

Reconsidering Meyer Schapiro and the New Vienna School

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... 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.¹

Meyer Schapiro, 1936

The American art historian Meyer Schapiro (1904-96) has a clear connection to the so-called New Vienna School and its art historians. In 1936, Schapiro published a widely known review of the second and last volume of the New Vienna School's journal, *Kunstwissenschaftliche Forschungen*, in the *Art Bulletin*, the official journal of the College Art Association in the US.² The New Vienna School took shape around two young art historians, Hans Sedlmayr (1896-1984) and Otto Pächt (1902-88), in Vienna in the late 1920s and early 1930s. At that time, Schapiro was likewise a young art historian as well as an innovator in the discipline. His attempts to develop a historically-based, systematic analysis of style contributed to a critical rethinking of the practice of art history in the American academy, thereby advancing what was heralded as a 'new era in the study of the fine arts'.³ Though the young Schapiro gravitated towards the work of German-speaking scholars who explored formal qualities as the expression of a distinct historic moment out of his concern for establishing a solid methodological basis for art history in the US, the contemporary political situation made his task increasingly complex.

Schapiro's early engagement with the German art historical tradition in the 1920s and 1930s coincided with and was complicated by the rise of fascism in

¹ Meyer Schapiro, 'New Viennese School', *The Vienna School Reader: Politics and Art Historical Method in the 1930s*, ed. Christopher S. Wood, New York: Zone Books, 2000, 259. Originally published in *Art Bulletin*, 18, 1936, 258-66.

² Only two issues of the journal ever appeared, once in 1931 and again in 1933.

³ 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 US. 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 US 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. See 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.

Germany and an art history that was increasingly occupied with the assertion of racial and national superiority. Schapiro's status as a Jewish immigrant, his upbringing in the Jewish, working-class, immigrant neighborhood of Brownsville, Brooklyn, and his early involvement with socialism all contributed to the complexity of his position vis-à-vis German-language art history in general and that of the New Vienna School in particular.⁴ While continuing to explore the possible theoretical avenues in the work of German-speaking art historians, Schapiro expressed growing concern over the attribution of formal characteristics to particular races and nations. His most explicit condemnations of racial and national understandings of style appear in his publications from the mid-1930s, 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, New Vienna School co-founder Sedlmayr made his support clear to the art historical community when he wrote a letter prefacing his contribution to the 1938 *Festschrift* for art historian Wilhelm Pinder in which he congratulated Adolf Hitler on the annexation of Austria.⁵ In contrast, while Schapiro was a Marxist, he did not explicitly state his politics in his essays in mainstream art historical publications; he saved such statements for essays that he published often under a pseudonym in less-widely available journals. However, Schapiro did take particular care to counter nationalistic and racializing tendencies in art history through his publications in mainstream journals. Given his personal and political concerns, it is not surprising that Schapiro had a close yet complex relationship with the ideas and art historians of the New Vienna School. This article explores the complex and often contradictory nature of Schapiro's relationship with the ideas of the New Vienna School and his subsequent dissemination and transformation of them to an English-speaking, primarily American audience.

Rethinking Schapiro's 'New Viennese School'

In considering Schapiro's review of the New Vienna School, contemporary scholars have primarily focused on Schapiro's condemnation of the New Vienna School's approach to art history, in particular what he described as their substitution of racial for real historical factors in explaining style. For example, Richard Woodfield has pointed out that Schapiro's review was 'one of the fiercest attacks on a group of scholars ever to appear in the *Art Bulletin's* pages.'⁶ Similarly, in the introduction to

⁴ Schapiro was born in Shavly (Siauliai), Lithuania on 23 September 1904. His parents, Fanny Adelman Schapiro and Nathan Menachem Schapiro, were both from Jewish orthodox families. At the time that Schapiro's father emigrated to the US in 1906, Lithuania seethed with anti-semitism. Schapiro, along with his mother, brother, and sister, joined his father in the US in 1907. For more on Schapiro's biography see Helen Epstein, 'A Passion to know and make known', *ARTNews*, May 1983, 60-85, and 'A Passion to know and make known', *ARTNews*, Summer 1983, 84-95.

⁵ Hans Sedlmayr, 'Vermutungen und Fragen zur Bestimmung der altfranzösischen Kunst', *Festschrift Wilhelm Pinder*, Leipzig: Seemann, 1938, 9-27. For a description of Sedlmayr's increasingly public support of National Socialism, see Christopher S. Wood, 'Introduction', *The Vienna School Reader: Politics and Art Historical Method in the 1930s*, ed. Christopher S. Wood, New York: Zone, 2000, 12-13.

⁶ Richard Woodfield, 'Reading Riegl's *Kunstindustrie*', *Framing Formalism: Riegl's Work*, Amsterdam: G + B Arts, 2001, 64-65, esp. 64.

his *Vienna School Reader*, Christopher Wood emphasized Schapiro's criticisms while downplaying any admirations, maintaining that: 'Schapiro delivered a negative view.'⁷ Schapiro was without a doubt a vocal opponent of racial and national essentialism in the art world. The same year that he published the review of the New Vienna School, Schapiro also published his most in-depth renunciation of an understanding of artistic style and meaning as based on a constant national or racial character.⁸ Furthermore, Schapiro was well aware of Sedlmayr's associations with National Socialism, which had driven a wedge between Sedlmayr and Pächt in 1934, and Schapiro was thus careful to disassociate himself from any of the group's racist tendencies.⁹

Not surprisingly then, one of Schapiro's specific criticisms of the New Vienna School in his published review was that members of the group often relied on racial and national characterizations to explain style. His more general criticisms focused on the 'looseness' of their approach as well as their lack of 'scientific rigor'.¹⁰ He was specifically disturbed by the group's general lack of historical grounding and its reliance on intuition, which were demonstrated by their use of racial characterizations. Schapiro writes: 'Entities like race, spirit, will and idea are substituted in an animistic manner for a real analysis of historical factors.'¹¹ And, he continues shortly thereafter, stating that:

The appearance of comprehensiveness conceals the lack of historical seriousness ... we reproach the authors not 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.¹²

His criticisms of their approach are undeniable and clearly stated. Yet Schapiro's review of and his relationship with the New Vienna School are more complex than this initial description suggests.

In his review, Schapiro expressed his interest in several aspects of the New Vienna School's approach. First, although Schapiro rejected their findings on racial and national constants in art as unscientific, he admired their willingness to apply new scientific findings from disciplines such as philosophy, psychology, and anthropology, to the study of art history, as the epigraph at the start of this essay

⁷ Wood, 'Introduction', 12.

⁸ Meyer Schapiro, 'Race, Nationality and Art', *Art Front* 2, no. 4, 1936, 10-12.

⁹ In a letter to Schapiro from February 1935, Pächt, who was Jewish, 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 erklärt, dass ich mit ihm nicht mehr zusammenarbeiten könne. Und diese Zusammenarbeit war doch das Fundament der Kw. Forschungen.' Otto Pächt, letter to Meyer Schapiro, 23 February 1935, Meyer Schapiro Collection, 1919-2006, Rare Book & Manuscript Library, Columbia University in the City of New York. Cited hereafter as Schapiro Collection.

¹⁰ Schapiro, 'New Viennese School', 459.

¹¹ Schapiro, 'New Viennese School', 459.

¹² Schapiro, 'New Viennese School', 460.

makes clear. He was encouraged by their attempts to develop a scientific approach to understanding art, even if he was critical of their execution. In his own art history over the course of his career, Schapiro often looked to ideas developed in other disciplines, including psychology, anthropology, and semiotics.¹³ Second, although Schapiro repeatedly condemned the New Vienna School's reliance on the unverifiable, 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.¹⁴ Third, it is important to recall that Schapiro's review summarized the work of the New Vienna School in order to make their ideas available to a non-German speaking and primarily American 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.'¹⁵ Schapiro admired particular aspects of the New Vienna School's approach and believed they could valuably contribute to the development of art historical methodology in the US.

Schapiro, Sedlmayr, and Pächt on 'national constants'

Schapiro's sincere interest in better understanding the methods of the New Vienna School is evident by the fact that he began a collegial dialogue with the group's co-founders, first with Hans Sedlmayr in 1930 and then with Otto Pächt in 1934.¹⁶ From 1930 to 1933, the correspondence between Schapiro and Sedlmayr focused almost exclusively on issues of art historical concern. In the spring of 1931, Sedlmayr invited Schapiro to contribute to the group's journal, *Kunstwissenschaftliche Forschungen*. By fall of that same year, with the journal's future at that point uncertain, Sedlmayr suggested Schapiro publish an article in *Kritische Berichte zur kunstgeschichtlichen Literatur*, a journal devoted to the consideration of art historical methodology.¹⁷ In 1932, Schapiro must have expressed concern over the issue of national constants, the idea that particular national aesthetics remained constant over extended periods of time. In response, Sedlmayr asked Schapiro to contact Pächt, who had been working on the problem for some years, directly. In 1934, Sedlmayr and Schapiro began to

¹³ I argue elsewhere that Schapiro turned to cultural anthropology and Gestalt psychology as a part of the postwar trend away from conceptions of society grounded in racialist and nationalist thought and towards more holistic understandings of society rooted in the heterogeneous. Likewise, I argue that his turn to semiotics in the 1960s provided him with a scientific framework in which he could discuss qualitative aspects of style, which had previously been attributed to race or ethnicity. See Cindy Persinger, 'The Politics of Style: Meyer Schapiro and the Crisis of Meaning in Art History', PhD diss., University of Pittsburgh, 2007, esp. chapters five and six.

¹⁴ Several scholars have commented on Schapiro's critical nature. See, for example: Walter Cahn, 'Schapiro and Focillon', *Gesta* 41, no. 2, 2002, 129-36; Carl Nordenfalk, 'The Diatessaron miniatures once more', *Art Bulletin*, 55, no. 4, 1973, 532-46, esp. 532.

¹⁵ Schapiro, 'New Viennese School', 462.

¹⁶ There are twenty-one letters from Sedlmayr to Schapiro dating from 1930 to 1935 and one draft of a letter from Schapiro to Sedlmayr and 37 letters from Pächt to Schapiro dating from 1934 to 1972. Schapiro's letters to neither Pächt nor Sedlmayr appear to have survived. Meyer Schapiro Collection, 1919-2006, Rare Book & Manuscript Library, Columbia University in the City of New York.

¹⁷ Sedlmayr, letter to Schapiro, 11 March 1931, Schapiro Collection. Also, Sedlmayr, letter to Schapiro, 24 September [1931], Schapiro Collection.

clash over political differences and their correspondence ended with a decisive break in 1935 because of Sedlmayr's anti-Semitism.¹⁸ Sedlmayr and Schapiro shared a brief, but intense correspondence that was sustained by mutual art historical concerns. In contrast, the dialogue between Pächt and Schapiro was long-lived, lasting until 1972, even though it began out of Schapiro's concerns over the crucial issue of national constants.

In the fall of 1934, a little over a year prior to the publication of his review in early 1936, Schapiro expressed his interest in discussing the issue of national constants in art with Pächt to the art historian Bruno Fürst.¹⁹ Pächt and Fürst were friends and both had been editors of *Kritische Berichte zur kunstgeschichtlichen Literatur* in which Schapiro had published at Sedlmayr's suggestion.²⁰ Pächt's response to Schapiro's inquiry via Fürst came in a letter dated 4 October 1934 and was an attempt to convince Schapiro that the use of racial and national constants need not lead to a 'Nazi attitude', a concern that Schapiro must have expressed.²¹ As a Jewish intellectual, Pächt began his letter recognizing that the political climate made it all the more critical that he not be misunderstood.²²

Though Hitler's forces did not invade Austria until 1938, the Austro-fascist regime had come to power in 1934. In considering Pächt's position as a Jewish intellectual living under a fascist regime that discriminated against Jews, Schapiro must have found Pächt's defense of the idea of national constants in art insupportable. Before Pächt was able to complete his first letter to Schapiro, Sedlmayr had delivered a long letter from Schapiro to Pächt. In this letter, Schapiro must have questioned Pächt on the issue of national constants as well as expressed his concern regarding Pächt's situation in Vienna.²³ In response to the question of the circumstances in Vienna, Pächt concluded his letter by summarizing the state of his career. Though he had received a position as a lecturer in Heidelberg, Germany, just before Hitler came to power, Pächt stated that he never gave a single lecture and now anti-Semitism had made it impossible for him to find employment.²⁴

¹⁸ While Sedlmayr's letters to Schapiro provide valuable insight into the relationship of their political differences with their art historical work, the details of their correspondence are not considered here because they lay outside the purview of this essay.

¹⁹ Pächt begins his letter: 'Dr Fürst hat mir Ihren Wunsch übermittelt, meine Ansichten über bestimmte wissenschaftliche Probleme näher kennen zu lernen.' Pächt, letter to Schapiro, 4 October 1934, Schapiro Collection.

²⁰ Meyer Schapiro, 'Über den Schematismus in der Romanischen Kunst', rev. of *La Stylistique Ornamentale dans la Sculpture Romane*, by Jurgis Baltrusaitis, *Kritische Berichte zur kunstgeschichtlichen Literatur* 1, 1932-33, 1-21.

²¹ Pächt wrote: 'Wenn ich Sie recht verstehe, fürchten Sie, meine These von den 'nationalen Konstanten' könnte zu einer Art wissenschaftlicher Rechtfertigung des (politischen) Nationalismus benützt werden, ja müsste konsequentermassen zur Annahme einer "Nazi attitude" führen.' Pächt, letter to Schapiro, 4 October 1934, Schapiro Collection.

²² 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 Lehren infizieren zu lassen, nicht missverstanden zu werden.' Pächt, letter to Schapiro, 4 October 1934, Schapiro Collection.

²³ 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.

²⁴ 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

Yet Pächt did not understand his argument regarding national constants to be supportive of either National Socialism or anti-Semitism, as Schapiro did. In fact, Pächt tried to convince Schapiro that the use of so-called national constants in art history 'can be a radical critique of the current nationalism as well as a critique of conservatism.'²⁵ 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.²⁶

Then, in an attempt to explain how his understanding of national constants in style could run counter to a fascist understanding of national style, Pächt emphasized that artists need not be ethnically related in order to belong to a specific line of art historical development.²⁷ He argued that one's aesthetic preferences were

derzeit hier herrschenden klerikalen, verschärft antisemitischen Kurs völlig aussichtslos gewesen wäre.' Pächt, letter to Schapiro, 4 October 1934, Schapiro Collection.

²⁵ Pächt wrote: 'Ich glaube beweisen zu können, dass dem nicht so ist, dass meine These zu einer Verteidigung der nationalistischen Einstellung vollkommen untauglich ist, ja ich glaube zeigen zu können, dass einzig von dieser meiner Position aus seine radikale Kritik des landläufigen Nationalismus als auch Konservatismus möglich ist.' Pächt, letter to Schapiro, 4 October 1934, Schapiro Collection.

²⁶ Pächt wrote: 'Dieser stetige Faktor ist nicht etwas, was sich etwa durch Angabe bestimmter gleichbleibender, regelmässig oder nur häufig wiederkehrender Formen definieren liesse. Es genügt auch nicht, den stetigen Faktor als die spezifische Einstellung 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 Inhalten erfüllt 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.' Pächt, letter to Schapiro, 4 October 1934, Schapiro Collection.

²⁷ 'The task of *Kunstwissenschaft* 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

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. 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. By emphasizing that one's biological parents would not determine one's aesthetic, Pächt expresses an idea of the nation that runs counter to that expressed in Nazi policy.

Schapiro remained unconvinced by Pächt's vindication of national constants, replying that: '... your account of the constants is largely hypothetical, not empirical or scientific.'²⁸ In his following letter, Pächt expressed his regret that the two could not come to a common understanding.²⁹ Apparently, Schapiro had posited the social bases of art as a counterpoint to national constants, but Pächt dismissed this point. He did not view social art history as a means to a valid understanding of the creative process. He argued 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.'³⁰

When Schapiro published his review of the second volume of *Kunstwissenschaftliche Forschungen* in 1936, Schapiro discussed Pächt's 'Design Principles of Fifteenth-Century Northern Painting', providing a fairly lengthy summary of Pächt's main ideas concerning the relations between spatial composition and surface pattern in Dutch, Flemish, and French painting because of 'the rarity of thinking and observations like his in the English and American writing on the arts he deals with and our real need of formal analysis and fresh historical generalization'.³¹ Schapiro also specifically discussed the lack of clarity in Pächt's notion of formal 'constants'. According to Schapiro, Pächt would need 'to indicate the historical and spatial limits in which the constant is observable, since it is predicated on historical, changing objects, like styles of art.'³² Rather than do so, Schapiro points out that Pächt resorts to 'such indefinite entities as French art, Dutch art, and Flemish art'.³³ Furthermore, Schapiro demonstrates that Pächt's examples are faulty, pointing out for example that Pächt finds the French constant in the work of a Dutchman, Paul of Limburg.

When Schapiro sent Pächt an offprint of his review of *Kunstwissenschaftliche Forschungen* in 1936, Pächt responded that he knew that he and Schapiro did not

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.' Pächt, letter to Schapiro, 4 October 1934, Schapiro Collection.

²⁸ Pächt cited from Schapiro's letter. Pächt continued by responding that hypotheses are a part of science and empiricism. Pächt, letter to Schapiro, 28 December 1934, Schapiro Collection.

²⁹ 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.' Pächt, letter to Schapiro, 28 December 1934, Schapiro Collection.

³⁰ Pächt, letter to Schapiro, 28 December 1934, Schapiro Collection.

³¹ Schapiro, 'New Viennese School', 473.

³² Schapiro, 'New Viennese School', 474-75.

³³ Schapiro, 'New Viennese School', 475.

share the same views regarding national constants: '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.'³⁴ By this point, Pächt had resigned himself to disagreement with Schapiro on the concept of national constants.³⁵ Yet although the two 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 Vienna School than others have previously expressed. As has already been noted, Schapiro clearly stated in his review that his objective was to bring the work of the New Vienna School to the attention of American students. Even more notable is the fact that in a letter to Schapiro, Pächt recognized one of Schapiro's essays as being 'the first "Strukturanalyse" of an [sic] high medieval work of art'.³⁶ A closer look at Schapiro's application of the New Vienna School's methodology of structural analysis helps elucidate his transformation and dissemination of their ideas.

Schapiro's *Strukturanalyse*

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.³⁷

Pächt, 3 June 1939

³⁴ Pächt wrote: 'Was Ihren Aufsatz zum Konstantenproblem anlangt, so war mir Ihre Stellungnahme ja ans unserem Briefwechsel bekannt. Ebenso kennen Sie, glaube ich, meine Einstellung zur Genüge, so dass ich auch jetzt nichts Neues hinzuzufügen habe.' Pächt, letter to Schapiro, 15 June 1936, Schapiro Collection

³⁵ 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.' Pächt, letter to Schapiro, 23 February 1935, Schapiro Collection. Without Schapiro's response to Pächt's suggestion, it is impossible to determine Schapiro's position.

³⁶ Pächt, letter to Schapiro, 3 June 1939, Schapiro Collection. Beginning with his letter of 5 May 1939, Pächt's letters to Schapiro are in English.

³⁷ Pächt, letter to Schapiro, 3 June 1939, Schapiro Collection.

Pächt's praise of Schapiro's article in the above passage is clear. When Pächt wrote to Schapiro, Pächt was living and researching in London at the Warburg Institute. Pächt had left Vienna in 1937 prior to the *Anschluss* and went to London where the Warburg Institute had relocated due to the increasing pogroms against Jews in Germany in 1933. Pächt and Schapiro continued to correspond with one another as well as to share offprints even after their disagreements over the existence of national constants. Though Pächt does not specify to which of Schapiro's articles he refers, a consideration of Schapiro's publications reveals that Pächt must be referring to Schapiro's article of 1939, 'The Sculptures of Souillac'.³⁸ Pächt explicitly contrasted Schapiro's approach with the iconographic practice of the Warburgians, describing it as 'the crossword puzzle game of the Warburg symbolism'. Matthew Rampley has similarly expressed the view that, by the 1930s, Warburg's approach had devolved into 'an exercise in cataloguing often overlooked and arcane symbols'.³⁹ Not only did Pächt value Schapiro's article as an example of *Strukturanalyse* or structural analysis, but he also viewed it as a 'completely new method of iconographical analysis, which art history needs so badly'. Schapiro's 1939 essay, 'The Sculptures of Souillac', can thus be argued to demonstrate a variation on the New Vienna School's methodology for an English-speaking, and primarily American, audience.

In 'The Sculptures of Souillac', Schapiro addresses a Romanesque relief sculpture and trumeau (1120-35) that are located above the door on the inner west wall of the abbey church of Souillac in France.⁴⁰ 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 church dedicated to the Virgin Mary, the Virgin returns the pact to Theophilus who publicly burns it. Theophilus dies happily three days later after having been reunited with God. At Souillac, the story is depicted in a relief sculpture through the use of continuous narrative: two scenes of the Devil and Theophilus in

³⁸ Meyer Schapiro, 'Sculptures of Souillac', *Mediaeval Studies in Memory of A. Kingsley Porter*, ed. W. R. W. Koehler, Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1939.

³⁹ 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.

⁴⁰ 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, 161-72; M. Durliat, 'Un nouvel examen des sculptures de Souillac', *Bulletin Monumental*, 135.1, 1977, 71-72; Régis Labourdette, 'Remarques sur la disposition originelle du portail de Souillac', *Gesta*, 18.2, 1979, 29-35. 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. This essay focuses on Schapiro's interpretation of the sculptures and does not debate their original placement.

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 deviation 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.'⁴¹ 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'.⁴² 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.'⁴³

While Schapiro devotes the first two-thirds of the article to an incredibly 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 deviation 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.⁴⁴

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]'.⁴⁵ 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

⁴¹ Schapiro, 'Souillac', 104. Donald Kuspit has discussed Schapiro's use of 'discoordination' in his analysis of dialectical reasoning in Schapiro's work. See Donald B. Kuspit, 'Dialectical reasoning in Meyer Schapiro', *Social Research*, 45.1, 1978.

⁴² Schapiro, 'Souillac', 102.

⁴³ Schapiro, 'Souillac', 104.

⁴⁴ Schapiro, 'Souillac', 119.

⁴⁵ Schapiro, 'Souillac', 116.

corresponds with the growing power of the secular world at the time.⁴⁶ Schapiro thus gleans the meaning of the relief from both formal and iconographic concerns as understood within the social-historical context.

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 an individual work of art. An emerging capitalism conflicts with a faltering feudalism and opens up the possibility to understand the close relationship of both form and subject matter to social-historical context better. This approach is common to his work at this time and can be seen in his 'From Mozarabic to Romanesque at Silos' also published in 1939.⁴⁷ 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].⁴⁸ In this way, Schapiro made a case 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 its accompanying struggle.

Schapiro's approach in this essay shares certain affinities with structural analysis, the methodological approach theorized by Sedlmayr. When the 'Sculptures of Souillac' was published in 1939, Schapiro had already been in contact with Sedlmayr between 1930 and 1935, been corresponding with Pächt since 1934, and published his review of the group's journal, *Kunstwissenschaftliche Forschungen*, in the *Art Bulletin* in 1936. 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 practice, structural analysis took a variety of forms. According to Schapiro, it was 'difficult to describe their theory as more than a tendency, still fluid and changing'.⁴⁹ Sedlmayr had provided the closest thing to a systematic approach and Schapiro provided a detailed summary in his review. Arguably, Schapiro applied several of Sedlmayr's theoretical recommendations as he implemented his version of structural analysis in his article on the Souillac sculptures. A closer look at the methodological approach of structural analysis as described by Sedlmayr reveals its similarities to Schapiro's approach in 'The Sculptures of Souillac'.⁵⁰

In 'Towards a rigorous study of art' published in the first volume of *Kunstwissenschaftliche Forschungen* 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.⁵¹ According to Sedlmayr,

⁴⁶ Schapiro, 'Souillac', 117.

⁴⁷ Meyer Schapiro, 'From Mozarabic to Romanesque in Silos', *Art Bulletin* 21.4, 1939.

⁴⁸ Schapiro, 'Souillac', 119.

⁴⁹ Schapiro, 'New Viennese School', 454.

⁵⁰ In practice, structural analysis took on a variety of forms. Schapiro commented on the

⁵¹ Hans Sedlmayr, 'Towards a rigorous study of art', *The Vienna School Reader: Politics and Art Historical Method in the 1930s*, ed. Christopher S. Wood, New York: Zone Books, 2000, 148.

'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.'⁵² 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.'⁵³ In 'The Sculptures of Souillac', Schapiro arguably approaches the work of art with what Sedlmayr would have deemed was the 'correct attitude'; just as Sedlmayr proposed, Schapiro makes sense of previously unexplained aspects of the work by interpreting them within a newly considered social-historical context.

Importantly, Sedlmayr argues that the two studies of art must complement each other, and not be performed in isolation. He expressed concern that 'thus far, the aims of art *history*, and its practice has become too much the history of *style*' [original emphasis].⁵⁴ By style here, Sedlmayr means form. In 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.⁵⁵ 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].⁵⁶ Schapiro's singular focus is on how the Theophilus relief sculpture and accompanying trumeau can be understood in relationship to its particular historical context.⁵⁷ Historical context is an essential element of Schapiro's discussion; he links both form and subject matter to the emerging attitudes of the bourgeoisie in conflict with the established religious attitudes. For Schapiro, the 'tympanum' at Souillac can only be understood as the expression of this particular attitude.

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.'⁵⁸ Through a detailed analysis of the form and subject matter at Souillac, in conjunction with an understanding of the changing social-historical context, Schapiro arrives at a new

⁵² Sedlmayr, 'Rigorous study', 148.

⁵³ Sedlmayr, 'Rigorous study', 148-49.

⁵⁴ Sedlmayr, 'Rigorous study', 154.

⁵⁵ Sedlmayr, 'Rigorous study', 154.

⁵⁶ Sedlmayr, 'Rigorous study', 155.

⁵⁷ 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.

⁵⁸ Sedlmayr, 'Rigorous study', 158.

understanding of the sculpture, which had previously been viewed as poorly designed.⁵⁹ 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.⁶⁰

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.

The 'Sculptures of Souillac' stands as a testament to Schapiro's belief that structural analysis might provide useful tools for understanding the meaning of art if proper care was taken in elucidating the social-historical context. It is no wonder that Pächt recognized this article as an example of structural analysis as Schapiro's methodological approach here presents many parallels with that proposed by Sedlmayr. For Pächt, the theoretical basis of Schapiro's article would have been plainly evident. Yet to many others, 'The Sculptures of Souillac' would have had no obvious connection to Sedlmayr or the New Vienna School since rather than explicitly stating his theoretical inspirations, Schapiro presented Sedlmayr's approach to an English-speaking audience simply through application.

Schapiro and Crow

More recently, art historian 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 *The Intelligence of Art* (1999), Crow argues that the so-called '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.⁶¹ Crow particularly values the developments of a social

⁵⁹ 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, *Romanesque Sculpture of the Pilgrimage Roads*, vol. 1, 10 vols., Boston: Marshall Jones, 1923, 199. Alfred Ramé, 'Explication du bas-relief de Souillac - La légende de Théophile', *Gazette archéologique*, 1885, 231.

⁶⁰ Schapiro, 'Souillac', 125-126.

⁶¹ 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, *The Intelligence of Art*, Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1999, 5.

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.'⁶² 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'.⁶³

One factor motivating Schapiro's publication on the sculptures at Souillac is likely to have been a practical one. The essay appeared in a collection to which Schapiro had been invited to contribute and that was published in honor of medievalist Alfred Kingsley Porter, the famed author of *Romanesque Sculpture of the Pilgrimage Roads* (1923). In 1929, Porter had published a play that took the Theophilus legend as its subject.⁶⁴ As Crow has pointed out, Schapiro's selection of Souillac as the topic of his essay seems calculated; it allowed Schapiro to honor Porter, while at the same time avoid making any comment on Porter's romanticized views of medieval society, which Schapiro did not share.⁶⁵

Yet 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 avoiding 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 complexities of the Theophilus relief work against established categories. By demonstrating how a work that does not appear to correspond with 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 for Schapiro, 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. Schapiro's mode of thinking thus 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 approach that appear to have been shaped by Sedlmayr's structural analysis. 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, reassuring regularities of form

⁶² Crow, *The Intelligence of Art*, 11.

⁶³ Crow, *The Intelligence of Art*, 23.

⁶⁴ Arthur Kingsley Porter, *The Virgin and the Clerk*, Boston: Marshall Jones, 1929.

⁶⁵ Crow, *The Intelligence of Art*, 10-11.

disintegrate; then the true power of an art system could begin to be comprehended.⁶⁶

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 . . .'⁶⁷ 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.⁶⁸ 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.'⁶⁹ Crow's observation echoes Sedlmayr's description of how one might be able to understand a work of art better. 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.'⁷⁰ Sedlmayr, like Crow after him, invited the consideration of individual works that depart substantially from the conventional.⁷¹ By focusing on the Theophilus relief, Schapiro is concerned with a work that diverges considerably from a pre-existing notion of Romanesque style. Schapiro examined the work's formal characteristics in extraordinary detail, even inventing a new term for the formal qualities of the sculpture – 'discoordination.' Recall that Schapiro had praised the New Vienna School for 'the intensity and intelligence with which they examine formal arrangements and invent new terms for describing them.'⁷² Thus, Schapiro's interest in the structural significance of the Theophilus relief, which Crow admires, is in fact related to Sedlmayr's theory of structural analysis.⁷³

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

⁶⁶ Crow, *The Intelligence of Art*, 22.

⁶⁷ Crow, *The Intelligence of Art*, 21.

⁶⁸ Sedlmayr, 'Rigorous study', 151.

⁶⁹ Crow, *The Intelligence of Art*, 15.

⁷⁰ Sedlmayr, 'Rigorous study', 151.

⁷¹ 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.

⁷² Schapiro, 'New Viennese School', 453.

⁷³ 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.

dichotomy of form and content.’⁷⁴ Schapiro departed from conventional art historical methodology in the US at the time 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 in *The Intelligence of Art* and Pächt in his letter 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’.⁷⁵ 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 permitted it – opened art-historical interpretation to realistic information about the Middle Ages . . .⁷⁶

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.

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, something probably more akin to iconology. Following the 1939-45 war, iconography became the preferred methodological approach in the US, but it never evolved much 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.⁷⁷ 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

⁷⁴ Crow, *The Intelligence of Art*, 22-23.

⁷⁵ Pächt, letter to Schapiro, 3 June 1939, Schapiro Collection.

⁷⁶ Crow, *The Intelligence of Art* 21.

⁷⁷ 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.

mapped according to a limited set of conceptual oppositions.⁷⁸ Thus, while Pächt 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.

Conclusion

While Schapiro's review of the New Vienna School has long been viewed in terms of its strong criticism of the group's 'unscientific' methods, Schapiro's correspondence with Pächt allows for a more nuanced understanding of Schapiro's position. His condemnation of the nationalistic and racializing tendencies of New Vienna School art historians is in keeping with his well-known views on race, nation, and art. Yet along with his warning, he introduced the New Vienna School's theoretical perspectives to an American audience. He did so not only through his review, but also by adapting Sedlmayr's ideas and implementing them in his 'The Sculptures of Souillac'. He attempted to bypass the intuitive aspects of their approach by substituting a careful consideration of the social-historical context for vague references to racial or national constants.

Given the evidence presented here, it seems pertinent to ask how Sedlmayr's theories have shaped American art history. Elements of his art historical approach are arguably already integrated into American art history and were introduced by the most unlikely of suspects, a Jewish Marxist. In addition, Crow also arguably recuperated aspects of Sedlmayr's structural analysis when he celebrated Schapiro's 'Sculptures of Souillac'. Thus, both Schapiro's response to and his remove from the political turmoil of Europe shaped his application of the New Vienna School's ideas to his art history and helped mold their subsequent life in American art history.

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⁷⁸ Crow, *The Intelligence of Art*, 89.