Sedlmayr's Borromini[*]

Ian Verstegen

The work that announces the methodology of the new Vienna school is Hans Sedlmayr's *Die Architektur Borrominis* of 1930.[1] A brilliant and difficult book, it has had scattered influence but, like all of Sedlmayr's work, is tainted by its author. Martin Raspe, who attempted a similar syncretic view of the architect and move beyond the standard *catalogue* was at pains to distance himself from Sedlmayr's example, which loomed so long in his own German-language tradition.[2] Indeed, language has been a barrier to fairly assessing Sedlmayr, as was his own notorious characterological interpretation of Borromini. But the book advances a remarkable analysis of Borromini's work, which is worth the effort to understand.

The model of Sedlmayr's self-reflexivity that I have sketched elsewhere can be confirmed in the book on Borromini.[3] Indeed, if the author gets ahead of himself with his later speculations on Borromini's personality, the overall aim of the book is reasonable – to give a phenomenological account of Borromini's architecture. This is the propadeutic use of phenomenology as a basis for any critical discipline, in line with the appropriation of Kurt Lewin's idea of a proper *vergleichende Wissenschaftstheorie*. If Sedlmayr's approach is self-conscious about its own contribution, then we have to regard it not only according to its stated aim but the discipline of architectural history at the time. With his lens of Gestalt psychology, Sedlmayr actually achieves a remarkable deal of self-reflexivity in his discussion of Borromini.

After expanding the idea of Sedlmayr's method, I will pass on to a full exposition of his analysis. Next, I undertake a full discussion of the idea of characterology. While I fault Sedlmayr's use of Ernst Kretschmer's ideas in large part, I also clarify how many things thought to be true about the theory are in fact inaccurate. Indeed, I find much *Die Architektur Borrominis* to be a victim of failed

[1] Hans Sedlmayr, *Die Architektur Borrominis*, Berlin : Frankfurter Verlags-Anstalt, 1930. For a good introduction to the text, see Marco Pogacnik, 'Introduzione', in Hans Sedlmayr, *L'architettura di Borromini*, Milan: Electa, 1996, 7-22; Eng. Trans., 'Beyond the Vienna School: Sedlmayr and Borromini', in Andrew Leach, John Macarthur and Maarten Delbeke, eds, *The Baroque in Architectural Culture, 1880-1980*, Aldershot: Ashgate, 2015, 97-108.

[2] Martin Raspe, *Das Architektursystem Borrominis*, Munich: Deutscher Kunstverlag, 1994.

[3] See Ian Verstegen, 'Materializing *Strukturforschung*', in Dan Adler and Mitchell Frank, eds, *German Art History and Scientific Thought*, Aldershot: Ashgate, 2012, 141-160; 'The "Second" Vienna School as Social Science', *Journal of Art Historiography* 7, 2012, 1-17.

hermeneutic charity, because readers have not sought a meaning that would make its meaning most coherent. By placing the book into a cultural context that shows it to be overly ambitious but not unfounded as a method of analysis. Then, I introduce those critics who have used Sedlmayr's ideas on Borromini fruitfully. By viewing Sedlmayr's sympathetic interpreters, who were able to take advantage of later advances and discoveries in seventeenth century Italian architectural history, we get a more accurate view of what such a model of interpretation can afford. In the end, the aim is to return the book to the genealogy of art historical structuralism and highlight its role as a founding analysis of the 'new' Vienna School.[4]

The book

Sedlmayr's book was brilliant but breathlessly pioneering. Aside from the sympathetic commentators discussed below, there has not been much attention to its central analysis. If authors do discuss it, they often simply pass on to the salacious chapters on characterology. Even Frederic Schwartz, who calls the book 'quite compelling' spends the majority of his time on characterology.[5] First, however, it is important to focus on the brief first two chapters containing the core of its insights. These insights, while attempted in a rigorous form are, as Schwartz has written, often not fully substantiated, relying partly on intuition.

   The content is inseparable from the historical moment that Sedlmayr and Otto Pächt saw themselves in. Max Dvořák had died, the last of the speculative generation. The more recent members of the Vienna School like Oskar Pollak had turned to documentation. As Sedlmayr refreshed art history's contact with psychology, he simultaneously returned to Dvořák and behind him, Alois Riegl. Of course Riegl had helped rehabilitate the Baroque. Borromini, like Riegl's late antique, would have been a good subject for a-normative analysis. In a footnote to his well-known *Space, Time and Architecture*, Siegfried Giedion seems to take it for granted that Borromini was an ideal Viennese topic, writing 'the systematic study of Borromini was first undertaken by the "Vienna School" after 1900.' He follows Dvořák, to Oskar Pollak, and A. E. Brinckmann.

   The idea of treating the anti-classical Borromini must have pleased Sedlmayr and it was crucial that in an early work Dvořák had discussed Borromini briefly.[6]

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[4] Wolfgang Kemp, 'Strukturalismus', *Kunsthistorische Arbeitsblätter* 12, 2008, 1-10.

[5] Frederic Schwartz, *Blind Spots: Critical Theory and the History of Art in Twentieth-Century Germany*, New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2005, 158; c.f. my review, 'Persistence of Vision – Blind Spots after Ten Years, *Journal of Art Historiography* 11, 2014, 1-11.

[6] Max Dvořák, 'Francesco Borromini als Restaurator', *Kunstgeschichtliches Jahrbuch der K. K. Zentral-Kommission*; reprinted in Max Dvořák, *Gesammelte Aufsätze zur Kunstgeschichte*, ed. by J. Wilde and K. M. Swoboda, Munich: R. Piper & Co., 1929, 271–78; Eng. Trans. By Jonathan Blower, 'Francesco Borromini as Restorator', *The Monument Question in Late Habsburg Austria*, PhD dissertation, University of Edinburgh, 2012, 238-244.

But Sedlmayr's personal ambition fueled his efforts too. Just as the older Dagobert Frey brought his 'Beiträge zur Geschichte der römischen Barockarchitektur', to press, Sedlmayr rushed 'Gestaltetes Sehen' to publication.[7] In this way, he was not responding to Frey but actually competing with him. Andrew Hopkins had noted how Frey was a Dvořák 'profiteer', and this perhaps drove Sedlmayr and Pächt further back to Riegl in their reissue of his works rather than Dvořák's.[8]

Sedlmayr's 1925 monograph, *Fischer von Erlach der Ältere*, was relatively atheoretical. The article of the same year, 'Gestaltetes Sehen', on the other hand, established his structural method through the example of Borromini. This method relies on stable knowledge already gained by the discipline. Looking at Sedlmayr's early books, like *Fischer von Erlach der Ältere* (1925), *Österreichische Barockarchitektur 1690-1740* (1930) and indeed *Die Architektur Borrominis*, one can see that Sedlmayr does not generally do original archival research.[9] He reuses well-known images, prints and plans already published. In the case of the Borromini book, although Sedlmayr did make use of the Albertina, he largely relied on Eberhard Hempel's book as a 'first science', with which to build his 'second science' interpretation.[10] Leo Steinberg perspicaciously noted that the drawings and diagrams that Sedlmayr published in 1926 were not reproduced in the 1930 monograph.[11] Against Frey's immediately preceding Dvořákian contextualism, Sedlmayr rhetorically offers a return to a Rieglian deep synthesis.

It is important to gain an overview of Sedlmayr's whole book. Because Sedlmayr was quite methodical about his presentation of Borromini, he gives specific tasks to the individual sections of the book. Part I, for example, is concerned with 'structures' (*Gebilde*) and is largely given over to 'descriptions' (*Beschreibungen*) of general principles. In part II, Sedlmayr passes to Borromini's architecture proper, and abstracts a theory of Borromini's architecture. It is only in part III that Sedlmayr passes to the treatment of Borromini's architecture as a 'document' (*Dokument*). Here, specifically treating Borromini's work from a wider viewpoint, Sedlmayr passes to the notorious discussion of Borromini's psychology (using Kretschmer's constitution characterology) and the Borrominian 'worldview' (*Weltbild*).

[7] Dagobert Frey, 'Beiträge zur Geschichte der römischen Barockarchitektur', *Wiener Jahrbuch für Kunstgeschichte* 17, 1924, 5-113; and the popularizing *Architettura barocca*, Rome and Milan, 1926; Hans Sedlmayr, 'Gestaltetes Sehen', *Belvedere* 8, 1925, 65-73; 'Zum Gestalteten Sehen', *Belvedere* 9/10, 1926, 57-62.

[8] Andrew Hopkins, 'Riegl Renaissances', in *The Origins of Baroque Art in Rome*, eds. Andrew Hopkins and Arnold Witte, Los Angeles: Getty Publications, 2010, 65.

[9] Hans Sedlmayr, *Fischer von Erlach der Ältere*, Munich: Piper, 1925; *Österreichische Barockarchitektur 1690-1740*, Wien, Filser EA, 1930.

[10] Eberhard Hempel, *Francesco Boromini*, Vienna: Schroll, 1924.

[11] Leo Steinberg, *Borromini's San Carlo alle Quattro Fontane: A Study in Multiple Form and Architectural Symbolism*, New York: Garland, 1977, 31. Sedlmayr had published Albertina 175 in his 1926 article.

As Sedlmayr moves closer to his particular interpretation of Borromini, he gives further crucial sign posts to the reader, consistent with his realist philosophy of art history. His task is enlightening a single artistic figure, Borromini, and elucidating his theory of art. This is useful to keep in mind when moving on the interpretation of San Carlo alle Quattro Fontane, because it is only chosen for its completeness and representativeness in explaining Borromini's larger architectural commitments. Sedlmayr actually tries to make it clear he is not writing a standard monograph.

Sedlmayr's method

Sedlmayr begins his book with some reasonable methodological questions. How do we decide what the correct reading of a work of art is? Anticipating Michael Baxandall by five decades, he argues that an interpretation will always presume a preliminary description. Furthermore, a description presupposes a particular point of view, for which each other description (and hence interpretation) will be different. In respect to the goal of research, Sedlmayr does not so much seek Borromini's intention as the way in which the work is configured (*gestaltet*). This is a crucial difference, because such a conception presumes not just a discursive or stated intention, but a kind of embodying of the solution; *gestaltet* is formed material, not immanent form. As I have argued elsewhere, this is good methodology and probably superior to anything in the offering at the time.

Sedlmayr anticipates his formal argument in 'Zu einer strenge Kunstwissenschaft', where he distinguished between a first and a second science of art history.[12] He notes that a science of art history cannot be a history of single, exterior facts. That would be mere 'style history' (*Stilgeschichte*). The absurdity would be the same as writing a history of automobiles that does not understand either their function or construction.

It is here that Sedlmayr introduces the idea of deep structural knowledge, borrowed from Gestalt psychologist Kurt Koffka. The quote he uses had opened his 1925 article on Borromini, and had just appeared in 1923.[13] There, in a very early document in the Gestalt movement, Koffka had explored the notion of understanding and used the example of seeing an internal combustion motor for the first time. One would only see it meaningfully if one had a full understanding of its mechanical functions. Sedlmayr wanted to see buildings in this way. It is quite striking that the engine is precisely the imagery used by the Russian formalist

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[12] Hans Sedlmayr, 'Zu einer strengen Kunstwissenschaft', *Kunstwissenschaftliche Forschung* 1, 1930/31, 7-32; trans. in Christopher Wood (ed.) *The Vienna School Reader*, New York: Zone Books, 2000.

[13] Kurt Koffka, 'Zur Theorie der Erlebnis-Wahrnehmung', *Annalen der Philosophie* 3, 1923, 375-399.

Viktor Shklovsky in his metaphor of formal analysis as mechanic's work.[14] In a text of 1928, Shklovsky had written,

> The understanding man scrutinizes the car serenely and comprehends 'what is for what': why it has so many cylinders and why it has big wheels, where its transmission is situated, and why its rear is cut in an acute angle and its radiator unpolished. This is the way one should read.[15]

Sedlmayr believes that by finding the historical problem that Borromini faced, a product of the first science of art history, he can achieve the correct mind-set (*Einstellung*) to intuit the underlying formative factor that motivated the architect. In good Gestalt form, he then seeks the explanation that best captures the 'central characteristics' of an artistic form.

As with all discussions of 'inference to the best explanation', a form of Charles S. Pierce's abduction, there is the possibility of error, and Sedlmayr recognizes this.[16] However, as in the case of ordinary perception, the richer the stimulus is – or the more facts available to the art historian – the more the likely explanation will be the correct explanation. Therefore, Sedlmayr sees the earlier works of A. E. Brinckmann and Cornelius Gurlitt as tentative solutions to reading the forms of Borromini, which although limited, are based on legitimate insights. Furthermore, he argues, it is not so much that each did not obtain *the* correct interpretation but that there will be a number of sub-interpretations, each based on different relationships of forms in the architecture. Here we must agree with Schwartz in applauding Sedlmayr's 'self-awareness and scrupulousness with which the argument is pursued.'[17]

Gebilde – Borromini's works

Sedlmayr notes that upon entering the church of San Carlo, one does not receive any definite impression, and although one can resolve the forms into a definite percept, one cannot discover the hidden articulation of the forms, which has 'not been discovered or described correctly.' The space, he says,

> Is a prism of rectangular base with rounded angles, the sides of which are vaulted with arches (Fig. 1). Along the primary axis the arches are semi-circular and are 'thrown' on the vaulted niches (apses) whose plan is also

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[14] For a discussion, see Peter Steiner, *Russian Formalism: A Metapoetics*, Lausanne: sdvig press, 2014, 39-59.

[15] Viktor Shklovsky, *Technika pisatel' skogo remesla,* Moscow, 1928; cited in Steiner, *Russian Formalism*, 40.

[16] For a discussion of abduction, see Verstegen, 'Materializing *Strukturforschung*', 144.

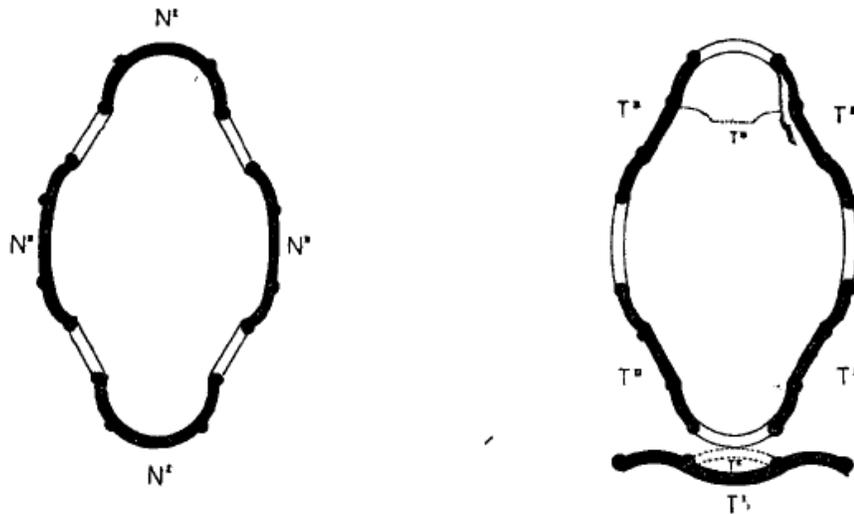[17] Schwartz, *Blind Spots*, 158.

Figure 1 Sedlmayr's diagram of the alternate wall groupings (Sedlmayr, *Die Architektur Borrominis*, 1930, figs. 4&5).

semi-circular. The arches over the minor axes are oval segments and are vaulted with lowered vaults whose plan is an oval segment. The arches hold up a masonry oval cupola that rests, on spherical, trapezoidal spandrels, on the 'rounded angles' of the prism of rectangular base. On the elevation, three distinct zones are developed: that with the architectural orders, that of the cupola, and in between an intermediate zone formed of arches, portions of vaults and pendentives. The fourth is represented by the sole lantern.[18]

Criticizing the previous work of Brinckmann,[19] Sedlmayr argues that in the analyses published, no significant progress has been made in uncovering the basic structure of Borromini's design. Sedlmayr does approximate the floor plan but he is talking about impressions not the draftsman's geometry (Fig. 2).

[18] Sedlmayr, *Die Architektur Borrominis*, 24: 'Der Raum mist ein rechteckiges Prisma mit abgestumpften Ecken, dessen Seiten sich mit Bogen überspannt öffnen. Die Bogen in der langen Achse sind Halbkreise und öffnen sich auf gewolbte Nischen (Apsiden), deren Grundrisse Hälften von Kreisen sind. Die Bogen in der kurzen Achse sind Teile von Ovalen und öffnen sich auf flache Apsiden, deren Grundrisse Teile von Ovalen sind. Die Bogen tragen eine massive Ovalkuppel, die mit sphärischen Trapez-Zwickeln auf den "abgestumpften Ecken" des Rechteckprismas ruht. Senkrecht liegen dabei drei scharf getrennte Zonen übereinander: Zone der Säulenordnungen, Kuppelzone, dazwischen eine vermittelnde Zone zusammengesetzt aus Bogen, Partialwölbungen und Zwickeln. Als vierte die ganz selbständige Laterne.'
[19] A. E. Brinckmann, *Baukunst des 17. und 18. Jahrhunderts in den romanischen Ländern*, Berlin, Neubabelsberger Athenaion, 1915.
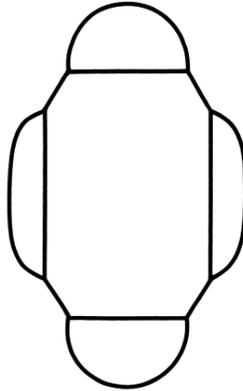
Figure 2 Sedlmayr's idea of the plan of San Carlo, after Arnheim ('Objective Percepts, Objective Values', 307)

Sedlmayr argues that in trying to discover the *essential* form of the church, one runs into the distinction between phenomenal and geometric qualities. What is decisive in Borromini's design is not a series of shapes or dimensions, but a phenomenal value. For example, one cannot analyze the two stories of the façade separately, but in 'reciprocal relationship.' The upper story is a 'development' of the lower story, and the concaves are in relationship with the convexes. Adapting Kurt Koffka's 'formative vision' (*gestaltenden Sehen*), Sedlmayr wants to find the tolerance for the basic Gestalt, which survives metric change and adjustment.[20]

Just as someone knowledgeable about motors could describe one's inner workings, Sedlmayr believes that in the internal space the four niches are different (in depth and shape) but express the same basic form (*Gestalt*).[21] He sees the perimeter of the deepest niche, N1, folded, rolled or better like a compressed spring. Between the niches, the rounded corners look like mere dead zones between the active forms. These varied niche forms in black (N) are, following Edgar Rubin, 'figure' to the blank interstices (the 'ground'). So far, Sedlmayr's approach is orthodox in its adherence to Gestalt theory and it must be admitted that he is

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[20]   Citing Max Wertheimer. Shortly after this was published, Wertheimer's student in Frankfurt, Erich Goldmeier, would publish extensive experiments on phenomenal similarity, illustrating precisely this point; 'Über Ähnlichkeit bei gesehenen Figuren', *Psychologische Forschung* 4, 1937, 146–208, translated as 'Similarity in Visually Perceived Forms', *Psychological Issues* 8, 1973, 1-136.

[21] Otto Pächt would go on to use this example in 'Gestaltungsprinzipien der westlichen Malerei des 15. Jahrhunderts', *Kunstwissenschaftliche Forschungen* 2, 1933, 75-100; English trans. by Jacqueline Jung, 'Design Principles of Fifteenth-Century Northern Painting', in Christopher Wood (ed.) *The Vienna School Reader Politics and Art Historical Method in the 1930s*, New York: Verso, 2000, 243-321. For a discussion, see my forthcoming article, 'Otto Pächt and 'National' Constants in Late Gothic Painting', *Wiener Jahrbuch für Kunstgeschichte*.

essentially exploring figure-ground in three dimensions in 1930, forty-five years before Rudolf Arnheim would do so in his *Dynamics of Architectural Form*.[22]

As with all figure-ground phenomena, an alternative perceptual aspect is possible when the dead areas are seen as the positive pier that serves as the springing of the vaulting. Here, instead we see the door and niche of the central section dominating, and surrounded by the concavity of the niches. Now, as in the former case, we derive a set of related but different architectural units, which appear as variations of one another but this time the flat depths of the niches are now the 'dead' zone. A Gestalt switch has occurred. Sedlmayr, however, sees this new form as related to the façade, because it duplicates its form more or less with a central bowing element and two concavities. Against any objection, he notes that the altar duplicates the form of the façade in miniature, and therefore reinforces the transition from the exterior to the interior, and the second Gestalt.

After making observations on the lower two zones of the interior of the church, Sedlmayr asks what the relationship can be to the cupola, which is in contrast relatively rigid and self-enclosed. He acknowledges that the relationship is not so well pronounced as in later buildings but finds a key in the basement. There, the wedges that are formed by the closure of the vaulting leading to the ceiling, provides a continuity to the forms all the way up in the cupola carrying on, if only weakly, a functional relationship that is much clearer in the Propaganda Fide.[23]

After making comments on Borromini's choice of columns over pilasters, and the aesthetic consequences, Sedlmayr summarizes his argument.

> 1. At bottom, Borromini's forms are based on a unity of relief structures in various relationships.
> 2. The unity is not rigid but dynamic and flexible. The alterations already proposed bear the unity in alteration, not as single unalterable forms.
> 3. The structure thus has a dual character (*Doppelstruktur*), dynamic and alterating.

Sedlmayr's argument is reinforced in Chapter 2, which discusses Borromini from a 'genetic' point of view. Following Kurt Lewin, he distinguished between phenotypical similarities and genotypical similarities. Style history can only group phenotypes and does not understand function. This is ironic because Sedlmayr is assumed to rely on a physiognomic approach that is intuitive and immediate. In the first sense, he wants to 'provide a key' to understand his works structurally; in the second, the 'forces' that were active on the work at the moment of the birth of its

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[22] Rudolf Arnheim, *Dynamics of Architectural Form*, Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1977, 69-75.

[23] Sedlmayr references Albertina inv. 236 here, which seems to be an error, as he further cites Hempel, *Francesco Borromini*, who himself mentions Albertina inv. 171 and 223. The drawings associated with the basement are inv. 223 and 180.

forms. It is crucial that genetic description comes second because he has outlined that it is impossible to connect works of art by influence if one does not have an initial understanding of them. Otherwise, there are tacit assumptions packed into such judgments. This constitutes his and Pächt's critique of style-history (*Stilgeschichte*).

Among the genetic analyses that Sedlmayr gives is one related to San Carlo, and it can be summarized to further the author's points. Sedlmayr derives the facade of San Carlo from the tiburium of Sant'Andrea delle Fratte **(Fig. 3)**, specifically seeing it as the isolation of one face of the centralized structure. In this way, Sedlmayr actually shies away from the modernist tendency to see Borromini's forms to be undulating.
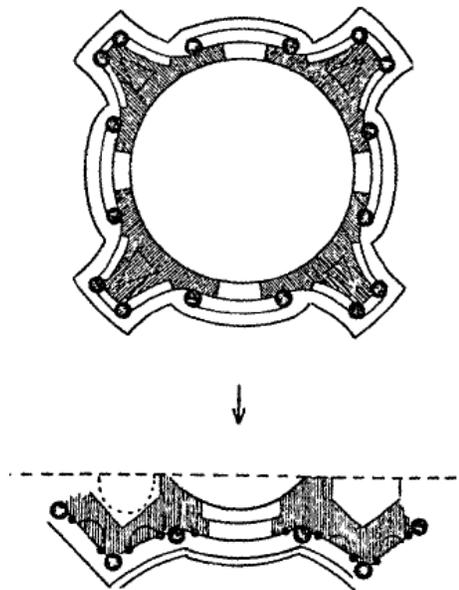

Figure 3 Sedlmayr's diagram of the derivation of San Carlo's façade form Sant'Andrea delle Fratte (Sedlmayr, *Die Architektur Borrominis*, 1930, figs. 11 & 13).

Architektur – **Borromini's theory**

In part II, Sedlmayr passes beyond the individual work of architecture to Borromini's 'theory', or underlying systems of ideas. Just as the parts of a building add up to a 'good' whole and cannot be understood in isolation, the buildings themselves can't be completely understood alone. Sedlmayr sees Borromini's central ideas evolving, and only emerging fully in his later works. Such a synoptic view leads Sedlmayr to begin to speculate on Borromini's personality, leading to the next section.

Sedlmayr immediately turns to the idea of the dynamic in Borromini's works. Far from being a characteristic of the Baroque, Sedlmayr only sees this quality of movement (*beweglich*) in Borromini, and then only in the late works. This

latent quality began with the reuse of antique forms in a multitude of combinations. Sedlmayr insists that for Borromini, forms had a non-thingish (*nicht Dinglich*) quality. Parts are purely additive and this makes them strictly piecemeal, allowing their fluidification. The dissolution of the forms allowed for a new dynamic quality. A method of using antique forms slowly became a new aesthetic.

For Sedlmayr, Borromini works with identical items distinguished by their relief. It is the outer surface, then, that is most of interest to Borromini. The result is a solid compactness to such relief elements; as a result, 'single elements cannot be exhibited independently because otherwise the unity of the theme is compromised.' The importance of relief extends to the columns, without which the expressive character of the building, including its 'mobility', would disappear.

Sedlmayr reflects on Borromini's preference for the orthogonal plan, in contrast to Bernini's use of perspective drawings. He sees the orthogonal drawing underscoring Borromini's 'non-thingish' tendency, because forms remain open to numerous possibilities. It is here that Sedlmayr inches toward a characterological idea of Borromini, because the art historian finds that the incessant drawings out of proportion to be typical of 'schizothemic' artists. For this reason, Sedlmayr resists seeing drawings of a window to be typical alternative proposals, as they might be for another architect; rather, they are possible permutations of the same forms already tried out.

The distance from reality that Sedlmayr finds in Borromini's drawings demonstrates the architect's abstract thought. Here we see the importance of mathematics for Borromini, creating shapes intended to be seen in a 'diffuse, homogeneous and schematic' light. Sedlmayr insists that Borromini is not interested in dramatic light effects. Similarly, he insists that the undulating quality of the architect's facades is achieved in complete independence from the material and therefore is not a victory over them.

Returning to the topic of dynamics, Sedlmayr calls it an illusion. Sounding like a Gestalt psychologist, he says 'Borromini's figures appear "alive" when the figures of the "superior" geometry…possess an effect of greater 'vitality' than the elementary forms;' the 'gestalt' of movement emerges.[24] The movement is just the possibility of variation of abstract, formal complexes. The material, however, is dead and inert. For Sedlmayr this is another consequence of Borromini's 'distance from reality.'

According to Sedlmayr, Borromini thinks in pure forms, more or less indifferent to typology and function. Practical uses, like the ability to enter a portal, are occasions and limits to realizing forms, and not determiners. Sedlmayr refers to a famous experiment by Friedrich Wulf from the Berlin Gestalt Institute on memory

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[24]   Here his logic is following that of Max Wertheimer in 'Untersuchungen zur Lehre von der Gestalt II', *Psychologische Forschung* 4, 1923, 301-350.

to make his point.[25] Some percepts are remembered for their intrinsic qualities and some with reference to the world. One can see an angularly undulating line as a 'zigzag' or as steps. Similarly, for Borromini, window forms take on a life of their own, only barely tethered to their original function. As an extension of this idea, Sedlmayr believes that Borromini's buildings do not seem to acknowledge at all their surroundings, but seem 'dropped from the sky.'

Sedlmayr ends this chapter with a reflection on physiognomy. He thinks of physiognomy as the initial impression we have of someone's pedantry. To explain this impression of Borromini's architecture, he takes over Heinz Werner's distinction between 'geometric-technical' and 'expressive' speech.[26] Although 'physiognomic' perception invokes Johann Caspar Lavater and later, more sinister, traditions, it is used in Berlin Gestalt theory and the allied personalistic Hamburg psychology of Heinz Werner (both cited by Sedlmayr) as a mode of *expressive seeing*. Indeed, it continues to be used in this way to the present day in experimental psychology, apparently with no misunderstanding or stigma attached.[27]

Daniela Bohde states that, 'Sedlmayr's theory, then, is that the essence of the work of art can be grasped just by looking at it', and also that there was an increasing conflation of 'physiognomy, character and essence.'[28] Bohde argues both for the immediacy of the physiognomic impression and also its connection to classical physiognomy. In regard to the second point, Werner and the Gestalt psychologists were quite conscious of the traditional meaning of 'physiognomy' and resurrected its use quite consciously as a legitimate concession to the expressiveness of perception. Contrary to Bohde, when Arnheim or his teacher Max Wertheimer demonstrated physiognomic correlations, they *never* argued that one gained an insight into the character of a person from their appearance.

What Wertheimer and Arnheim affirm about personality is that its manifestations may be *correlated* but its content may not be *divined* (Fig. 4). For

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[25] Freidrich Wulf, 'Über die Veränderung von Vorstellungen (Gedächtnis und Gestalt)', *Psychologische Forschung* 1, 1922, 333-373; Eng. Trans. 'Tendencies in figural variation', in W. Ellis (ed.), *A Source Book of Gestalt Psychology*, London: Kegan Paul, Trench, Trubner, 1939, 136-148; The experiments are discussed by Arnheim, *Art and Visual Perception*, Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1974, 66-67.

[26] Heinz Werner, 'Über Sprachphysiognomik als einer neuen Methode der vergleichenden Sprachbetrachtung', *Zeitschrift für Psychologie* 109, 1928, 337-363.

[27] Joseph Glicksohn and Tal Yafe, 'Physiognomic perception and Metaphoric Thinking in Young Children', *Metaphor and Symbol* 13, 1998, 179-204; Martin Lindauer, *The Expressiveness of Perceptual Experience: Physiognomy Reconsidered,* Amsterdam: Benjamins, 2013, and Giulia Parovel, *Le qualità espressive: Fenomenologia sperimentale e percezione visiva*, Milan: Mimesis, 2012; Michele Sinico, *Expressive Design. Human Factors e teoria delle qualità terziarie per il disegno industriale*, Milan: Mimesis, 2012.

[28] Daniela Bohde, 'The Physiognomics of Architecture: Heinrich Wölfflin, Hans Sedlmayr and Paul Schultze-Naumberg', in Dan Adler and Mitchell Frank, eds, *German Art History and Scientific Thought*, Aldershot: Ashgate, 2012, 131.
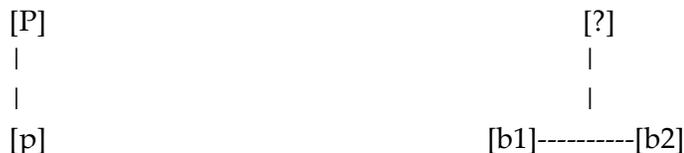
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        [P]                                    [?]
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        [p]                              [b1]----------[b2]
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Fig. 4. (left) classic physiognomy inference from p, outward sign, to P, personality; (right) Wertheimer's method, correlation from b1to b2, outward traits, with no inference to P, personality.

example, Wertheimer's famous classroom exercise of improvising on the piano and asking students to identify who is intended *is not physiognomic*.[29] There is a correlation sideways from music to person, not vertically from person to content. A slow walking person and a slow plodding melody don't really say anything about the person, although we can identify to whom the music refers. The same goes for Wertheimer's famous *radix*, the common core to an individual's expressive behavior. These manifestations can correlate with one another without any affirmation about their content. Put another way, the outward form of behavior does not give insights into permanent dispositions.

In regard to spontaneity, Sedlmayr confirms opposing impressions, of Borromini's 'cold' mathematical sense along with his organic 'warmth.' The impressions coexist, leading to a paradoxical 'icy fire' or 'dead life.' It should be pointed out that this 'immediate' impression is Sedlmayr's cultivated perception, which nevertheless is spontaneous. Regardless of our knowledge, expressive impressions are still spontaneous. Learning more about a building or an architect, we might cultivate our impression and the expressive quality might change. We might quote Jean-Paul Sartre, who said in reference to Kretschmer, 'the character of the Other, in fact, is immediately given to intuition as a synthetic ensemble. This does not mean that we can immediately *describe* it. It would take time to make the differentiated structures appear, to make explicit certain givens which we have immediately apprehended effectively, to transform the global indistinction which is the Other's body into organized form.'[30] The spontaneous impression is of the collective *Gebilde*, not an isolated building seen by an uninitiated viewer.

For Sedlmayr, the physiognomy is different between the early and late works, underscoring the rarity of the 'dynamic' of the Baroque. The early works, including the San Carlo (but not the façade) are clear, precise, 'scientific.' Somewhere in the mid 'fifties, the same forms shift slightly and begin to give rise to a more mysterious impression. The examples he gives are the tombs in S. Giovanni in Laterano.

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[29] See Fritz Heider, *The Life of a Psychologist – An Autobiography*, Lawrence: University of Kansas Press, 1983, 44-45; cited by Daniela Bohde, *Kunstgeschichte als physiognomische Wissenschaft: Kritik einer Denkfigur der 1920er bis 1940er Jahre*, Berlin: Akademie Verlag, 2012, 164.

[30] Jean-Paul Sartre, *Being and Nothingness: An Essay on Phenomenological Ontology*, trans. Hazel Barnes, New York: Philosophical Library, 1956, 350.

This version of physiognomy is not suspect. It is part of Sedlmayr's critical project in *Die Architektur Borrominis*. He took documentary evidence to build up his picture of Borromini that was based on the psychological literature available to him. Here, we have to keep aside what Sedlmayr did later with intuition and rely on his 1930 text and its theoretical apparatus. Sedlmayr believes the unsettling quality he has isolated in Borromini's late works can only be explained in psychological terms. The logic of forms, we might say, has run out, and the necessity of the design cannot any longer be explained. More is called for. While a chapter on Borromini and Guarini follows, it feels like a short interlude. Instead the ground is cleared for reflecting on Borromini's personality.

Dokument – **Borromini's character**

In Anglo-American art history, Sedlmayr's analysis of Borromini's personality has been seen as completely unfortunate and indeed has been conflated with his adoption of Nazism. Rudolf Wittkower's reasonable and commonsense critique sealed this unfortunate theory so that save a few like Werner Oechslin, no one has even bothered to mention this aspect of Sedlmayr's work on Borromini.[31] But this ignorance indicates a retrospective misreading of German-language academic discourse on the body and the intuitively and immediately given. By reviewing this misinterpretation, Sedlmayr's admittedly overenthusiastic efforts can be put into context and even reconsidered.

The introduction of Borromini's personality was intended to close the circle of interpretation and create, as it were, a complete portrayal of the man and his architecture. This discussion takes place in the third section of the book called 'Borromini's Architecture as Document', meaning its use as symptomatic of other things. In reality, it only takes up 13% of the book, much less than its notorious content has warranted in print. Nevertheless, because Sedlmayr saw it as the logical conclusion of his efforts, it cannot simply be excised from his larger interpretation of Borromini.

Following the work of Kretschmer, Borromini is deduced to be a Cartesian with typical 'schizothymic' personality traits. Schizothymia, in its turn, is meant to reflect the normal character distribution of those inclined to become schizophrenia (psychosis). This diagnosis in turn is supposed to make his larger formative impulses more understandable. Sedlmayr summarizes Kretschmer's typical schizothemic:

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[31] Rudolf Wittkower, 'Francesco Borromini: Personality and Destiny', *Studies in the Italian Baroque*, London: Thames and Hudson, 1975; Werner Oechslin, '"Folie borrominienne", "esprit cartésien", "schizothyme"', in Fabrice Douar et al. (ed.), *Borromini en perspective*, Paris: Louvre, 2003, 46-71.

1. Tendency to recast given forms in an unconventional way (arbitrariness).

2. Search for the most extreme expressive effect.

3. Tendency to unify heterogeneous elements within the same work and connect them in a peculiar and unmotivated way.

4. Rigid constructive structure in combination with original and richly varied detail.

5. Prolific production disproportionate to actual commissions. Compulsive labour.

6. Combination of abstract-analytical, systematizing thought with dreamlike

fantasy.[32]

It is this intuited, physiognomic leap from Borromini's works to his alleged schizothymic personality that has been singled out by Wittkower and other authors as so unfounded.[33] Frederic Schwartz saw it as a leap into quackery. It is clear that this all-in-one strategy is extremely ambitious and is not expressed in the spirit of fallible interpretation and is rather cavalier about the explanatory pay-off that the psychology of his time can deliver. But I affirm, once more, that we are are too ready to read too much into this procedure when it really represented an interesting, if difficult to defend, critical practice.

There are essentially two basic issues with Sedlmayr's use of characterology that must be separated. First, is the aggressive attempt to glean from the signs of Borromini's art and life a fully formed psychological 'profile' of the artist and follow it through to its interpretive end. Second, is the very use of characterology in the first place. Since the second hinges on the first, I want to say something about expression itself.

The cosmopolitan and completely non-racist theories of Gestalt theory embraced concepts such as physiognomic perception and were at least sympathetic to Kretschmer's theories of characterology.[34] Unfortunately, there is even misunderstanding here in regard to basic concepts. Most scholars are incredulous that Kretschmer could even have been taken seriously at all, a position that is summarized in his notorious photographs and diagrams of body types. This is not surprising. With the disasters of Nazism, any discussion of the body and disposition is held in deep suspicion. Yet Kretschmer did not build up his system from subjective judgments but rigorous description based on anatomical function

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[32] Here I follow Schwartz's translation, with the exception of one word; *Blind Spots*, 159.

[33]   Interestingly, Gombrich is not so harsh in his memoir, 'Art History and Psychology in Vienna Fifty Years Ago', *Art Journal* 44, 1984, 162-4

[34] Ernst Kretschmer, *Körperbau und Charakter*, Berlin: Springer, 1921; *Physique and Character*, trans. W. J. H. Sprott, London: Kegan Paul, 1925. As already pointed out by Daniela Bohde, *Kunstgeschichte als physiognomischen Wissenschaft*, 167.

available at the time, speculating how metabolism and the endocrine system could contribute to individual differences among humans.[35] The theory has been superseded but temperament has not.[36]

Thus Kretschmer was hardly a 'physiognomist.' To wonder how Kretschmer could have been taken seriously is anachronistic and exactly the wrong way to put it. Kretschmer was a respected clinical psychiatrist and was (and still is) interesting for his discussions of the etiology of various psychoses.[37] Sedlmayr wanted to understand personality and Kretschmer was a perfectly respectable guide. This also explains how Kretschmer fits into Sedlmayr's Gestalt worldview. When Sedlmayr found a way to work in a Gestalt psychologist, he did.[38] Because Gestalt theory had no real theory of abnormal and differential psychology, it would be natural to turn to a mainstream writer like Kretschmer if one were trying to engage with aspects of personality.[39]

To be sure, there were speculative elements in Kretschmer's (and William Sheldon's) works that revealed racial biases – and any theory of physical differences of temperament in psychology or race in anthropology has the potential to be put to racist uses – yet the basis of the theories was not motivated by racist goals. Indeed, it should be stressed that Kretschmer saw the body types as within the span or normalcy and only used their extreme forms as a possible explanation of abnormal behavior. Indeed, Kretschmer's theories were actually counter to racism.[40] Michael Hau writes,

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[35] Jerome Kagan, *Galen's Prophecy: Temperament in Human Nature*, New York: Basic Books, 1994.

[36] Raymond Montemayor, 'Men and Their Bodies: The Relationship between Body Type and Behavior', *Journal of Social Issues* 34, 1978, 48-64.

[37] For one contemporary use of Kretschmer, see Louis Sass, 'Affectivity in schizophrenia: A phenomenological perspective', *Journal of Consciousness Studies* 11, 2004, 127-147.

[38] This is the reference to Friedrich Wulf, already discussed, and also Dmitrii Usnadze, 'Zum Problem der Bedeutungserfassung', VIII International Congress of Psychologie (1926), Groningen: Noordhoff, 1927, 440-442.

[39] See for example Heinrich Schulte's references to Kretschmer's 'meticulous investigation' in one of the few contributions to psychopathology in the early Gestalt literature: Heinrich Schulte, 'Versuch einer Theorie der paranoischen Eigenbeziehung und Wahnbildung', *Psychologische Forschung* 5, 1924, 1-23; Eng. Trans., 'An Attempt at a Theory of the Paranoid Ideas of Reference and Delusion Formation', *Gestalt Theory* 8, 231-48. Max Wertheimer later revealed to Erwin Levy, his assistant in Frankfurt and later a therapist in New York City, that he had written the paper for Schulte. See further Wolfgang Köhler, review Ernst Kretschmer, *Körperbau und Charakter*, Berlin: Springer, 1921; *Psychologische Forschung* 1, 1922, 156-158, and less reliably J. F. Brown, *The Psychodynamics of Abnormal Behavior*, New York: McGraw-Hill, 1940, 262-265.

[40] Ernst Kretschmer, *Geniale Menschen*, Berlin: Springer, 1929; *The Psychology of Men of Genius*, London: Kegan. Paul, Trench, Trubner & Co., 1931, 89.

In contrast to eugenicists such as Fritz Lenz, who equated talent with the social position of the upper and educated classes, and who therefore favored the endogamous reproduction of these classes, Kretschmer argued that it was the transgression of class barriers that ultimately led to the creation of exceptionally talented human beings.[41]

Indeed, in a paper called, 'The Breeding of the Mental Endowments of Genius', Kretschmer specifically opposed what would be the Nazi viewpoint: 'Uncrossed tribes and races which have been inbred for long periods are strikingly poor in genius, although exhibiting otherwise quite excellent properties; examples are the relatively pure Nordics in certain districts of Northwestern Germany.'[42] This is the old notion from animal husbandry of 'hybrid vigor', which tells against racial purity.

This is Kretschmer writing in 1930. Bohde notes of Sedlmayr that, 'the basis for his diagnosis is the architecture itself and a list of typical features of schizothymic art, which he claims was developed by Kretschmer. But it is actually difficult to identify these features with anything in Kretschmer's writings. Unfortunately, Sedlmayr refrained from indicating a specific text or page.'[43] This is true in regard to pages but Kretschmer had made reference to the schizoid personality in the arts, its jerky and tenacious quality, and their 'baroque quality.'[44] Sedlmayr cites the seventh edition of 1928, which as Arnheim has pointed out, has an additional chapter – 'Experimentelle Typenpsychologie' – that makes reference to aesthetic behavior.[45]

I have resisted citing Sedlmayr's later works but find it necessary to do so here. We have to be cautious in judging Sedlmayr's later statements about his theory in 1939 written for the second edition, but their tone is quite restrained and his words are credible. He first clarifies that he never meant that Borromini was pathological (schizothemia is not schizophrenia). Next, he stresses that race is transversal (*quer*) to temperament. Mentioning Eugen von Eickstadt without citation – for he would have been the most authoritative Nazi-sanctioned physical anthropologist at the time – Sedlmayr says that he agrees with him that race and temperament *do not* intersect.[46] This brings to mind Franz Weidenreich's

[41] Michael Hau, *The Cult of Health and Beauty in Germany. A Social History, 1890-1930*, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2003, 168; c.f. Hau and Mitchell Ash: 'Der normale Körper - seelisch erblickt', in Sander Gilman and Claudia Schmölders, eds, *Gesichter der Weimarer Republik. Eine physiognomische Kulturgeschichte*, Cologne: Dumont, 2000, 12-31.

[42] Ernst Kretschmer, 'The Breeding of the Mental Endowments of Genius', *Psychiatric Quarterly* 4, 1930, 78.

[43] Bohde, 'The Physiognomics of Architecture', 131.

[44] Kretschmer, *Körperbau und Charakter*, 150; *Physique and Character*, 209.

[45] Arnheim, *Art and Visual Perception*, 478.

[46] I state 'physical anthropologist' on purpose. Eickstedt was trained, unlike Günther, whom Sedlmayr does not cite. Eickstedt did not believe that the Germans were a race, although he

contemporary idea that racial types are actually closer to temperaments because races are often accidental variations and some forms valorized as 'Nordic' might actually be simple human variation.[47] Sedlmayr telegraphs his tone by referring to Kretschmer's idea on genius, which as we have seen would have disassociated purity from accomplishment.[48]

Sedlmayr's comments are very unusual due to the direction that characterology had taken not only in German art history but his own Viennese school. Both his colleagues Karl Maria Swoboda and Dagobert Frey had pushed Kretschmer toward a racialist synthesis, which Sedlmayr above clearly resists.[49] Indeed, in 1939 a year after the *Anschluss* we would expect precisely the opposite so that Sedlmayr's comments are doubly resistant, not joining in the pan-German discussion of the mid-thirties in Austria or the post-Anschluss. In this, Sedlmayr might be compared to his colleague in Gestalt psychology, Kurt Gottschaldt. Largely regarded as having passed the Nazi period in German academe without excessively compromising his scholarship, more recently it has been shown that his experiments with twins were only made possible by racialist science funded by the Nazi state. Even so, while Nazi racism was the departure for his research, his work is more quantitative, less subjective and he did not refer to the dominant race literature.[50]

Sedlmayr has passed from individual buildings, to Borromini's oeuvre, his theory, and personality to arrive at his place in history, treated in a final 'sketch of a part IV' (not a chapter). This section is useful in sketching out principles of mannerism, early Baroque, Mature Baroque and Late Baroque, into which Borromini can be related. One important discussion treats the role of the viewer in architecture, which overcomes some of the apparent absence of such concerns elsewhere in the book. For Sedlmayr, the Mature Baroque is not interested in real relationships but *projective* relationships. Thus the viewer is implied. Felix Thürlemann has suggested that, for this reason, it is not surprising that in the age of

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felt that the 'Nordic' race was predominant among Germans; Christopher Hutton, *Race and the Third Reich*, Cambridge: Polity, 2005, 149; Egbert Klautke, 'German "Race Psychology" and Its Implementation in Central Europe: Egon von Eickstedt and Rudolf Hippius', in Marius Turda and Paul J. Weindling, eds, *Blood and Homeland: Eugenics and Racial Nationalism in Central and Southeast Europe 1900-1940*, Budapest: CEU Press, 2007.

[47] Franz Weidenreich, *Rasse und Körperbau*, Berlin: Springer, 1927.

[48] Kretschmer, *Geniale Menschen*; *The Psychology of Men of Genius*.

[49] Karl Maria Swoboda, *Kunst und Nation* (1936) and 'Zum deutschen Anteil an der Kunst der Sudetenländer' (Rohrer Verlag, 1938) and Dagobert Frey, *Englisches Wesen im Spiegel seiner Kunst*, Stuttgart: W Kohlhammer, 1942; for discussion see Thomas DaCosta Kaufmann, *Toward a Geography of Art*, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2004, and Jan Bakoš, *Discourses and Strategies: The Role of the Vienna School in Shaping European Approaches to Art History and Related Discourses*, Frankfurt: Peter Lang, 2013, 23-28.

[50] G. R. Mastroianni, 'Kurt Gottschaldt's Ambiguous Relationship with National Socialism', *History of Psychology* 9, 2006, 38-54.

photography Borromini and the Baroque were rediscovered. Sedlmayr would undoubtedly agree, in line with Riegl's reflexiveness.[51]

Discussion

 This is Sedlmayr's argument in 1930. It is impossible to read it as a contemporary text. All we can hope to do is recover some basic insights and recall the overall approach to anticipate some following of its ideas. What is most striking about the exposition so far is that, contrary to almost all interpretations, the text is not strongly interpretational. It stays true to its aim after description, to intuit the overall approach (*Gestaltungsprinzip*) behind Borromini's architecture. Part of the problem begins when it is read according to the genre of strict art history. It is very general, does not nominate causes, and rather seeks to render the real sense of Borromini himself.

       Although much of Sedlmayr's research on Borromini fell flat, particularly on Anglo-Saxon ears, he did have a series of sympathetic interpreters who accepted it as an interpretive model closer to *Kunstwissenschaft* and took his analysis as a fruitful point of departure for their own research. They are important not only for understanding further details of what Sedlmayr was trying to do, but also carrying it forward. Naturally, any book of 1930 will remain dated and it is important to distinguish the spirit and the letter of any historical interpretation. If art history is to be cumulative and all of its efforts not judged by the same standard, then this is a necessary concession.

       It is perhaps significant that when Otto Pächt came to reflect on art historical methodology in his 1970/71 lectures at the University of Vienna, he acknowledged the importance of his estranged colleague's work. In particular, he believed that the way in which wall elements could be parts of both convex and concave triads at the same time could be generalized to other Italian examples.[52] Pächt's brief discussion is the most general but also the most important endorsement, because it is Pächt's credibility that sustains the structural project, whether or not we forgive Sedlmayr for his political life.

       By far, writers acknowledged that Sedlmayr's approach was important for having intuited the basic qualities of Borromini's space, and thereby his major achievement. One of the biggest followings the Austrian art historian had was in Italy. There, writers like Luigi Moretti and Cesare Brandi read *Die Architektur*

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[51] Felix Thürlemann, 'Vedere Borromini: il rapporto tra storia dell'architettura e storia della rappresentazione', in Christoph Frommel and E. Sladek, eds, *Francesco Borromini. Atti del convegno internazionale*, Milan, 2000, 425-428.

[52] Otto Pächt, *The Practice of Art History: Reflections on Method*, translated by David Britt, New York: Harvey Miller, 1999, 59.

Borrominis carefully.[53] In addition, in his *Baroque Architecture* and elsewhere Christian Norberg-Schulz expresses enthusiasm for Sedlmayr's method and interpretations.[54] He believed that Sedlmayr had helped scholars see how Borromini had broken from the Renaissance system of relating plastic members in favor of the manipulation of space. Norberg-Schulz carries forward Borromini's gift for uniting inside and outside, up and down, into a holistically controlled unit. Finally, and less surprisingly, there are strong echoes of Sedlmayr in his students like Hermann Bauer or Erich Hubala and a few contemporary art historians like Werner Oechslin, Felix Thürlemann and somewhat grudgingly Wolfgang Kemp.[55]

Interestingly, when Rudolf Arnheim came to discuss San Carlo alle Quattro Fontane, he does not even mention Sedlmayr's book.[56] Instead, as he often did in his American work, Arnheim cited traditional art historical approaches, in this case Leo Steinberg's analysis, to complement his own perceptual approach.[57] For Arnheim, Steinberg's work had the advantage of being a seemingly conclusive demonstration of the derivation of Borromini's plan from the three shapes – the oval, the cross, and the octagon. To this discursive discovery, Arnheim could add his own perceptual elaboration, which was useful for his stated purpose of showing how scholars can come to consensus.

Michael Hill has recently named Steinberg's interpretation of San Carlo a 'complete exegesis', aside from minor details.[58] Steinberg had argued that Borromini developed the plan from two triangles, from which he elaborated his tri-form design. Therefore, there was a Trinitarian content built into the very design. In particular, Steinberg was able to bring to the table new drawings – ironically from the Albertina collection that Sedlmayr knew well –, particularly Albertina 171.[59] The subsequent discussion of Steinberg's work has been about the chronology of the drawings and whether or not the geometrical schemes he finds in them are

[53] See, for example, Luigi Moretti, 'Le serie di strutture generalizzate di Borromini', Accademia Nazionale di San Luca, 1967, Rome: DeLuca, 1969; Eng. Trans., 'The Series of Generalized Structures in Borromini's Work', *Oase. Journal for Architecture*, 2001, 48-55; c.f. Federico Bucci and Marco Mulazzani, *Luigi Moretti: Works and Writings*, Princeton: Princeton Architectural Press, 2002; and Cesare Brandi, 'Borromini', *Struttura e architettura*, Turin: Einaudi, 1967. Paolo Portoghesi gave general respect to Sedlmayr's work: *Borromini nella cultura europea*, Rome and Bari: Laterza, 1982, 127-128.

[54] Christian Norberg-Schulz, *Baroque Architecture*, New York: Rizzoli, 1985.

[55] Erich Hubala, *Baroque and Rococo*, New York: Universe Books, 1976, 50-51.

[56] Rudolf Arnheim, 'Objective Percepts, Objective Values', *New Essays in the Psychology of Art*, Berkeley: University of California Press, 1986, 297-326.

[57] Steinberg, *Borromini's San Carlo alle Quattro Fontane: A Study in Multiple Form and Architectural Symbolism*, New York: Garland, 1977.

[58] Michael Hill, 'Practical and Symbolic Geometry in Borromini's San Carlo alle Quattro Fontane', *Journal of the Society of Architectural History* 72, 2013, 555-583.

[59]   Steinberg, *Borromini's San Carlo alle Quattro Fontane*, ch. 2; Christof Frommel and R. Bösel, eds., *Borromini e l'universo barocco*, Milan: Electa, 2000, VI.15, 335.

generative or *ex post facto* rationalizations, perhaps intended for their publication later in Borromini's life.[60]

Here, Sedlmayr's self-censoring is instructive. While in his 1926 article he mentioned a drawing and derived a diagram from it, it only suggested but did not guarantee the veracity of the octagonal form of the church, which instead came from experience. Even then, he only outlined forms based on 'simple geometric relationships' (*einfache geometrische Beziehungen*), nothing esoteric.[61] Steinberg indeed notes that in omitting the drawing the geometric idea seems to be 'intuited from the structure itself.' Instead, I would suggest that Sedlmayr did not want to be mistaken for writing a certain kind of history. Drawings containing source geometry were not failsafe keys to understanding but instead merely more elements leading to a proper interpretation.

Yet in the present context it is extremely interesting to think of Steinberg as standing in the line of Panofsky and Gombrich. Although Steinberg in his work on Michelangelo or Borromini uses visual lines and shapes, the structure of the argument is similar to the classic Panofskyan form except that Steinberg does not discover texts but rather formal coincidences. These forms function like the typical Ur-text that is used as the basis of an interpretation. Although Steinberg has strongly idiosyncratic and avant-garde qualifications, his approach here is traditional in the sense outlined by Sedlmayr and Pächt in their theoretical writings. Foremost, it is problematic in relation to the built and experienced forms. Second, the geometrical derivation creates only a 'genetic', but not necessarily a true evolutionary sequence.

For both Sedlmayr and Pächt, then, what is problematic is that the 'source' document (text or in this case design) is not translated into an architectural meaning, although it is potential ground for that. Kemp intuits this when he notes that there is with Sedlmayr's book no search for an 'Überfigur' in a traditional iconographic sense but rather, consistent with 'Gestalt seeing' the generative principle organizing the work.[62] The hidden symbolism that Borromini kept to himself is uncomfortably close to Panofsky's hidden meanings within Netherlandish painting. But what is most damning is that there is no intelligible relationship between the geometric (not phenomenal) system in the drawings and the final church as built. For Sedlmayr, San Carlino was above all a fused perceptual unit, which would not be adequately portrayed through geometry. One is reminded of Pächt's comments on Hans Kauffmann's work on Rembrandt, where, 'a sort of secret pictorial ornament, gladly imagined as a figure (such as a star or rosette)

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[60]   Joseph Connors, review of Leo Steinberg, *Borromini's San Carlo alle Quattro Fontane*, *Journal of the Society of Architectural Historians* 38, 1979, 283–85; Francesco Borromini, *Opus Architectonicum*, ed. Joseph Connors, Milan: Il Polifilo, 1998; Hill, 'Practical and Symbolic Geometry'.

[61] Sedlmayr, 'Zum Gestalteten Sehen', 57.

[62] Kemp, 'Strukturalismus', 8-9.

characterized by a certain geometrical regularity or especially suggestive form, which is then usually assigned a specific symbolic meaning. The interpreter thus believes he has uncovered the deeper symbolic significance of the work of art, inconspicuously woven, by means of these ornamental figures, into the external representational meaning.'[63]

On the other hand there is a strange affinity between Sedlmayr and Steinberg. Steinberg obviously cited Sedlmayr's work but does not seem to give credit to the multi-stability of its internal reading, or Sedlmayr's own commitment to see the work as a 'tiny world.'[64] Perhaps Steinberg assimilated it in a way unusual for an Anglo-Saxon writer, due to his German fluency. Steinberg's careful observation of the building, and desire to first 'show what the work is' of course is quite close to how I have described Sedlmayr's aims, while – negatively – like Sedlmayr he was uninterested in issues of patronage and logistics.[65] (Indeed, this kinship may have led Arnheim to believe that Steinberg was the logical development of Sedlmayr's ideas). Nevertheless, I believe that the formal and traditional iconological elements coexist uneasily in his system.

Our natural tendency would be to assume that Sedlmayr engages in profligate theorizing in regard to personality and expression and we would assume his reading of San Carlo to be modernist in extravagant identifications of its dynamic character. Yet as we saw, he was quite restrained in those statements, if highly specific. Fabio Barry has coined the 'dynamic fallacy' what modernist architectural historians bring to Baroque monuments.[66] Citing their empathic theories that stressed psycho-motoric responses to buildings, we instead have seen how Sedlmayr explained – among his contemporaries (Nikolaus Pevsner, Wittkower) – how this very fallacy could arise.

The foregoing interpretive survey of Sedlmayr's book has shown that it has rarely been read and consistently misinterpreted in intent. As Marco Pogacnik has already pointed out, what is really strange about the book is its genre. Sedlmayr's book would have fared much better as a distillation of the essence of an architect by

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[63] Pächt, 'Gestaltungsprinzipien'; 'Design Principles', citing Hans Kauffmann, *Rembrandts Bildgestaltung: Ein Beitrag zur Analyse seines Stils*, Stuttgart: Kohlhammer, 1922.
[64] Michael Hill, 'Steinberg's Complexity', in Andrew Leach, John Macarthur and Maarten Delbeke, eds, *The Baroque in Architectural Culture, 1880-1980*, Aldershot: Ashgate, 2015, 211-221, traces Steinberg's use of 'double structure' back to Wittkower, yet Wittkower clearly indicates the paternity of the idea in Panofsky and none other than Sedlmayr; 'Michelangelo's Biblioteca Laurenziana', *Art Bulletin* 1934, 214.
[65] Hill, 'Steinberg's Complexity', 219; quoting Leo Steinberg and Richard Candida Smith, 'The Gestural Trace', Getty Research Institute for the History of Art and the Humanities, 2001, 106.
[66] Fabio Barry, 'Bernini's S. Andrea al Quirinale and Early Modern Architectural Representation', *Italian Academy Fellows' Seminar Working Papers* 2012: http://hdl.handle.net/10022/AC:P:19535, accessed January 8, 2014.

a senior scholar. Instead it was the manifesto of an anxious young man, whose compressed logic and accelerated conclusions have not helped its interpretation.

Ian Verstegen is Associate Director of Visual Studies at the University of Pennsylvania. He is the author of, most recently, *Federico Barocci and the Oratorians: Corporate Patronage and Style in the Counter-Reformation* (2015).

ianverstegen@yahoo.com