

Archives of lasting sands: notes on the first English translation of Schlosser's *Die Kunstliteratur*

Review of:

Julius Schlosser, *The Literature of Art: A Manual for Source Work in the History of Early Modern European Art Theory*, translated by Karl Johns, edited by Karl Johns and Barbara Gable, Riverside, California: Ariadne Press, 2023, 711 pages.

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After exactly one hundred years since its pioneering publication in Vienna, Julius von Schlosser's *Die Kunstliteratur* appears – at last – in a superb, carefully written, and accurately prepared English translation, provided by scholar Karl Johns, with the editorial collaboration of Barbara Gable. This important enterprise – which might have appeared tantalizing, challenging, daunting, and even discouraging to many other scholars and translators – is the result of several years of meticulous research and unparalleled dedication from the side of its main editor, who has relentlessly checked, controlled and, whenever necessary, reassessed notes, materials, and bibliographical references presented in the previous editions of this volume, from its first release in 1924 to more recent versions, reprints, or translations in Italian and French. Such a rigorous, continual operation of gathering information, comparing editions, cross-examining data, and confronting multiple sources and methods allowed the editor to prepare a critically conducted translation that provides also a much-needed revision of its massive – but, alas, quickly outdated – apparatus of notes and bibliographies. From these few remarks the reader may have already realized that, more than just an accurate and extremely effective, fluid, and fluent English translation of the German text (which would have represented a Herculean labour worth oceans of gratitude and praise), the volume offers a scrupulous, all-encompassing meta-analysis of former editions of Schlosser's labyrinthine written monument, marking a truly relevant point in the history of the reception of *Die Kunstliteratur* and the dissemination of its author's premises and ideas.

*Copies of this book can be ordered in the USA from Ariadne Press by contacting karltjohns@gmail.com. The retail price is USD 89.95. Within the US, media mail with USPS is \$8.42, a Priority box \$17.10. The same Priority box postage to Europe costs \$79.05. The publisher recommends Walther Koenig in continental Europe and Gazelle Book Services in England, both of whom have accounts with the Ariadne Press. [Ed. 18.02.2024]

In 1939, in an intense, concise yet moving obituary devoted to the memory of his much-esteemed mentor and recently passed colleague, Ernst Gombrich described *Die Kunstliteratur* as the epitome of Schlosser's historical orientation and philological criticism, referring to the volume with enthusiastic words:

The final result of a lifetime of research was the fundamental work *Die Kunstliteratur*, embracing the history of all writing on art from classical times to about 1800. Written with the profound insight of first-hand knowledge, it is not only indispensable as a bibliographical reference book, but it is also one of the few works in our subject to be both genuinely scholarly and readable.¹

Scholarly and readable: those are, in fact, two distinctive features of Schlosser's encyclopaedic contribution that have been not only conscientiously preserved but, if anything, further increased in the English version provided by Karl Johns. On the one hand, this translation maintains the complex fabric, the sinuous rhythm, the defining elements of the German-written *Ur-text*, while magnifying, at the same time, its value as a research-oriented tool of reference and a philological basis for art historical investigations, thanks to the punctilious control of all pre-existing bibliographical notes and a much-welcomed addition of new scholarly sources. In other words, words truly matter in this edition, if one may play, indeed, with words: an edition that delivers a respectful, well-balanced, and intelligently measured linguistic equivalent to the unique weaving style of Schlosser's expressions. Not by accident, in the already mentioned tribute deliberated by Gombrich, Schlosser's writing style was described as 'very cultivated, very personal' and quite significantly as 'consciously "oldfashioned", packed with allusions, which make every sentence stand in relief against the wide background of his enormous general knowledge, [which] reveals the man in more than the ordinary way. In times like ours he chose to be an "anachronism" in the very best sense of the word'.²

In line with those remarks, one could even venture to speculate the existence of – and, if so, the role played by – a distinctively literary-flavoured attention towards linguistic qualities and stylistic features in Schlosser's textual construction, in which the author seems to adopt models that, without disrupting the rigor of an academic writing or breaking the rules of a scholarly essay, nevertheless evoke the rich, long, incisively carved paragraphs formulated by writers such as Goethe and Thomas Mann. The flavour of words truly enhances the critical thoughts conveyed in *Die Kunstliteratur*, transforming the reading process into a hermeneutic journey that is both intellectually adventurous and culturally enriching. Scholarly and readable, indeed.

Moreover, should one agree with Gombrich's opinion that Schlosser 'chose to be an "anachronism"', in a comment significantly echoed also by Otto Kurz,³ it is plausible to suggest

¹ Ernst Gombrich, 'Julius von Schlosser', *The Burlington Magazine for Connoisseurs*, 1939 (431), p. 98.

² Gombrich, 'Julius von Schlosser', 99.

³ See, for instance, Otto Kurz, 'Julius von Schlosser: Personalità-Metodo-Lavoro', *Critica d'arte*, 1955 (11/12), 402-19.

that the author of this monument called *Kunstliteratur* might have done so in the attempt of getting even closer to the 'historical grammar' as well as the 'creative personalities' he was investigating, in a project of trans-historical proximity and interpretive juxtaposition that entails a connection between artist and spectator, scholar and object of study that brings to mind his profound friendship with philosopher Benedetto Croce.⁴ Be as it may, Schlosser's language – with its recurrent notes of subtle irony and subjacent tone of polite sarcasm – reemerges in the English translation in a most palpable and pleasant manner, giving the reader the impression of having direct (privileged) access to the author's original sentences, instead of going through the mediation of a (well-done) linguistic fabric of equivalences.

This is just one of the multiple merits of this exquisitely crafted English version. The editor and translator of this edition is aware of the qualities – as well as the many linguistic peculiarities – that inform Schlosser's book. 'His peripatetic sentences', states Johns, 'with redundancies surviving from the academic lecture mode, are characteristically long, elliptic, and nested and difficult, and provide a challenge in preserving at least some trace of a style surviving from the monarchy into the interwar period.'⁵ According to the editor, this amalgamating proximity between written and oral forms of discursive delivery is at the basis of Schlosser's 'uniquely extensive sentences with tangential clauses reflecting and frequently surreptitiously quoting the German literature he loved'.⁶

Before excavating further into the multiple achievements reached by this pioneering new edition of *Die Kunstliteratur* in English, it might be useful to undertake at first a brief, selective *excursus* on some of the reviews dedicated to previous versions, reprints, or translations of Schlosser's work, providing a close reading of their most significant critical points. To that end, it may be productive to examine the ideas conveyed by some of its earliest reviewers, starting from a long note written by E. Steinmann for the *Monatshefte für Kunstwissenschaft* in 1921, which chronologically preceded the publication of the volume and focused, in fact, on the seminal research published by Schlosser between 1914 and 1920 in the prestigious *Sitzungsberichten der Akademie der Wissenschaften*. It is well known that prior to releasing his comprehensive 1924 volume – committed to assembling, ordering, and critically presenting written sources connected to the production and the reception of art forms (from a historical, technical, theoretical, and (auto)biographical standpoint) – Schlosser had already provided significant contributions to this field of research – that is, the Literature of Art – by means of a series of studies published with the title of 'Materials on the Sources of Art History' (*Materialien zur Quellenkunde der Kunstgeschichte*). These contributions constituted, therefore, the preliminary, foundational stages of *Die Kunstliteratur* both as a publication as well as a field of studies. In one of the opening paragraphs of his review, Steinmann anticipated with almost

⁴ On the long-lasting friendship between Schlosser and Croce, see Ricardo De Mambro Santos, *Viatico viennese. La storiografia critica di Julius von Schlosser e la metodologia filosofica di Benedetto Croce*, Rome-Sant'Oreste: Apeiron, 1998.

⁵ Karl Johns, 'Julius Schlosser: Between Art and Literature' in Julius Schlosser, *The Literature of Art [...]*, Riverside, California: Ariadne Press, 2023, xxxii.

⁶ Johns, 'Julius Schlosser', xxii.

premonitory acumen that 'it can be assumed with certainty that sooner or later these individual issues will form a single book arranged with progressive pages'.⁷ Once this virtual book will be ready, the reviewer firmly sustained that it will 'become an indispensable handbook for all Art History institutes'.⁸ To support his claim, Steinmann reminded the readers, in a rather emphatic way, that 'experts have seen with increasing astonishment what Schlosser had achieved with his genius in recent years', emphasizing that 'all his works are characterized by fine criticism, thoroughness of knowledge, and a certain noble decorum', almost paraphrasing Winckelmann.⁹

The reviewer continued his highly encomiastic praise of Schlosser's accomplishments prior to the appearance of *Die Kunstdliteratur*, observing that the vast territory of written sources investigated by the scholar in those articles was open to a constant process of expansion, reassessment, and further clarification, due to the ever-growing number of studies associated with these areas of research and bibliographical references connected to each one of them. 'In this sense', asserted the reviewer, 'this book will be continually expanded and improved as it progresses through the centuries',¹⁰ thus becoming an irreplaceable, priceless tool for art historical explorations 'even more than Burckhardt's *Cicerone*'.¹¹ Although the author of the review underlines Schlosser's astonishing breadth of historical, cultural, and artistic expertise, commending his 'universal knowledge', he correctly underlined that the contributions provided by the scholar were exclusively focused on Western sources and mainly devoted to the analysis of Italian art literature. However, the reviewer did not neglect to highlight the fact that, considered as a whole, those articles indicated the vitality of a promising field of historical and philological investigation, bringing out written documents and discussing – unknown, seldom examined, or never critically addressed – sources that will certainly stimulate future scholars to further venture themselves in those different, uncharted areas of study. Transformed into a book, those articles could shape – not only metaphorically – the endless archive of art-related written sources and orient their corresponding scholarly analyses. In other words, 'everyone will make their own out of this inexhaustible source, depending on their ability, knowledge, and wishes'.¹² The very existence of this new English edition confirms this predicament with

⁷ 'Es ist aber mit Sicherheit anzunehmen, dass diese Einzelhefte früher oder später ein einziges Buch mit mit durchgehender Seitenzahl bilden werden' in E. Steinman, 'Review of: Materialien zur Quellenkunde der Kunstgeschichte. Heft I-X. Sitzungsber. Der Akademie der Wissenschaften in Wien, Bd 177/96 by Julius v. Schlosser', *Monatshefte für Kunstwissenschaft*, 1921/22 (14), 273.

⁸ 'Dies Buch wird sehr bald das unentbehrliche Handbuch aller kunstgeschichtlichen institute sein' in Steinman, 'Review of: Materialien', 273.

⁹ 'Was Schlosser in den letzten Jahren seinem Genius abgerunden hat, haben die Fachgenossen mit steigendem Erstaunen gesehen. Alle seine Arbeiten zeichnet die feine Kritik, die Gründlichkeit des Wissens und ein gewisser vornehmer Anstand aus, der sich mit einer ebenso schlichten wie fesselnden Sprache verbindet' in Steinman, 'Review of: Materialien', 273.

¹⁰ 'In solchen Sinne wird sich dieses Buch in seinem Laufe, den es durch die Jahrhunderte nehmen wird, dauernd erweitern und verbessern lassen' in Steinman, 'Review of: Materialien', 274.

¹¹ 'Als ein festgefügter, mit grösster Sorgfalt ausgearbeiteter Organismus wird es mehr noch als Burckhardts *Cicerone* in allen Neuauflagen bleiben was es ist' in Steinman, Review of: 'Materialen', 274.

¹² 'Jeder wird aus disem unerschöpflichen Quell sich zu eigen machen, was seinem Können, Wissen und Wollen gemäss ist' in Steinman, Review of: 'Materialen', 274.

palpable evidence: not only have those various studies been assembled, rewritten, and enriched in the culminating preparation of *Die Kunstliteratur*, but it survives to this date as a cohesive, indispensable meta-source.

While this note referred to the preliminary stages of Schlosser's scholarly project, the first review to directly address the 1924 edition of *Die Kunstliteratur* appeared in the *Annalen der Philosophie und philosophischen Kritik* one year after the book had been released. Signed by a scholar indicated as J. J., this note made two important claims that would become recurrent leitmotifs in future reviews of the book: first, it pointed out that Schlosser's volume operated within the complex, multi-layered domain of historical critique and, consequently, should not be reductively considered as a mere bibliographical apparatus. 'This is by no means a pure bibliography', stressed vehemently the reviewer, 'but rather a critical processing of the enormous material' organized as a 'circumscribed presentation of special chapters pertaining to Art Theory and Art History'.¹³ Given, however, the astronomic scope of Schlosser's scholarly enterprise, according to the reviewer the book presented inevitable flaws not only regarding the compilation of its (continually expanding) bibliographical references but also, and more importantly, in relation to the historical, cultural, and artistic contexts included in its universally-claiming – but in fact European-centred – narratives. Due to the combination of those entangled features, the reviewer argues that, after all, '[t]here is no point in indicating the gaps in the book, which is born from an infinitely rich and cleverly handled knowledge and is unique within its discipline'. On the other hand, the reviewer stresses that 'the author himself was well aware' of those gaps, implying a connection between the (materially unavoidable) existence of those bibliographical lacunae and 'the universal attitude' embraced by the Viennese scholar who clearly intended to examine 'History and Philology from the high point of view of a History of Mentality'. Schlosser's work should be regarded, consequently, as 'a first attempt to write the history of one of the most interesting areas of the modern Humanities'¹⁴ – that is, the History of Mentality, focused, in this case, on the variable definitions of art – triggered by the fusion of methods and models pertaining to the *Kulturwissenschaften* as well as the *Kunstgeschichte*.

At the conclusion of this brief review, the anonymous author left unanswered the question whether, in his view, Schlosser failed or succeeded 'in fulfilling the intention he had indicated at the beginning of the book', that is, to outline 'a Theory and a History of Art

¹³ 'Dabei handelt es sich keineswegs um reine Bibliographie, sondern um kritische Bearbeitung des riesigen Stoffes, um geschlossene Darstellung von Sonderkapiteln aus Kunsttheorie und Kunstgeschichte' in 'Review of: Julius Schlosser, *Die Kunstliteratur*', *Annalen der Philosophie und philosophischen Kritik*, 1924/1925 (9/10), 118.

¹⁴ 'Es hat keinen Zweck, an dieser Stelle auf die Lücken des aus einem unendlich reichen und geistvoll gehandhabten wissen geborenen, innerhalb seiner Disziplin einzigartigen Buches hinzuweisen, Lücken, deren der Verfasser sich selber sehr wohl bewusst ist – sondern dies sei hier hervorgehoben: Die universelle Haltung des Verfassers, der Historie und Philologie bei aller Gründlichkeit stets von einem hohen geistesgeschichtlichen Gesichtspunkt aus betreibt, lässt dieses Werk zu einem ersten Versuche werden, die Geschichte einer der interessantesten unter den modernen Geisteswissenschaften zu schreiben' in 'Review of: Julius Schlosser, *Die Kunstliteratur*', 118.

Historiography'.¹⁵ Whatever the answer might be, the *Annalen* reviewer made a few significant points that will emerge also in future critical examinations of the book, stating that *Die Kunstliteratur* is not a mere compilation of bibliographical data but, on the contrary, reveals an intentionally ambitious cultural scope. For this very reason, it does present inescapable gaps, flaws, and mistakes in the material gathered but also promotes a forward-looking fusion of History, Philology, and Critical Analysis, perceived as equally relevant disciplines toward the configuration of an all-encompassing, meta-field of humanistic explorations that could be called History of Mentality. By keeping the epistemological balance between History and Historiography, as well as Philology and Philosophy, the Literature of Art comes out as a scholarly road to pursue with endless interest and constant updates.

In the same year, another anonymous reviewer – who signs his note as C. D. – delivered a succinct description of Schlosser's volume for *The Burlington Magazine for Connoisseurs*. After presenting the book as 'an indispensable aid to research in every department of the history of art from the early middle ages to the end of the eighteenth century', the reviewer reiterated the opinion that the well-articulated and conceptually far-reaching volume written by the Viennese scholar 'is far from being a mere list of books and treatises classified by subjects; it is also the critical history of their development over time and consequently [narrates] the history of the various disciplines, from a theoretical, aesthetical, technical, or purely historical and topographical standpoint, the progress of which the immense mass of literature passed in review by Professor Schlosser was intended to assist'.¹⁶ As a follow-up to these considerations, the reviewer insists on underlining the philosophical agenda that orients Schlosser's approach, restating that the book 'is not a mere compilation but bears evidence on every page of the strong personality and independent judgment, as well as the encyclopaedic learning, of its author'.¹⁷ Although the reviewer does not explicitly mention the name of Benedetto Croce in this sentence, the concept of 'personality' mentioned above brings inevitably to one's mind the important, life-long connection between the Austrian scholar and the Italian philosopher, given the centrality of the paradigm of '*personalità artistica*' in the aesthetic disquisitions of the latter: a notion that will be attentively explored also by Schlosser as the epitome of creative individuality or artistic personality (*Persönlichkeit*), to the point of becoming an ontological synonym of style, in relation to and often in contrast against the general, commonly-shared tendencies that characterize the 'artistic language' (*Kunstsprache*) of a certain context, period, or community¹⁸.

¹⁵ 'Hoffen wir, dass es ihm auf dieser Grudnlage gelingy, sein eingangs des Buches angedeutetes Vorhaben wahr zu machen, uns eine Theorie und Geschichte der Kunstgeschichtesschreibung zu schenken' in 'Review of: Julius Schlosser, *Die Kunstliteratur*', 118.

¹⁶ 'Review of: *Die Kunstliteratur* by Julius Schlosser', *The Burlington Magazine for Connoisseurs*, 1925 (47), 59.

¹⁷ 'Review of: *Die Kunstliteratur*', 59.

¹⁸ In that regard, it suffices to observe the appearance of this concept in the introductory pages of Schlosser's 'The Art of the Middle Ages' in strict association, on the one hand, with the Philosophy of Benedetto Croce and, on the other, with the art historical parameters of 'artistic language' (*Kunstsprache*) and creative 'personality' (*Persönlichkeit*). See Julius von Schlosser, *Die Kunst des Mittelalters*, Berlin-Neubabelsberg: Akademische Verlagsgesellschaft Athenaion, 1923, especially 1-8.

Within this specific hermeneutic setting, Schlosser's 'strong personality', supported by his 'encyclopaedic learning', invalidated any attempt to consider his scholarly undertaking as a plain, passive taxonomy of art-related writings, inviting the reader to value, on the opposite, the 'independent judgment' and the overall critical approach that truly defined his enterprise. *Die Kunstliteratur* is a monument of historical criticism, despite the open boundaries and ever-growing number of contributions that ceaselessly enrich it.

In conclusion, the reviewer made another very significant point – which shall be brought up also in later commentaries and critiques – regarding the Italian-centric dimension of documents examined by the scholar: while Schlosser's intricate compendium of written sources and ideas 'deals avowedly with Italian art more completely (...), the sections dealing with the literature of art in other countries (...) are comparatively brief interpolations in what is mainly a guide to the study of the architecture, painting, sculpture, theoretical literature, and artistic topography in Italy'.¹⁹ Such an unbalanced distribution of sources and unequal attention to extra-Italian centres of artistic production – candidly acknowledged, one must not forget, by Schlosser himself in the opening pages of *Die Kunstliteratur*²⁰ – becomes even more apparent in relation to non-European cultural contexts, excluded altogether from the scholar's radar and neglected as possible ambits of historical and aesthetic investigation.

Thirty years later, a new chapter in the history of the reception of Schlosser's volume was added by a review compiled in 1956 by Heinrich Brauer, focusing on the second Italian edition of *La letteratura artistica*, printed by the publisher La nuova Italia. By that date, Steinmann's premonitory insights outlined in the 1921 review had become true and Schlosser's study had indeed become a classic, indispensable instrument of reference in the entangled fields of Art History, Art Theory, and Art Historiography.²¹ This may explain the reviewer's decision to address only the contributions, alterations, and additions brought forth by this Italian edition, listing first and foremost the 'careful revision of the bibliographic section'²² undertaken by Otto Kurz, 'who was not only able to add some titles from older art literature that the author had missed, but also filled many pages with a list of important newer literature that has since

¹⁹ 'Review of: Die Kunstliteratur', 59.

²⁰ Julius Schlosser, *The Literature of Art: A Manual for Source Work in the History of Early Modern European Art Theory*, translated by Karl John, edited by Karl Johns and Barbara Gable, Riverside, California: Ariadne Press, 2023, pp. xiii/xiv.

²¹ This point was made quite clearly by Gombrich in another contribution, where he referred to Schlosser's volume as a 'work which has attained the status of a classic', according to a reference reported in Max Marmor, 'Review of: Die Kunstliteratur: ein Handbuch zur Quellenkunde der neueren Kunstgeschichte by Julius von Schlosser. Reprint of the 1924 edition [...] La littérature artistique: manuel des sources de l'histoire de l'art modern by Julius von Schlosser. Translated from the German by Jacques Chavy; preface by André Chastel (Flammarion, Paris, 1984)', *The Burlington Magazine*, 1988 (130), 783.

²² 'Nun bringt der Verlad diese zweite italienische Ausgabe heraus, bereichert durch eine sorgfältige Revision der bibliographischen Teile, welche ja den Kern und die Grundlage des vielfältigen Unternehmens bilden' in 'Review of: Julius Schlosser Magnino, *La letteratura artistica*', *Zeitschrift für Kunstgeschichte*, 1957 (20), 208.

appeared'.²³ By doing so, Kurz significantly expanded the horizon of secondary sources originally compiled by his master and mentor, transforming this second Italian edition into the most updated and scholarly advanced version of Schlosser's project until that moment. To put it another way, the newest Italian edition – commended as more philologically accurate and bibliographically complete than the previous ones – set a model that should be considered from now on as the starting point in the preparation of any future edition, translation, or even reprint of *Die Kunstliteratur*, which should also include, as the reviewer opportunely suggests, a much-needed updated version of the German volume.

Moreover, echoing the 1925 reviewer for *The Burlington Magazine for Connoisseurs*, Brauer, too, drew attention to the Italian-centred narratives promoted by Schlosser, connecting, however, this topographical inclination of the Viennese scholar with a well-established tradition of philological studies epitomized by the works of his colleague and friend, Karl Vossler – whom, one must not forget, *Die Kunstliteratur* was dedicated to – which were notoriously focused on Italian subjects of linguistic research. In his concluding remarks, the reviewer praised Schlosser's ability to deal with a wide-ranging spectrum of data, including texts and contexts pertaining to various historical periods, without neglecting to examine, whenever possible, more circumscribed, and less explored artistic communities, 'studying the smaller, often carefully detailed groups and directions of different art literature', while firmly maintaining 'the stability of a large overview'.²⁴

One year later, in 1957, Francis Haskell devoted another review to *Die Kunstliteratur* – focusing once again on the second Italian edition – in which he provided an accurate recap of the history of the various editions and reprints of the book until that moment, raising important questions regarding the material, editorial configuration of the volume, as well as its potential markets of distribution and intellectual ambits of dissemination. To begin with, Haskell addressed what appears to be, in his view, the major difference between the first and the second Italian edition, that is, the increased number of references added to the volume, mentioning the editorial involvement of Otto Kurz, who 'brought out a small bibliographical supplement, and this (with other additions and corrections) has been included in the new Italian edition which is otherwise an exact reprint of the original translation'.²⁵ Interestingly, the scholar seems rather uncomfortable with, and almost annoyed by, the lay-out chosen for this edition and criticizes the fact that Kurz's updates were 'inserted in square brackets', describing it as a quite confusing choice, which seems to imply an exceedingly subservient scholarly attitude from the part of the

²³ 'Diese Arbeit wird dem in London am Warburg-Institut wirkenden deutschen Kunstgelehrten Professor Otto Kurz verdankt, welcher nicht nur einige dem Autor entgangene Titel aus der älteren Kunstliteratur nachtragen, sondern auch manche seit dem Aufzählung des inzwischen erschienenen wichtigen neueren Schrifttums füllen konnte' in 'Review of: Julius Schlosser Magnino', 208.

²⁴ 'auch beim Studium der kleineren, oft tüftelnd genau dargelegten Gruppen und Richtungen der vielseitigen Kunstliteratur nicht die Sicherheit eines grossen Überblicks verlieren' in 'Review of: Julius Schlosser Magnino', 208.

²⁵ Francis Haskell, 'Review of: La Letteratura artistica by Julius Schlosser-Magnino', *The Burlington Magazine*, 1957 (99), 283.

editor: 'This shows perhaps slightly exaggerated deference to the original text and occasionally leads to minor absurdities'.²⁶

In keeping with these concerns, Haskell indicates another even more serious problem connected to the editorial choices adopted in this edition: 'Rather more tiresome than this is the practice, retained from the original edition, of including in the index only references to earlier literature'.²⁷ While acknowledging the fact that such a procedure 'serves the useful purpose of turning the index into a bibliography', he argues nevertheless that it could have been accompanied and further enriched by 'an additional index'.²⁸ As a matter of fact, the addition of more articulated indices is one of the most significant contributions provided by Karl Johns in his updated, enlarged, and carefully prepared list of bibliographical references that seals the English translation.

Equally interesting is to notice Haskell's barely controlled display of impatience when describing certain materials used in the making of the new Italian edition. While the adoption of 'slightly thinner paper makes the book somewhat more compact', the fact that 'it is handsomely printed and bound' are amongst the reasonable causes of its 'very stiff price',²⁹ which might potentially prevent the volume from reaching wide audiences, especially among students, and may end up transforming what was supposed to be an easily accessible tool of information and means of circulation of ideas into a highly elite-oriented product. Since the volume is excessively expensive for the pockets of any average university student and libraries, on the other hand, will most certainly allocate it within the misleading, reductive category of 'reference book', who could be the potential public for this editorial enterprise? In fact, as the reviewer observes with a sarcasm that would have probably pleased Schlosser, this reprint 'will hardly add to the *chic* of a drawing room or make a suitable wedding present for a debutante'.³⁰ Neither 'a lavishly illustrated book', nor a mere bibliographical compendium, Schlosser's volume offers a unique trajectory of intellectual experience, presenting itself as 'a journey through man's ideas on art over the centuries, conducted by a wonderfully sensitive guide'.³¹

Monumental yet cohesive, Schlosser's *Kunstliteratur* invites the reader to explore the interwoven paths of written sources belonging to different periods, carefully organizing them in accordance with a diachronic model of development that brings together multiple cultural contexts. Art and ideas can be thus examined simultaneously from the lens of historical research and philological analysis. The reviewer intentionally emphasized the thin line that seems to separate the field of the Literature of Art to the epistemological boundaries of a History of Mentality considered *sub species artis*, maintaining that Schlosser's volume 'makes a serious attempt to relate man's artistic and intellectual achievements'.³² Based on these comments, one

²⁶ Haskell, 'Review of: La Letteratura artistica', 284.

²⁷ Haskell, 'Review of: La Letteratura artistica', 284.

²⁸ Haskell, 'Review of: La Letteratura artistica', 284.

²⁹ Haskell, 'Review of: La Letteratura artistica', 284.

³⁰ Haskell, 'Review of: La Letteratura artistica', 284.

³¹ Haskell, 'Review of: La Letteratura artistica', 284.

³² Haskell, 'Review of: La Letteratura artistica', 284.

may infer that, in Haskell's view, Schlosser represented a perfect symbiosis between the methods applied by promoters of the *Kulturwissenschaften* and the specific goals, tools, and practices embraced by scholars associated with the *Kunstgeschichte*. That explains why, as the reviewer perceptively concluded, '[e]ach re-reading [of Schlosser's book] brings to light new ideas', which confirms, in turn, the open, dialogical, yet historically conditioned nature of art-oriented discourses and their profound connection with one's hermeneutic perspectives, philological parameters, and heuristic procedures. In other words, not only is Schlosser's volume an exemplary product of the History of Mentality, but it also entails productive interactions with its different readers over time and across multiple cultures. Therefore, far from being a passive bibliographical list, the book was presented by the reviewer as an exciting trajectory of discoveries onto the vast horizons of artistic domain, during which one has the opportunity to reflect on one's own critical habits, aesthetic ideals, and interpretive expectations.

Finally, among the most significant reviews dedicated to *Die Kunstliteratur* it is worth mentioning Max Marmor's detailed comments, published in 1988, once again in *The Burlington Magazine*. In this note, the author raises many relevant points regarding, on the one hand, Schlosser's overall scholarly pursuits and, on the other, the specific goals achieved by different editions and translations of the volume. Echoing Haskell's introductory remarks in the 1957 review, Marmor emphasized the relevance of Otto Kurz's 'enduring act of piety', that is, 'to keep his teacher's acknowledged masterpiece, *Die Kunstliteratur* (1924), up to date across a span of nearly thirty years'.³³ The reviewer went as far as to claim that if 'we are accustomed to referring the work as *La letteratura artistica*, it is because of Kurz's bibliographical contribution to the Italian editions of 1935, 1956 and 1964'.³⁴ After briefly describing the original book as a two-folded project, thanks to which one may find 'a sweeping survey of the subject' along with 'a bibliographical compendium', Marmor directed his attention primarily to the recently published French translation, stating – with heartfelt disappointment – that 'the new French version, which is marred by countless errors, leaves much to be desired. Misprints are legion, and proofreading was evidently casual'.³⁵ Not only has this publication repeated innumerable errors from antecedent editions but added new ones as well: it is particularly 'distressing to find that errors from previous editions are perpetuated here. Still worse, *errors corrected in previous editions are reinstated* (...). Furthermore, the compilers of the new edition also introduce more than their fair share of new errors'.³⁶ On the opposite side of this disastrous combination of disorder, dismissiveness, and lack of rigor, Schlosser's and Kurz's approaches had set a more suitable model of scholarly commitment and heuristic meticulousness, trying as much as they could to correct mistakes, revise misprints, and fill in gaps that had been accumulated over time:

³³ Marmor, 'Review of: *Die Kunstliteratur*', 783.

³⁴ Marmor, 'Review of: *Die Kunstliteratur*', 783.

³⁵ Marmor, 'Review of: *Die Kunstliteratur*', 783.

³⁶ Marmor, 'Review of: *Die Kunstliteratur*', 783.

Schlosser's original bibliographies, produced under trying circumstances during and immediately after the First World War, were themselves far from flawless. Evidently neither he nor Kurz ever found time to commit the entire volume to a thorough examination with an eye to simple bibliographical accuracy. Yet in subsequent editions both Schlosser and Kurz made a real contribution by correcting many, albeit by no means all, of the misspellings, incorrect publication dates and misprints of the original.³⁷

The 'lack of editorial continuity' seemed to inform every page of the French edition, according to the reviewer. Problematic as it certainly was, the French translation was not the only object of Marmor's critique. One year after the publication of this version in France, a reprint of the 1924 German-written edition appeared in Vienna, without bringing, however, any revisions, alterations, or even newer introductory pages to the book. Understandably, the reviewer expressed perplexity toward this edition and posed reasonable questions about its scholarly, academic, and even commercial targets: 'That its publisher expected to find a market for an unchanged reprint of a sixty-year-old reference book is food for thought',³⁸ states Marmor. This comment gives us, in turn, other kind of 'food for thought', since it unexpectedly and somehow disappointingly referred to Schlosser's articulated, theoretically driven, and historically organized text as an 'old reference book': a misleading and reductive qualification already addressed – and firmly reassessed – by the earliest reviewers, as we have noted, in the programmatic attempt of acknowledging the complexity of Schlosser's scholarly endeavour.

Both the 1988 French translation and the 1989 German reprint raised important questions regarding the goals, the urgency and, overall, the legitimacy of preparing new editions, translations, or reprints of a book pertaining to a field of study – that is, the Literature of Art – notoriously characterized by a never-ending quest for updates, especially in its bibliographical aims. Aside from the need to correct the many mistakes, misspellings, misprints, and misplaced references that have been accumulated over the years in the various editions, 'the entire bibliographical apparatus needs to be checked, and the silent assumption that previous editions were completely dependable abandoned. No doubt we will have to wait years for such a wholesale revision',³⁹ commented the reviewer in a tone that revealed hope and preoccupation at once. To prevent the latter from prevailing over the former, the reviewer offered a few recommendations that could guide future editions of *Die Kunstliteratur*, reminding that 'Schlosser's carefully crafted balance between text and bibliographical commentary has been irretrievably altered'⁴⁰ after the pioneering 1924 edition, due to the very development of this area of research and the almost tantalizing number of scholarly publications that have been released throughout the decades since the book first appeared. Therefore, a major element to be considered before planning any new edition is how to conciliate the original, rationally planned, and efficiently designed structure of the 1924 volume with the urge to incorporate the massive, and ceaselessly expanding, quantity of studies, publications, and other scholarly

³⁷ Marmor, 'Review of: *Die Kunstliteratur*', 783.

³⁸ Marmor, 'Review of: *Die Kunstliteratur*', 783.

³⁹ Marmor, 'Review of: *Die Kunstliteratur*', 783.

⁴⁰ Marmor, 'Review of: *Die Kunstliteratur*', 783.

materials within the bibliographical sections. Too much information to be contained in such a limited textual body as Marmor points out:

Not only has the text been progressively eclipsed but the bibliographical sections themselves have suffered. The army of parentheses, brackets, and asterisks which successive editors have marshalled to distinguish the several strata makes it virtually impossible to locate a given title, let alone to read these bibliographical essays. Future editors should abandon all pretense of retaining Schlosser's original essay format for these sections.⁴¹

In this nightmarish textual landscape, which could easily recall the claustrophobic entangled spaces of Piranesi's *Prisons* or the ever-changing paths of a Kafka-sounding literary topography, it is necessary to find feasible alternatives from an editorial standpoint in the attempt to keep Schlosser's ambitious project constantly updated without dismantling altogether its original structure. In conclusion, the reviewer suggested that 'the time has come to relegate the purely bibliographical sections of *Die Kunstliteratur* (including additions) to a companion volume which might be updated as needed. The original survey, liberated from its bibliographical shackles, should be allowed to stand alone'.⁴² If, according to this suggestion, a two-volume edition would allow for a continual improvement of the bibliographical sections of the book, without jeopardizing the already substantial size of the original text, new translations must prioritize the task of further facilitating the access of this continually expanding network of secondary sources. For this reason, the reviewer vehemently concluded with a useful recommendation, stating that 'we should now be thinking about an English edition of Schlosser compiled along these lines'.⁴³ It was 1988 when these words were written. Thirty-five years later, Karl Johns has finally accomplished this demanding yet urgent task.

Interpreted in their intertextual connections, these reviews tended to have two focuses of attention: on the one side, they would examine Schlosser's own path as a scholar and discuss his premises, methods, as well as his achievements in the field of art literature; on the other, some reviewers would shift the polarity of their critiques toward the editorial, structural, and material features of the various editions, reprints, and translations to better understand the extent to which Schlosser's original project might have been followed, updated, or altered by those different versions. Regarding the first point, past reviews underlined without any exception the critical undertone that permeated the entire volume, despite its resemblance to a mere taxonomy of sources. 'It is not a mere bibliographical apparatus' is a recurrent observation in those pages. On the contrary, the epicentre of Schlosser's methodology appears clearly located at the point in which philological efforts and philosophical stances meet, with the clear intent to operate a fusion between the analysis of art-related topics, examples, and phenomena and the study of the mentality that has characterized the various historical periods in which different, context-tied definitions of art have emerged. Hence the importance of examining written sources, considered as privileged intermediaries or residues of different mentalities in strict

⁴¹ Marmor, 'Review of: *Die Kunstliteratur*', 783-784.

⁴² Marmor, 'Review of: *Die Kunstliteratur*', 784.

⁴³ Marmor, 'Review of: *Die Kunstliteratur*', 784.

connection with various art processes. It could be useful at this point to recall Schlosser's reflections on the concept of 'sources' provided in the concise yet crucial "Prefatory Recollection. On the Concept and Scope of the Sources in Art History" that opens *Die Kunstliteratur*. In this important section of his book, Schlosser clarified what he meant by 'sources' in strict correlation to an art historical ambit of studies:

We are referring to secondary, indirect, written sources, what historians generally described as literary documents, dealing consciously and theoretically with the arts in historical, aesthetic, or technical terms. (...) Our subject is therefore ultimately a branch of philology, and for this reason, the study of art historical sources necessarily follows the guidelines so marvelously and finely hewn in the exemplary principles of classical philology.⁴⁴

Following this conceptual clarification, Schlosser expanded his discourse toward a methodological consideration that ultimately became an authentic epistemological manifesto concerning the distinctive nature, specific aims, and defining procedures that truly set apart the field of Art History as an autonomous discipline within the Humanities:

Heuristics, criticism, and hermeneutics applied to the sources provide the same sequence of layers for us as are found in classical philology. A primary goal for the study of the sources is to establish the extant material and at the very least to annotate it bibliographically. At a more advanced level, the study proceeds to evaluating this raw material critically, which it must do in a way that is appropriate for each individual historical period. It only reaches the status of what are known as the historical "auxiliary sciences" – to use that awkward phrase – when it reveals its innate historical content in a philosophical spirit, which necessarily leads to the most recent period, when it merges into the history of our discipline.⁴⁵

The historically contextualized and philologically conducted study of written sources associated with the variable, multi-layered dominion of art will eventually coincide with the equally variable, multi-layered narratives of its own history, thus encouraging the merge between Art History and Art Historiography. Our understanding of the past depends largely on our current means of interpretation. There is no art outside of its variably defining discourses. Therefore, the critical knowledge of these secondary sources plays a central role in our ever-changing recognition of values, functions, and forms associated with the overwhelmingly rich territory known as 'art'. Consequently, the impressive collection of data assembled and critically considered by Schlosser in *Die Kunstliteratur* offered an unparalleled help for both scholars and students while investigating a wide range of art-related topics.

In addition to examining Schlosser's contributions to the overall development of Art History and Art Historiography, past reviewers also inspected the material aspects of the different editions, from the quality of their paper to more structural concerns, related to the

⁴⁴ Schlosser, *The Literature of Art*, xix. For further insightful reflections on the concept of 'source' see, Christopher S. Wood, "Sources and traces", *RES: Anthropology and Aesthetics*, 2013 (63/64), 5-19.

⁴⁵ Schlosser, *The Literature of Art*, xix.

physical, visual, and typographic lay-out of the text, especially in its (continuously enriched) bibliographical sections. In that regard, the comments made by two reviewers may be of particular interest: in his notes, Francis Haskell pointed out that an excessive deference toward the original text (and its scholarly sources of reference) may be detrimental to future editions of it, given the daunting – and dangerously paralyzing – number of additional materials that these new versions of Schlosser's book are expected to incorporate; in line with these remarks, Max Marmor had advanced the promising idea of physically expanding the original book and preparing two-volume editions, one devoted to Schlosser's critical discourse (which should be virtually maintained in its 'original features' as a worth-preserving textual monument) and the other dedicated to the publication of new bibliographies, additional notes, and further commentaries (which would have, on the opposite, an open, ever-changing configuration). If adopted, this editorial choice could allow Schlosser's original critical insights to be preserved in their own textual and historical dimension, while leaving room for (potentially) endless new (updated) iterations.

This is the hermeneutic as well as the critical, epistemological, and editorial background on which the much-needed English translation edited by Karl Johns sets its own roots. Patiently undertaken and attentively conducted, this translation offers a superb linguistic equivalent of Schlosser's German text, choosing very carefully words, expressions, and concepts that could constructively evoke their *Ur*-formulation in the original, while making it accessible to English-speaking audiences. Given that Schlosser's 'thoughts and terminology remained very personal',⁴⁶ the translator refrained from flattening the complexity of the author's discourse and avoided to eclipse the anachronistic flavour of the original text by means of a well-chosen selection of semantic correspondences in English. As a sample of the text's writing style, with its rich, often convoluted, seldom deprived of ironical nuances, it is worth quoting the very final paragraph of the entire volume so the reader can fully appreciate Karl Johns' masterful version:

This is the end of our survey. Young people arose to beat apart old doctrines which still persist intact along with their political and social forms, yet the new self-examination of art did not come from the staggering language of quixotic young authors such as Wackenroder-Tieck punctuating the end of the century. It came from a completely different and creative direction, seen in the artistic testament of the writings left by Philip Otto Runge, a young and forcefully progressive talent, based on the solid ground of his craft, completely formed in spite of his not surviving to fulfil his promise. Yet this is a topic beyond the limits of our present study.⁴⁷

⁴⁶ Johns, 'Julius Schlosser', xxxi.

⁴⁷ Schlosser, *The Literature of Art*, 646. The original text asserts: 'Wir sind am Schlusse. Gegen die alte, noch immer unerschütterte Lehre erheben sich junge Geschlechter und schlagen die politischen und gesellschaftlichen Formen der Vergangenheit in Trümmer. Aber nicht in den Taumreden schwärmerischer Literatenjünglinge vom Schlage Wachenroder-Tiecks, mit denen das Jahrhundert ausklingt, liegt die neue Selbstbesinnung der Kunst; sie erscheint von ganz anderer, schaffender Seite her: in den hinterlassenen Schriften jenes Ph. O. Runge, auf sicherem Boden des Handwerks gegründet, als köstliches Vermächtnis eines Vorwärtsstürmenden, früh Vollendeten und nicht zum Auswirken

This paragraph exemplifies very well Schlosser's writing style in the pages of *Die Kunstliteratur* and, at the same time, sheds light on Johns' brilliant, rigorous – in a word: magnificent – translation of it. While the translation is remarkably well done, there is, however, one – minor, yet worth mentioning – editorial choice in the English version that might cause some difficulties to the reader. It refers to the inclusion of bibliographical data and, more specifically, the calculated, but never clearly explained, use of parentheses, brackets, and braces throughout the book, especially, of course, in the sections devoted to updated lists of scholarly publications. It is notorious that the ambitious scale of Schlosser's monumental volume – further increased in the various editions by the extensive, and ever-expanding, number of bibliographical references that accompany, or sometimes are interpolated with, the text – may become an impediment instead of a help in the actual consultation of the book: a point that had been already raised by Max Marmor, as we have seen, in his comments on the French translation, in which the reviewer outlined as highly problematic 'the army of parentheses, brackets, and asterisks' that seemed to have invaded and colonized the physical space of the pages in that edition, leaving the reader confused, overwhelmed.

In relation to this much-debated question of how to incorporate additional bibliographical references within an already thick volume, Johns has provided a very attentive revision of notes and materials based on the German, Italian, and French editions, indicating each one of them by means of brackets, introduced by the surname of their respective editors (namely, Kurz and Chavy). In keeping with this editorial tradition, every time Johns has added new materials to certain parts of the book they were written between braces, as the reader will eventually realize, and were sometimes inserted within larger bracketed paragraphs referring to bibliographical references already mentioned in a previous edition. If, on the one hand, this consistent use of parentheses, brackets, and braces shows the provenance of specific sources of information (indicating whether they belonged to the first German edition or to any other following version of the book), the frequent interpolation of those references with Schlosser's text may cause at times a feeling of excessive fragmentation, as if the reader were facing the pieces of a puzzle still in progress. To use Haskell's metaphor in which the reading process of *Die Kunstliteratur* was compared to an intellectual journey, one may say that, sometimes, in the English edition – as well as in previous versions of the book, for that matter – the path seems a little too rugged, despite the smoothness of this exquisite translation, due to the frequent mixing of text and notes of reference.

In the case of the English version, in the attempt to facilitate the readability of the book, it could have been helpful to provide a brief explanation of the editorial strategies adopted in this edition, so that the well-informed reader could move across sentences, paragraphs, and pages accordingly. It would have sufficed, for instance, a short introductory note – like the one included right before the 'Index, also a general bibliography'⁴⁸ – to clarify this point to the

Gelangten. Mit disem Ausblick sind aber die Grenzen, die wir von vorneherein unserer Darstellung gesteckt haben, erreicht, ja schon überschritten' in Julius Schlosser, *Die Kunstliteratur. Ein Handbuch zur Quellenkunde der neueren Kunstgeschichte*, Wien: Kunstverlag Anton Schroll & Co., 1924, 610.

⁴⁸ Schlosser, *The Literature of Art*, 647.

readers and thus facilitate their understanding of the typographic features and the placement of the bibliographical apparatus in this book. On the other hand, it is also important to note the commendable discretion with which Karl Johns has inserted his own general introduction to the volume, offering a five-pages long essay titled 'Julius Schlosser: Between Art and Literature'. Among the many insightful comments developed in those pages, the scholar points out – in reference to the enormous amount of scholarly bibliography that has been gradually accumulated over time, and included in the previous editions – that '[s]econdary literature was not yet so overwhelming [during Schlosser's own life-time] as to prohibit an individual from reading all of it in the peace of his office at the Kunsthistorisches Museum, the Augustinerlesesaal and at home'.⁴⁹ This remark holds still true in relation to the current – relatively limited – number of scholarly studies focusing primarily on Schlosser as an art historian. That being the case, it could have been a stimulating addition to this perceptive note to provide a list of references exclusively centred on Julius von Schlosser's work, career, and biography, so that the reader could get a better sense of this particular – 'not yet so overwhelming' – branch of art historiographical scholarship.

Finally, it is also worth highlighting the editor's strategic decision to including his general introductory note immediately after the preliminary remarks written by Schlosser for the 1924 German edition and the 1935 Italian translation, thus suggesting an implicit chain of continuity between the editor's contribution and Schlosser's scholarly project, connecting the latter's dedicatory pages to Karl Vossler ('Dear friend!'),⁵⁰ the 'Preface to the Italian Edition',⁵¹ and the already mentioned 'Prefatory Recollection'⁵² to this concise intellectual biography of the Viennese scholar.

In conclusion, the increasingly problematic issue concerning the manageability of Schlosser's volume does not seem to have found a workable solution yet. While the English translation successfully fulfils its semantic and critical scope, achieving magisterial levels of readability and providing accurate conceptual equivalences, on a more practical, functional level this version of Schlosser's book could have explored different editorial strategies to potentially facilitate the consultation of *Die Kunstliteratur*. The volume – carefully printed and thoughtfully planned in its general lay-out – presents nevertheless some physical characteristics that may render its dissemination rather difficult, particularly its significant weight and quite large dimensions (approximately 32 x 21 cm). Back in 1988, Marmor was already concerned about 'how future editions of the book might be approached' in the attempt to attain a doable balance between critical considerations and bibliographical interpolations, urging editors, scholars, and publishers to find 'a way of updating Schlosser's bibliographies without rendering their use impossible'.⁵³ The solution envisioned by the reviewer was two-folded: on the one hand, the original survey should be 'liberated from its bibliographical shackles' and stand

⁴⁹ Johns, "Julius Schlosser", xxxi.

⁵⁰ Schlosser, *The Literature of Art*, xiii-xv.

⁵¹ Schlosser, *The Literature of Art*, xvii-xviii.

⁵² Schlosser, *The Literature of Art*, xix-xxviii.

⁵³ Marmor, 'Review of: Die Kunstliteratur', 784.

alone; and, on the other, it seemed imperative to operate 'a much-needed simplification of the bibliographies themselves, which should be systematised to facilitate their use' and accompanied by 'a decent index'.⁵⁴ Those comments led Marmor to suggest the adoption of a two-volume solution for future editions.

Thirty-five years later, in a context of massively changed media platforms and means of circulating ideas, images, and sounds through digital channels, it may be time to think about a multimedia version of Schlosser's scholarly project. Supported by different digital platforms, the printed volume – perhaps containing only the critical considerations originally formulated by the author – could be conveniently enlarged, altered, or revised in its bibliographical sections, without hindering the degree of readability of the text. By transferring the enormous, and constantly reshaped, mass of bibliographical data onto a myriad of digital formats, future editions could find a new balance between the desire of preserving the original text and the need to continually renew its apparatus of notes, references, and bibliographical data. Thus envisioned, the combination of printed-and-digital media would epitomize the urge of preserving and interpreting, protecting and developing this incomparable monument of scholarly commitment titled *Die Kunstliteratur*. Therefore, the blending of printed formats with digital technologies could offer a promising, practicable solution for future editions of this ever-growing volume. Thanks to the mixture of printing models and digital modes, the protective walls of this colossal archive known as Art Literature could properly contain, display, and apply the metamorphic plasticity of those lasting sands called written sources and bibliographical data.

Close to the conclusion of this brief note, there is a final important point that must be introduced for future debate. As many reviewers have noted, Schlosser's scholarly project was intentionally limited to the parameters of European – and, more specifically, Italian – models of art and aesthetic discourses. It is, therefore, time to urgently expand the topographical limits set by Schlosser's original narratives, which coincided with the boundaries of the European cultural hegemony. Should digital platforms be used in the making of future editions (creating, for example, easily manageable and adjustable e-books), along with the reprint of Schlosser's critical considerations, it would be possible to integrate the cultural contexts examined by the Viennese scholar with art practices and aesthetic principles pertaining to different societies, in a world-wide scale of critical investigations, to be pursued by a group of collaborators instead of being the result of an almost post-human individual effort. In other words, one could use Schlosser's philological approach and historical analysis – that is, his methodological legacy as a scholar – to consider cultures and artistic settings not explored in the 1924 publication, or in any of its following editions for that matter. Looking forward to reading future updates of this bottomless, exciting, thought-enriching field of study, one could not think of any better way to celebrate the first centenary of the pioneering, influential publication of *Die Kunstliteratur* than welcoming this outstanding English edition, which marks a turning point in the history of the reception of this seminal book.

⁵⁴ Marmor, 'Review of: Die Kunstliteratur', 784.

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