the expressive feature. He states that:

> An iconographic symbol, established by convention, need not directly and immediately affect us; we will thoroughly understand it when we familiarize ourselves with the convention. An expressive feature, on the other hand, should directly and immediately move us, without our having first to acquire the knowledge of a code.[713]

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[711] In the "Sculptures of Souillac," the integration of a Marxist approach with detailed formal analysis is somewhat awkward as the social historical context is dealt with at the end of the article, apart from the formal description. He is much more successful at integrating his Marxism with his detailed formal analysis in "From Mozarabic to Romanesque at Silos" (1939).

[712] Schapiro, Language of Forms 129.

[713] Barasch, "Mode and Expression," 55-56.

Such a distinction does not hold true for Schapiro. For example, while Schapiro indicates that certain non-mimetic characteristics may be inherently expressive, (upper versus lower, for example,) the artist has the means to manipulate these inherent qualities in order to suit his intended effect. Furthermore, when combined with conventional subject matter, these inherent qualities can acquire new layers of meaning. Hence, for Schapiro the expressive qualities of form are not necessarily universally accessible, as Barasch states.

Schapiro's discussion of frontal and profile poses in Word and Pictures provides a specific example of how Schapiro addresses the question of conventional versus inherent meaning of non-mimetic qualities. Here, he views the frontal pose as more symbolic whereas the profile pose expresses a sense of action; the historical shift from the first to the second reflects a secularizing trend that was accompanied by an increased interest in the figure's action. (He relates the profile pose to the third person singular and the frontal to the first person singular.) Yet the actual meanings of the poses are not static. Schapiro states that: "The plurality of meaning in each of these two appearances of the head would seem to exclude a consistent explanation based on inherent qualities of the profile and frontal or full-face view."[714] As Iversen has so aptly expressed:

> For Schapiro, the plurality of meanings which attach to the frontal and profile positions does not lead to the conclusion that they lack inherent qualities, and that therefore the ascription of meaning is arbitrary and conventional. Rather he regards them as frameworks within which an artist can reinforce a particular quality while exploiting an effect latent in the view.[715]

For Schapiro, the two poses carry meanings that can be altered through the artist's creative agency as well as the viewer's experience and attitude.

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[714] Schapiro, "Words and Pictures," 92-93.

[715] Iversen, "Schapiro," 51.

While the two poses do not carry singular universal meanings, Schapiro does see "profile and frontal as paired carriers of opposed meanings where such opposition is important."[716] Not only does this estimation hold true for the particular instance that Schapiro is investigating, but he relates that: "In other arts besides the medieval Christian, profile and frontal are often coupled in the same work as carriers of opposed qualities."[717] Iversen has addressed this issue in Schapiro's writing and has rightly compared his ideas with those of Saussure, who argued that signs gain their meaning from their relationships with other signs. Saussure sees this as "the play of oppositions."[718]

Schapiro thus understands certain formal elements to be inherently expressive, but their meaning is relational, only rendered through their particular use in context. According to Smith's notes, Schapiro made this point quite clearly in his Methods course in 1973. At one point, Smith indicates that Schapiro reiterated his ideas regarding the inherent expressive qualities of frontal and profile: "Both profile and frontal viewpoints are used for different reasons. There are different qualities of expression latent in each one."[719] Several weeks later, Schapiro made the point that: "All expression is conventional, and depends on learned codes." And further, that there is no meaning without context.[720] While certain aspects of meaning are inherent, they can only be understood within particular contexts; all meaning is relational as opposed to absolute or fixed. Schapiro is concerned with both the universal (inherent) and social historical (conventional) aspects of meaning in these essays in semiotics. Art historian Jonathan Harris has drawn a similar conclusion specifically regarding "Field and Vehicle in Image-Signs." He states

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[716] Schapiro, "Words and Pictures," 75.

[717] Schapiro, "Words and Pictures," 82.

[718] See Iversen, "Schapiro," 50.

[719] Smith's notes from Schapiro's Theory and Methods course, 4 April 1973.

[720] Smith's notes from Schapiro's Theory and Methods course, 18 April 1973.

that: "Schapiro, then, I will characterize as a historical materialist concerned in this particular essay with some aspects of art's *anthropological* nature. This concept, like 'aesthetic,' implies a shared (universal) material human nature believed to be psychobiologically permanent."[721] This so-called "'anthropologizing' tendency" recalls my discussion of Schapiro's interest in the theoretical advances of both psychology and anthropology in chapter five.[722] For example, I have already pointed out that the notion of a universal human race that was being propagated by anthropologists such as Benedict and Weltfish in their 1943 publication, The Races of Mankind, was relevant to Schapiro's work in the 1950s. As Harris points out, "[Schapiro] chose to emphasize within his analysis those relatively constant psychological and physiological features of artworks . . ."[723] Schapiro's emphasis on the universal aspects of artistic expression can still be read as a rejection of the attribution of certain expressive elements to racial and national character. Schapiro's turn to semiotics could have been fuelled in part by the fact that it provided him with a scientific framework in which to address qualitative aspects of style, which had previously been attributed to race or ethnicity.

Schapiro's concerns with both the inherent/universal/aesthetic and conventional/social historical/art historical aspects of meaning are part of an extended argument made throughout his oeuvre. In the 1930s, Schapiro clearly articulated the social-historical bases of art and, in the 1950s, he highlighted the universal qualities of art.[724] For instance, recall that in discussing the significance of modern art, Schapiro stated that: "Art is now one of the strongest evidences of the

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[721] Harris, New Art History 167.

[722] Harris, New Art History 169.

[723] Harris, New Art History 169.

[724] For a clear formulation of his understanding of the social bases of art see Schapiro, "Social Bases of Art." For an example of his understanding of the universal qualities of art see Schapiro, "Style." See chapter two for more on the 1930s and chapter four for more on the 1950s.

basic unity of mankind."[725] According to Smith's notes, Schapiro also made this point in his 1973 methods course: "For a modern perspective, the value of an artwork adheres in its forms – *all* marks, if structured and expressive are admirable. Thus all the art of the world becomes available to esthetic valuing."[726]

Not only does Schapiro's interest in moving beyond a purely formalist understanding of pictorial structure correlate with his concerns regarding art historical practice, but it also intersects with his contemporary concerns regarding the meaning of abstract art. In trying to illuminate the relationship between visual and linguistic signs, Schapiro was arguing against those critics – perhaps most notably Clement Greenberg - who emphasized the visual nature of art.[727] Rather than focus on the visual alone, his interdisciplinary venture into semiotics is indicative of his continuing argument for the meaningful nature of both form and subject matter in art. Even in his word choice, Schapiro makes clear his predilection for understanding modern art as an indexical sign. That is to say that abstract work references the process of its production through the marks on the canvas. Art critic and historian John A. Walker has pointed out that Schapiro's use of the word "picture" can be contrasted with the Formalist use of the word "painting," the former being, in Walker's words, "a way of stressing the process and material basis of the art of painting as against its iconic, representational character."[728]

In "Field and Vehicle in Image Signs," Schapiro references the indexical nature of the artistic marks of abstract art in stating that:

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[725] Schapiro, "Style," 58.

[726] Smith's notes from Schapiro's Theory and Methods course, 23 January 1973.

[727] John A. Walker has pointed this out in his introduction to Iversen, "Schapiro," 50. In her recent book on Clement Greenberg, Caroline A. Jones addresses Greenberg's relationship with Schapiro. Caroline A. Jones, Eyesight Alone: Clement Greenberg's Modernism and the Bureaucratization of the Senses (Chicago: U of Chicago P, 2005) 132-35.

[728] Walker's introduction to Iversen, "Schapiro," 50.

> . . . artists in our own time preserve on the paper or canvas the earlier lines and touches of color that have been applied successively in the process of painting. They admit at least some of the preparatory and often tentative forms as a permanently visible and integrated part of the image; these are valued as signs of the maker's action in producing the work.[729]

Schapiro emphasizes that the material evidence of the artist's working process is valued as a sign of the production of the work. In 1957, Schapiro had similarly indicated the significance of the artist's working process; at that time, Schapiro expressed that the artistic production of certain abstract artists was a sign of unalienated labor. He felt that the modern artist was one of the few individuals whose work was unaffected by the division of labor.[730] While Schapiro no longer explicitly expresses this Marxist reading, his basic argument remains unchanged suggesting that his underlying concerns are still guided by his Marxism. By this point, however, he has eliminated any reference to class or a future socialist society.

While Schapiro's main concern in "Field and Vehicle in Image-Signs" is undoubtedly to consider how non-mimetic elements affect the meanings of naturalistic works of art, the concluding remarks of his essay return to the significance of non-mimetic elements in abstract art.

> In abstract painting the system of marks, strokes, and spots and certain ways of combining and distributing them on the field have become available for arbitrary use without the requirement of correspondence as signs. The forms that result are not simplified abstracted forms of objects; yet the elements applied in a non-mimetic, uninterpreted whole retain many of the qualities and formal relationships of the preceding mimetic art. This important connection is overlooked by those who regard abstract painting as a kind of ornament or as a regression to a primitive state of art.[731]

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[729] Schapiro, "Field and Vehicle," 6.

[730] For a detailed treatment of this subject, see chapter four.

[731] Schapiro, "Field and Vehicle," 31.

His line of thinking counters both a formalist argument with a concern solely for the visual and arguments that privilege naturalistic art. He further expresses that: "I wish, in conclusion, to indicate briefly the far-reaching conversion of these non-mimetic elements into positive representations. Their functions in representation in turn lead to new functions of expression and constructive order in a later non-mimetic art."[732] Schapiro contends therefore that non-mimetic elements are expressive in both earlier representational images as well as in later abstract art.

Semiotics allowed Schapiro to argue for the meaningful nature of abstract art in a way that accounted for a greater complexity in the image than Gestalt psychology could. In previous chapters, I have argued that Schapiro's favorable stance towards abstract art is significant in light of its historical baggage, specifically its condemnation by Hitler, Stalin and others. Schapiro's conception of a work of art in semiotic terms allowed for an understanding of abstract art that moved beyond the merely visual. As art historian Alex Potts has recently stated, "If we envisage a work of art as a sign or a combination of signs, our understanding of its form no longer operates at a purely visual level, but also concerns the articulation of meaning."[733] Such an understanding of art proved useful to Schapiro whose strong belief in the positive meaning of abstract art was arguably connected to his personal background. He no longer explicitly expresses this relationship, but it is difficult to imagine that he would so quickly abandon a position in favor of which he had spent decades arguing.

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[732] Schapiro, "Field and Vehicle," 31.

[733] Alex Potts, "Sign," Critical Terms for Art History, eds. Robert S. Nelson and Richard Shiff, 2nd ed. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2003) 21.

6.3.   WORD AND IMAGE

> Schapiro wants to break down the barrier between forms of representation (style) and meaning. This has been the task of the best writing in art history (Alois Riegl, Henirich Wölfflin, and Panofsky), but there has not been enough of this kind of study. Schapiro's analysis of the opposition of frontal and profile is a contribution to the semiotics of visual art which can serve as a valuable methodological model.[734]
>
> Margaret Iversen, 1979

In contrast to Schapiro's almost singular focus on non-mimetic aspects of art in "Field and Vehicle in Image-Sign," in considering the relationship between image and text in "Word and Pictures: On the Literal and the Symbolic in the Illustration of a Text," Schapiro concentrates on how meaning is produced through subject matter and form together. In so doing, he explicitly breaks down the perceived divide between form and content. In the first section of "Word and Pictures" entitled "The Artist's Reading of a Text," he emphasizes that how a text is interpreted is affected by historical changes in the meaning of a text as well as by changes in the formal characteristics of representation. He continues in the next two sections, "Theme of State and Theme of Action (1)" and "Theme of State and Theme of Action (II)," to focus on illustrations of Moses at battle with the Amalekites (Exodus 17:9-13): "To bring out the interplay of text, commentary, symbolism, and style of representation in the word-bound image, I shall consider at length a single text and its varying illustrations."[735] He thereby attempts to explain why the illustration of a text changes through history and counters the arguments of various scholars, art historians and otherwise, in the process.

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[734] Iversen, "Schapiro," 51.

[735] Schapiro, "Words and Pictures," 25.

In "Words and Pictures," Schapiro eventually fixes his attention on a change in posture from frontal to profile. In illustrations of the biblical text, Moses is depicted in a frontal position with arms raised until the psalter of Louis IX from the 13th century where Moses' pose changes to a profile view, as he is depicted kneeling in prayer. Schapiro links this shift to the emergence of a new symbolic meaning for Moses. Whereas the frontal view of Moses correlates with the early Christian understanding of this episode where Moses overcoming Amalek through the raising of his hands symbolizes the prefigurement of the Cross, the profile view corresponds with a new symbolic meaning where Moses instead represents the "fore-symbol" of the priest at the altar.[736] Schapiro concludes that: "As more naturalistic styles prevailed in art, the prefigurative interpretations of a narrative, transmitted by the later exegetes, became less cogent though they retained their appeal in liturgical contexts and in didactic art."[737] In this context, the more active profile pose gained in prominence. The pictures – both what and how they represented – changed as secular influences became more widespread.

Schapiro's "Word and Image" has received more attention in the scholarship than "Field and Vehicle" arguably because his lines of argument are more easily associated with the work of both Peirce and Saussure. For instance, the opposition of meaning in the play of frontal and profile is an obvious use of Saussure's concept of binary opposition.[738] Others point to the Peircean aspect of Schapiro's discussion of an image of Moses in prayer. Michael Hatt and Charlotte Klonk state: "Moses is represented standing with his arms outstretched; this, for the viewer, is a sign that Moses prefigures Christ in medieval theology - evident in the way his pose suggests the crucified body on the cross . . . The object is Moses; the sign is the image of Moses

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[736] Schapiro, "Words and Pictures," 60.

[737] Schapiro, "Words and Pictures," 65-67.

[738] Margaret Iversen and others have discussed this aspect of Word and Pictures. See Iversen, "Schapiro."; Iversen, "Saussure v. Pierce: Models for Semiotics of Art," 87-89.

at prayer; and the interpretant is the idea of Moses as prefiguring Christ."[739] While these others have pointed to Schapiro's debts to both Peirce and Saussure, I would like to shift the discussion to how Schapiro's concern with understanding a work of art through its form, subject matter and content, which is a key element of his work in semiotics, relates to the work of Panofsky.

Schapiro's interest in the relationship between word and image brings to mind the work of iconographers, such as Emile Mâle, whose primary interest lay in explaining the visual image as an "illustration" of the text. Rather than replicate this model, Schapiro's art history represents an alternative to straight iconography. As early as his dissertation, Schapiro insisted on the secular aspects of Romanesque art as a counterpoint to Mâle's focus on its religious aspects.[740] Furthermore, in both his "Style" essay and his correspondence with Panofsky, Schapiro expressed his concern regarding the vagueness of Panofsky's iconography in practice as it appeared in his Gothic Architecture and Scholasticism.[741] Semiotics continues to allow Schapiro to move beyond the traditional field of iconography.[742] Rather than simply match images with the biblical texts, Schapiro is concerned with their intertextuality – the ways in which the two affect each other through history – and particularly how this is focalized through the imagery.[743]

While Schapiro's application of semiotics goes beyond iconography in its emphasis on the expressive nature of both form and subject matter, its relationship to Panofsky's iconology, as theorized rather than practiced, is more complex. While some scholars have postulated a close relationship between Panofsky's iconology and semiotics, Christine Hasenmueller has argued

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[739] Hatt and Klonk, Art History 214.

[740] See chapter two for more on this.

[741] See chapter five for more about Schapiro's reaction to Panofsky's Gothic Architecture and Scholasticism.

[742] For more on Schapiro's iconology see chapter four.

[743] I borrow the term "focalized" from the work of Mieke Bal, who has defined focalization as: "the relations between the elements presented and the vision through which they are presented." Mieke Bal, Narratology: Introduction to the Theory of Narrative (Toronto: U of Toronto P, 1997) 142.

convincingly that, though Panofsky's iconology shares certain characteristics with semiotics, it is not "a nascent semiotic."[744] In Schapiro's work, however, some have found a relationship between iconology and semiotics. For example, Iversen has stated that: "It is understandable that certain strands of semiotic enquiry, like that of Meyer Schapiro, should be associated with Panofsky's procedures."[745] Made in Iversen's review of Michael Ann Holly's Panofsky and the Foundations of Art History, this idea is unfortunately not further considered. My aim here is to explore how Schapiro's work integrates the concerns of art historical methodology, specifically through Panofsky's iconology, with the emerging field of semiotics.

As I have argued in chapter four, Panofsky's iconology as theorized is intended to take into account form, subject matter and content, through the three levels of preiconographical description, iconographical analysis and iconological interpretation. Schapiro continues to address all three of these levels in his semiotic essays of the 1960s and early 70s, just as he did in his iconological essays of the 1940s. As Holly has pointed out, Schapiro's work on the expressive significance of non-mimetic aspects of a work of art addresses the pre-iconographic level of meaning as proposed by Panofsky:

> Meyer Schapiro, for example, in several articles on the semiotics of the visual arts has returned with renewed fervor to the preiconographic level. But he has come equipped with the tools of an iconological historian in order to distinguish between natural and conventional signs in the work. He wonders, as he gives a series of illustrative examples, how the nonmimetic [sic] elements

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[744] Christine Hasenmueller, "Panofsky, Iconography, and Semiotics," Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism (1978): 297. Hasenmueller points to several scholars who have explored the relationship between "structuralism and art history" (289). She points to Schapiro's "Word and Pictures" stating that it "is virtually alone in the attempt to develop elements of a semiotic of visual form" (299 n. 2). She cites the work of Giulio Carlo Argan, who went so far as to call Panofsky the "Saussure" of art history. As cited in: Hasenmueller, "Panofsky, Iconography, and Semiotics," 289.

[745] Margaret Iversen, "The Primacy of Philosophy," Rev. of Panofsky and the Foundations of Art History, by Michael Ann Holly. Art History 9.2 (1986): 273.

in a painting – for instance, frame, direction, colors, movement, and size – acquire a semantic value.[746]

As Holly has pointed out, Schapiro's search for the meaning of non-mimetic aspects of art operates at Panofsky's first level of meaning, the pre-iconographic.

While Schapiro is concerned almost entirely with Panofsky's pre-iconographical level in "Field and Vehicle," where his focus is primarily on the expressive qualities of non-mimetic forms, in "Words and Pictures" his discussion integrates all three of Panofsky's levels of meaning. Schapiro's explicit concern with how the biblical text relates to its illustration corresponds with Panofsky's second level of meaning, the iconographical. Yet Schapiro's discussion of meaning does not stop there; rather, he is most concerned with how both form and subject matter are related to content. Recall from the epigraph to this chapter how Schapiro stated in 1966 that: "the content of the work is the meaning of the forms both as representations and expressive structures."[747] Content understood in this way correlates with Panofsky's third level of meaning. My sense is that Schapiro's semiotics was an attempt to further ground Panofsky's iconology; that is to say, while we have seen how Panofsky retreated from a full-fledged iconology in practice, due at least in part to his concerns regarding the reception of iconology as unverifiable, Schapiro instead turned to semiotics in his attempt to address meaning in its fullest sense while providing a secure theoretical foundation.

In his methods course in the spring of 1973, Schapiro expressed his concern regarding the limited nature of an iconographical approach to the art object. Smith's notes to Schapiro's class read: "*Questions of interpretation/meaning* may be seen as the province of iconography and iconology in art history. But this approach is limited, depending as it does on extracting ideas

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[746] Holly, Panofsky 184.

[747] Schapiro, "Field and Vehicle," 41.

from texts and applying them to pictures, etc."[748] Schapiro continues by enumerating three senses that look quite similar to the three levels of meaning in Panofsky's iconological approach, though their order is different and Schapiro notably removes any reliance on texts. Schapiro stated that "Meaning is a broader matter, with three key senses: i) representation, symbolizing ii) structural and iii) genetic." Schapiro's senses align with Panofsky's levels in this fashion: [Table format?] Schapiro's "representation, symbolizing" corresponds with Panofsky's conventional subject matter, Schapiro's "structural" sense corresponds with Panofsky's natural subject matter, and Schapiro's "genetic" sense corresponds with Panofsky's intrinsic meaning. Smith stated that Schapiro's first sense of meaning is "that which is identified through a title or a label, for example, <u>Adoration of the Magi</u>, then matched with the Gospels, or with one's general knowledge of the attributes of certain figures." This first level corresponds with Panofsky's second level of meaning, which is accessed through iconographical analysis. The textual emphasis of Panofsky's iconography is removed in Schapiro's understanding of what is represented. Schapiro's second sense of meaning, the structural, concerns formal structure. Schapiro posed several questions that relate to this second sense: "What is the meaning of this line, or of separating the upper and lower parts, why no frame on this painting?" Schapiro's second sense of meaning thus corresponds with Panofsky's first level of meaning, which is accessed through pre-iconographical description. Lastly, Schapiro's third sense of meaning concerns content. "Why was this work made? Why was this man painted? . . . we can see the artwork's role in the culture, for example, the Parthenon's role in Periclean and post-Periclean Greek culture." This last level of meaning is similar to Panofsky's third level of meaning, which is approached through iconological interpretation. Just as Panofsky iterates in his introduction to

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[748] Smith's notes from Schapiro's Theory and Methods course, 21 March 1973.

Studies in Iconology, Schapiro sees that all three senses of meaning need to be explored together: "We should methodologically work i), ii), and iii) together whenever we seek knowledge."[749] Given these close parallels to Panofsky's iconology, Schapiro must have only been expressing his concern with the limited nature of iconography, or an iconology that would best be called iconography, rather than with the actual practice of iconology.

Not only does Schapiro's "Word and Pictures" engage with Panofsky's iconology, it also makes specific reference to Panofsky's earlier work. The title of Schapiro's fourth section, "Frontal and Profile as Symbolic Form," is an obvious adaptation of the title of Panofsky's essay Perspective as Symbolic Form. Schapiro has notably replaced Panofsky's "perspective" with "frontal and profile" in his title, distancing himself from Panofsky's privileging of Renaissance perspective. His understanding of symbolic form also differs from Panofksy's. Panofsky's notion of symbolic form is taken from the ideas of philosopher Ernst Cassirer, a colleague from his days in Hamburg. In his 1927 publication, Panofsky argued that perspective is, in Cassirer's terms, an example of a symbolic form in which "spiritual meaning is attached to a concrete, material sign and intrinsically given to this sign."[750] Schapiro begins his fourth section of "Words and Pictures" by stating that he will discuss "the role of the style of representation in the form of the symbol, and more specifically the frontal and profile positions."[751] The metaphysical plays no role in Schapiro's discussion of symbolic forms. Recall that Panofsky had distanced himself from the deciphering of a work's content, the third level of his iconological approach, precisely because it had been criticized as unverifiable. In his Introduction to Studies in Iconology,

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[749] Schapiro summarized these three types of meaning at the start of his next lecture 28 March 1973. He enumerated them in three questions "i) What is represented, said? ii) How does a given element function within the painting? iii) How does it come about that i) and ii) were done?" Smith reiterated the last question: "why were i) and ii) done the way they were?"

[750] As cited in Panofsky, Symbolic Form 41.

[751] Schapiro, "Words and Pictures," 69.

Panofsky had expressly related that knowledge of symbolic forms would provide the corrective necessary to the art historian's "synthetic intuition" in deciphering a work of art's content.[752] For Panofsky perspective serves as a symbolic form, in a philosophical sense; for Schapiro, symbolic form is simply a way of referring to the symbolic nature of formal elements within the imagery. Schapiro's notion of symbolic form is thus quite different from Panofsky's and the title, rather than an homage to Panofsky, is intended as a comparison.[753]

Schapiro's use of the term symbolic form can also be situated within broader discussions of semiotics. Earlier, I pointed out that Schapiro's and Jakobson's semiotics could be contrasted with that of Suzanne K. Langer, perhaps Cassirer's most well known student, who argued that the forms of art are distinctly different from those of language. Rather than pursue the Saussurian analogy between language and art, she sees forms in art as "presentational" and in language as "discursive." For Langer, no analogy can be made between structure in language and structure in art. Language is linear whereas art is perceived as a whole Gestalt. Thus Langer understands a work of art as a symbolic form; it is not composed of various units from a system of signification like language.[754] According to Smith's notes from his methods course of 1973, Schapiro remarked that the images that Gestalt psychologists work on are simpler than most art works: "Gestalt psychologists project simple images, much reduced, as their objects of analysis, yet most artworks, except recently, are more complex."[755] The complexity of the work of art, which Schapiro consistently emphasized, would preclude its perception as a Gestalt. Schapiro no longer viewed the notion of a Gestalt as sufficient in understanding the unified art object. Furthermore,

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[752] Panofsky, "Iconology," 40-41.

[753] While Hatt and Klonk assert that Schapiro uses the term "in a more familiar way" than either philosopher Ernst Cassirer or Panofsky did, they do not see Schapiro's use of it in relation to their work. Hatt and Klonk, Art History 213.

[754] See Langer, Philosophy in a New Key.

[755] Smith's notes from Schapiro's Theory and Methods course, 28 March 1973.

Schapiro's affinity with Jakobson's work on poetics also corresponds with his insistence on the complexity of the art object.

While Schapiro's use of the term "symbolic form" differed from both Panofsky's and Langer's, it corresponded with the ideas of Peirce, who saw the sign as an icon, index or symbol. Schapiro explained in his 1973 methods course that a semiotics of art can be approached through Peirce's theory of signs.[756] Hatt and Klonk have also pointed out that Schapiro's use of the term "symbolic" can be related to Peirce's semiotics.[757] Peirce's symbol is a type of sign that acquires its meaning conventionally. According to Peirce, "Symbols grow. They come into being by development out of other signs, particularly from icons, or from mixed signs partaking of the nature of icons and symbols."[758] Schapiro likewise viewed the symbolic forms of frontal and profile as conventional. This further set his understanding apart from Panofsky who saw symbolic forms as mediated but not conventional.[759] Schapiro's discussion of symbolic forms thus situated his ideas in relation to those of art history, philosophy and semiotics. Schapiro's definition of the term allowed him to continue to address form, content and meaning while attempting to avoid pitfalls associated with its earlier use in Panofsky's work.

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[756] Smith's notes from Schapiro's Theory and Methods course, 28 March 1973.

[757] Hatt and Klonk, Art History 213.

[758] Peirce, "Logic as Semiotic," 19.

[759] See Joel Snyder, Rev. of Perspective as Symbolic Form, by Erwin Panofsky. Art Bulletin 77.2 (1995): 338. Snyder states that: " . . . as a Kantian – and there can be no doubt that he takes himself to be a Kantian – Panofsky does not identify mediation with conventionalization. Our experience of the world is mediated across the board, and it is because of this mediation that science and universally true laws of nature are possible. The world appears to us in the way that it does because we use our cognitive equipment in the way that we do. Panofsky wants us to believe that there are facts about psychophysiological space and that classical and modern science have determined what they are. We know the psychological and physiological facts about the way the world appears to us spatially. And accordingly, we can chart the ways in which representations of the world do or do not accord with those facts. While Panofsky is surely committed to a view of the relativity of perspective schemes, he is also committed to a belief in the certainty of scientific explanation."

6.4.   THE ETHNIC ARGUMENT

> It is not easy to treat the problem [of the roles of Ireland and England in the formation of this art] in a fully detached spirit if one is either Irish or English. But I believe that even for a scholar who is not of those peoples, there are unconscious tendencies and sympathies, and implications beyond art that may affect one's understanding.[760]

<div align="right">Schapiro, 1968</div>

> . . . stylistic features or character are not made more intelligible by referring to a racial or ethnic spirit or a particular aptitude of a people. It is often said that a people is gifted for line as is another for color or pattern. But if we attempt to apply such notions consistently to the art of a long period of history or of a large region, we soon recognize that while they may appear to illuminate certain continuities and unexpected revivals of style, they are hardly clear enough to serve as guides to historical explanation.[761]

<div align="right">Schapiro, 1968</div>

In the late 60s and early 70s, Schapiro continued to argue explicitly against theories that attributed the expressive quality of art to innate racial or national characteristics. He does so specifically in the last of his Morgan lectures from 1968 – "The Religious and Secular Grounds of Insular Art." Here, Schapiro counters the common racialist explanation for the emergence of Insular art in England, Ireland and Scotland in the 7th and 8th centuries:

> Explanations of the character and flowering of Insular culture have tended to focus on an idea that is intelligible – that they are the effect of an innate, inherited disposition of the people who are called Celtic. One thus assumes there are specific traits in the psychology of the Irish and other Celtic peoples that account for the character of this art. We are not satisfied by this explanation. Apart from the vagueness of the concept of an ethnic psychology, the notion of a race or people must take into account the

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[760] Schapiro, Language of Forms 175-76.

[761] Schapiro, Language of Forms 158.

intermingling of peoples in the British Isles; language does not coincide with ancestral continuity, culture, or history.[762]

In his account of the development of the complex forms of Insular art, Schapiro instead considers the work from the British Isles of this period as a whole. Insular art's "openness and interchange" allow him to study the "complex of cultures as a unity."[763] He characterizes the 7th and 8th centuries in the British Isles as a time and place of great change, with the formation of new political entities, the migration of people and an intensification of religious life with the recent arrival of Christianity. The arrival of this new religion from Rome brought with it the sacred book of the Bible and the Latin language of the Roman church. With little surviving documentation from the period, the exact attribution of works to distinct cultures is difficult. Schapiro is concerned instead with a broad understanding of widespread artistic trends in a particular geographic area during a specific span of time – the British Isles between 650 and 800.

Schapiro also lays out the inadequacies in François Masai's counter argument to the "ethnic or racial approach" to Insular art. According to Schapiro, "Masai argued that the essential character of this art is better understood through the fact that the makers belonged to a precommercial, preurban type of civilization."[764] Masai characterized the art of farmers as abstract and irrational and the art of city dwellers as naturalistic and rational. Schapiro opposed such a simplistic view that linked rationalism to naturalism and both to urban culture. Contrarily, Schapiro emphasized the creative ingenuity of the Insular artists in producing complex and coherent patterns: "These great pages of ornament exhibit a subtle and finely developed sense of

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[762] Schapiro, Language of Forms 157-58.

[763] Schapiro, Language of Forms 160.

[764] Schapiro, Language of Forms 159.

order, a close coherence of forms, a great ingenuity in creating a consistent complex pattern out of a few motifs, a pattern open to many variations."[765]

Schapiro's argument for the coherence of works of art that are usually understood as irrational and barbaric is certainly not new to his writings. Neither is his emphasis on the artist's active role in producing them. I have already considered these trends in his publications on medieval art from the 1930s. Schapiro saw Insular art as an important forerunner to later medieval art. In his unpublished 1973 lecture on Insular art titled "An Experiment with Forms in Art," Schapiro stated that: "In the later medieval art, [the free invention of forms without a clear representational counterpart] was made possible, I believe, by that previous experience in which field and frame became participants in the expressive representation of the figures."[766] Just as in the medieval period where Schapiro saw change in style as related to a shift occurring from feudalism to capitalism, Schapiro saw the emergence of a distinctive Insular style in the British Isles in the 7th and 8th centuries as related to the changing social and political structure.

Schapiro links the growing importance of the artist to both the increasing social status of the metalsmith and the increasing significance of the written word in a changing society. Schapiro noted that contemporary stories treat the "smith as a person of high merit and often of great social importance" and that "we read of bishops who are goldsmiths as well as of priests who fabricate precious objects."[767] Schapiro sees the metalsmith's newly acquired status as affecting his self-consciousness as an artist. Schapiro argues that: "With the prestige and self-

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[765] Schapiro, Language of Forms 159.

[766] Schapiro, "An Experiment with Forms in Art," 2 April 1973. (manuscript p. 27)

[767] Schapiro, Language of Forms 165.

conscious individuality of the smith as an artist in the Insular sphere, there was a corresponding valuation of the scribe and illuminator."[768]

The scribe's status was also ensured by the new passion for the written word that had been introduced through the adoption of Christianity. In describing the respect afforded both the written word and those who created manuscripts, he emphasizes the significance of every mark placed on the page. The new sacred content affected the formal choices of the artist more deeply than previous pagan texts because the written word was equated with the sacred. Schapiro noted that: "A new conception of writing appears in Insular art. The page is appropriated by the scribe-artist as a field for individual fantasy, expression, and elaboration."[769] The illuminations in the text reflect the artist's emphasis on the function, weight, and/or meaning of particular words.

The strong link that Schapiro argues existed between word and image further supports his view that visual art can be understood in linguistic terms. Schapiro sees a strong parallel between the artist/scribe of the Insular world and the new emphasis on the written word in Insular manuscripts. The expressive content of the text is further emphasized through the expressive content of the accompanying forms that the artist has been inspired to create. Schapiro draws on the analogy that he has previously drawn between verbal and pictorial structure. He effectively argues that pictorial structure is intimately related to verbal structure.

In considering Insular art and the debates surrounding its formation, Schapiro recognizes that the arguments that look to "a racial or ethnic spirit" to explain the particular qualities of the work were linked to the political sphere.

> We understand of course, that the reference to an ethnic character in the now discredited biological sense of a racial psychology, aptitude, or world view had a strong appeal in this particular

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[768] Schapiro, <u>Language of Forms</u> 166.

[769] Schapiro, <u>Language of Forms</u> 172.

context because for many centuries the people of Ireland, Scotland, and Wales, in trying to maintain their culture and self-respect under foreign dominations, were led to cultivate their old traditions and arts in a defensive, self-affirming spirit. The notion of an inherent racial genius served a purpose then in maintaining the culture and resisting a foreign ruler. This is evident in the maintenance of a native tongue or dialect in defiance of a foreign conqueror's language.[770]

Schapiro gave this lecture on 27 March 1968, which was still more than six months prior to the eruption of conflict between the Irish and the English in Northern Ireland on 5 October 1968.[771] Though Schapiro's comments may seem somewhat prescient, they perhaps better reflect his sensitivity to Irish history than a foreknowledge of the forthcoming violence. Nonetheless, these lectures can still be read with the beginnings of the so-called "Troubles" in Northern Ireland in mind.

In 1973, Schapiro made more explicit reference to the Troubles as he continued to recognize publicly that a sense of nationalism lay behind the art historical interpretations of particular individuals. In a lecture on the topic of Insular manuscripts at Columbia in 1973, Schapiro made a side remark to the audience during his discussion of the Book of Kells. After stating that it was probably done in an Irish monastery in the south of Scotland, he remarked that: "I hope the Irish patriots in this audience will forgive me for placing it so far from Ireland."[772] Even in the Morgan lectures of 1968, Schapiro concludes his last lecture by considering the question of "the roles of Ireland and England in the formation of this art and in the attribution of

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[770] Schapiro, Language of Forms 158.

[771] The first mention of tensions in Northern Ireland in the New York Times was made in an article that reported the public disorder that erupted at the Civil Rights march in Derry on 5 October 1968. See "Northern Irish Police Rout a Catholic Rights Parade," New York Times 6 October 1968.

[772] Schapiro, "An Experiment with Forms in Art," 2 April 1973. (manuscript p. 18)

works to one or the other of these regions."[773] He recognizes that it is difficult to address this problem if one is either Irish or English; yet even for scholars who are neither one, "there are unconscious tendencies and sympathies, and implications beyond art that may affect one's understanding."[774] Though he does not specify so, Schapiro's interest in semiotics might be partially attributed to the role it could play in transcending these national boundaries.

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[773] Schapiro, <u>Language of Forms</u> 175.

[774] Schapiro, <u>Language of Forms</u> 176.

7.   CONCLUSION

In this dissertation, I have argued that Schapiro continually struggled to practice an art history that was dedicated to understanding the historical meaning of the art object without recourse to racial or national determinants. His concerns were both political and art historical. I have shown that while Schapiro's earliest writings reveal his sympathy for the work of certain German-speaking art historians, including Emanuel Löwy, Wilhelm Vöge and Heinrich Wölfflin, he simultaneously expressed concern that they often understood stylistic difference in terms of racial or national difference. Schapiro's critical embrace of their ideas colored his art historical concerns for the rest of his career. I have made clear that while he approached the art object with various methodologies over the years, he remained dedicated to a definition of style that recognized the unity of form and content. Each phase of his career – his Marxist art history of the 1930s, his iconological work of the 1940s, his concern with Gestalt psychology and cultural anthropology in his reconsideration of style in the 1950s and his turn towards semiotics in the 1960s and 70s - was marked by the struggle to recognize the complex and often contradictory meaning of the art object, its forms and subject matter.

In the 1930s, he repeatedly expressed explicit dismay with the increasingly pernicious application of racial and national essentialism to the understanding of art. I have maintained that Schapiro's Marxist politics of the 1930s was only one element among many that helped shape his famous publication on Silos. I have argued that "From Mozarabic to Romanesque in Silos" (1939) was not simply a demonstration piece of his Marxist approach, but that it more broadly demonstrated how one might avoid many of the methodological weaknesses that he had critiqued in his reviews of the 1930s. I have shown that Schapiro repeatedly argued against methodological tendencies that either relied on racial psychological traits to explain stylistic

change or made too loose of an association between artistic and social change. In contrast, he emphasized the relationship between form and content in his publications of the 1930s by viewing stylistic change in relation to meaningful shifts in societal structure.

Likewise, I have argued that Schapiro's "The Sculptures at Souillac" (1939) can be understood as an attempt to practice structural analysis (*Strukturanalyse*,) an approach that was theorized by Hans Sedlmayr of the New Vienna School. Though Schapiro condemned the group's reliance on the unverifiable and their substitution of racial for real historical factors, Schapiro stated that he was intrigued by their innovative application of new scientific findings in other disciplines to art history. I have argued that similarities exist between the theorization of Sedlmayr's structural analysis and Erwin Panofsky's iconology. Schapiro's interest in their approaches is understandable, as both were dedicated to the discovery of the historical meaning of stylistic types and subject matter as an expression of specific cultural attitudes. I have contrasted Schapiro's subsequent attempts to practice iconology with Panofsky's own seeming retreat from the full-fledged practice of iconology. As we have seen, Panofsky expressed reluctance to attempt iconological analysis once his approach had been unrightfully accused of contributing to the rise of fascism in Germany. Both Schapiro and Panofsky struggled with the complexities of understanding the expressive character of formal elements and neither ever expressed satisfaction with their solutions.

By focusing on the dialogues that Schapiro established with several of his peers, many of whom were German-speaking scholars who fled Hitler's regime, I have provided a fresh look at Schapiro's art history as well as the discipline's development in the U.S. Schapiro's relationship with Panofsky is particularly notable in this regard, as it helps clarify their divergent solutions to the same conundrum. The comparisons I have made of their methodological differences in their

publications were greatly enriched by reference to their private letters. Schapiro's correspondence with the New Vienna School's Otto Pächt is also illuminating. Their letters reveal that while the two similarly condemned fascism and Hitler's rise to power, they had divergent views on the role that "national constants" play in art. I have thus brought to light previously unconsidered aspects of Schapiro's art historical trajectory.

In 1953, Schapiro offered a definition of style that emphasized the expressive content or meaning of the formal elements of the aesthetic whole at the same time that he maintained his long-standing argument against the determining role of racial and national constants. I have argued that Schapiro's concern with theorizing a stylistic whole that was heterogeneous in nature was inspired by the ideas of social scientists and modern artists alike. Like Schapiro, these intellectuals and artists were also alarmed by the affects of racial and national essentialism. Schapiro's interest in the theorization of a unified heterogeneous aesthetic whole corresponded with this postwar trend away from discussions of society grounded in nationalist and racialist language and towards the notion of society rooted in the heterogeneous. Likewise, Schapiro believed that the heterogeneous style of modern art expressed democracy and internationalism. I have thus argued that Schapiro's continued worry over both capitalist and dictatorial regimes lead Schapiro to support a broader understanding of style that fully embraced modern artistic practice.

Ironically, in his effort to avoid racial and national determinants, Schapiro effectively marginalized himself and his work from mainstream art history. His methodological search led him to semiotics in the late 1960s and 70s, at which point he also relinquished class as a determinant. I have argued that with his application of the theory of semiotics to art, Schapiro sought to address the social historical basis of style while simultaneously avoiding racial and

national characterizations. While his art historical practice continued to be enmeshed in a web of political and methodological concerns, his approach veered far from his Marxist approach of the 1930s. At a historical moment when Marxism again began to have sway, Schapiro's work increasingly faded from view. His studies in semiotics appeared largely irrelevant to the generation of Marxist scholars that emerged in the late 1960s and early 70s. T. J. Clark did, however, acknowledge Schapiro's 1937 "The Nature of Abstract Art" as his starting point in his Painting of Modern Life: Paris in the Art of Manet and his Followers.[775] Clark recognized the necessity of returning to class, but wanted to rethink determination. Clark handled Schapiro's concerns regarding Marxist determination in part by turning to the ideas of Marxist philosopher Louis Althusser. If Schapiro is visible at all in the 1970s, it is within the work of Clark and those who followed with the practice of social art history.

While the lessons that we can derive from Schapiro's work are multiple, complex and contradictory, my dissertation suggests that rather than reject style as a concept because of its tainted history, Schapiro's lesson is to approach style with an understanding of its history, its relevance to the contemporary social historical moment and how one's own attitudes and experiences help shape one's point of view. It is imperative that those who try to understand the meaning of images today be aware of the national and racial biases that have complicated the notion of style. The contemporary moment, which includes such simplifications as the binary opposition of good and evil, seems to necessitate just such an insistence on the complexity of meaning.

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[775] T. J. Clark, The Painting of Modern Life: Paris in the Art of Manet and his Followers (Princeton: Princeton UP, 1984) 3-5.

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