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the process to memorable comic effect in his early "Put Yourself in My Shoes," when a fatuous couple instructs a writer on the proper way to write a short story. "I'll go right to the climax, as you writers say," says the husband. One might argue that Mr. Fixit, like this bullying husband, misconstrued the nature of Carver's art. He thought that Carver was in the tradition of Hemingway, that he was a "minimalist" of some kind, an artist of radical abbreviation; in short, a writer of "short stories." Lish certainly "improved" Carver's stories by the standards of that tradition, giving them extra point, concision, suggestiveness, and climax.

But in fact, as we can now see from the original versions of his stories in this important Library of America volume, Carver was part of a different tradition altogether—the tradition of orally based storytellers such as Mark Twain and Sherwood Anderson. One could even argue that the abbreviations of the "short story," as taught at Iowa and elsewhere, are fundamentally opposed to the oral nature of the kind of storytelling that Carver was practicing. "Modern man no longer works at what cannot be abbreviated," Walter Benjamin declared in his famous essay "The Storyteller." "In point of fact, he has succeeded in abbreviating even storytelling. We have witnessed the evolution of the 'short story,' which has removed itself from oral tradition."

Twain and Anderson, along with Chekhov and Babel, were the writers Carver went to in times of trouble, the beacons he tried to steer his own wavering course by. During the summer of 1968, for example, the Carvers embarked on an ill-fated sojourn in Tel Aviv, funded by an academic fellowship that Maryann had won. Everything went wrong on the trip—disappointing accommodations, typewriter damaged in transit, overly sweet Israeli wines, and then, in the wake of the Six Day War, terrorist bombings in their neighborhood. Carver, as he recalled in a poem, tried to maintain perspective by reading *Life on the Mississippi*:

> I hang my legs further over the banister
> and lean back in shade,
> holding to the book like a wheel,
> sweating, fooling my life away,
> as some children haggle,
> then fiercely slap each other
> in the field below.

The story of Carver's final decade, as Sklenicka tells it, is one of reprieve, of release from the dependencies that had plagued his life. He stopped drinking in June 1977, after repeated warnings from doctors that liquor would kill him. His marriage ended the following year, and he began living with Gallagher in 1979. It was during this transitional period that he wrestled with Lish over the editing of *What We Talk About When We Talk About Love*, and finally gave in on all the important points. With the publication of his next volume of stories, *Cathedral*, in 1983, he had broken this dependency as well. Not only was the ecstatic title story reminiscent of Sherwood Anderson (about whom Carver published an admiring essay the following year), but the religious valences of the story were unambiguous, as the narrator guides the blind man's hands over the flying buttresses and great doors of the cathedral that they are drawing together. The collection also included a restored version of "A Small, Good Thing." Carver, one is tempted to say, was saved.

And yet that stubborn sense of things unresolved will not go away. There is that measly five-thousand-dollar bequest to the members of the family left behind, and the concomitant human cost of Carver's eventual success as a writer. And there is the recalcitrant fact that we now have to deal with two Carvers. There is the historical Carver whose books, especially the epochal *What We Talk About When We Talk About Love*, as edited by Lish, are an ineradicable part of the evolution of American literature. And then there is the restored Carver, who writes in a different tradition altogether. Under ordinary circumstances, one could rule out this unpublished Carver, for books are made not just by writers, but also by editors and agents and publishers as well. Under ordinary circumstances, original intentions deserve as much respect in literature as in law. As Lish remarked acerbically, rhetorically, and, with an awkward passive, evasively: "Which has the greater value? The document as it issues from the writer or the thing of beauty that was made?"

But when you actually sit down and read the words that Carver originally wrote, all these convictions disappear into air. I cannot read "Mr. Coffee and Mr. Fixit" ever again. "The art of storytelling is reaching its end," Benjamin wrote, "because the epic side of truth, wisdom, is dying out." When Murakami remarked on "something penetrating and profound" in Carver's work, he was not referring to clever repetitions and oblique narrative disjunctions. He was talking about wisdom, the epic side of truth. It is Carver's hard-earned and vulnerable wisdom that we are hungry for, not the disdainful toughness that Mr. Fixit thrust into his gentle creations. It is increasingly clear that at this late date we are only at the very beginning of our understanding of this extraordinary storyteller. ◆

Andrew Butterfield

A RESPONDING SENSIBILITY

MEYER SCHAPIRO ABROAD: LETTERS TO LILLIAN AND TRAVEL NOTEBOOKS
Edited by Daniel Esterman
(Getty Research Institute, 243 pp., $39.95)

I.

Meyer Schapiro Abroad is an astonishing book. It consists of seemingly commonplace materials—the love letters that a graduate student wrote while traveling to work on his dissertation, plus a selection of sheets from his research notebooks. Yet taken together these pages present something extraordinary and nearly unique: an intensely evocative account of the process and the experience of historical discovery. As almost no other art historian or critic has ever done, Schapiro describes what it is like to deepen one's imaginative and emotional contact with the past, and to sharpen one's eye and focus one's mind on the material and visual culture of mankind. *Meyer Schapiro Abroad* is the autobiography of a great mind blossoming into maturity. Reading these pages, one can watch as the student transforms himself into the master.

Schapiro was twenty-two years old in 1926 when he left America to work on his doctoral dissertation. His thesis advisor at Columbia University had suggested that he study the twelfth-century sculptures of the Romanesque abbey at Moissac in southwest France, one of the first sites of the re-emergence of monumental statuary in Europe after the fall of the

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Roman Empire half a millennium earlier. Schapiro won a grant from the Carnegie Corporation to fund his trip, but he was not content to confine his travels to France and Spain, as the foundation expected. Over the course of sixteen months he traveled ceaselessly throughout Western Europe and the Middle East, concentrating chiefly on medieval art, but also investigating an astonishing array of other subjects, from prehistoric pottery to modern painting. Only someone of the boundless energy and endless curiosity of Meyer Schapiro would measure mosques in Cairo and photograph ruins in Baalbek as part of the study of an abbey in southern France.

The trip was the basis for much of Schapiro's later work. It provided him with the material for his first major study on modern art, as well as for the influential essays on medieval sculpture he produced over the next twenty years. Two sets of documents help us follow his journey. Eighteen of his research notebooks from the trip are preserved in the archive of Meyer Schapiro papers at the Rare Book and Manuscript Library of Columbia University. Some of the class notes that he made at university also survive, and they are fairly routine stuff—brief outlines of lectures, loose sketches of floor plans and façades, doodled portraits of his classmates and professors; they bear no clear mark of genius. But the drawings and records produced on his trip are distinguished by a completely different order of insight and observation.

Over and over again in these journals, he wrote to himself the imperatives "Look" and "Note"—and nearly every page gives abundant evidence of the urgency with which he pursued these commands. A talented artist—he had taken lessons in drawing and painting—Schapiro's usual way of analyzing a building, sculpture, or manuscript illumination was to draw it. The journals are full of precise and exquisite renderings in pen and ink, which he sometimes also shaded with pale wash. *Meyer Schapiro Abroad* reproduces, in excellent color illustrations, eighty sheets of sketches from his journals, and it also provides transcriptions of his often cryptic notes on these pages. But it does not explain that these sheets come from different notebooks, and it does not mention that there are hundreds more unpublished drawings in the archive at Columbia.

Schapiro's architectural sketches are especially commanding. He was able to capture the rhythm of a building's articulation of form and space, the sense of massing and order that it conveyed. Drawn freehand, without ruler or compass, the structures in his sketches appear majestic and yet full of energy and life. It is common praise to speak of a building as an organic whole, but few have succeeded as well as Schapiro in making an edifice seem like a living being. In his illustrations, structures do not simply stand and bear the load they carry. They thrust upward with surging vitality, like a dancer leaping or a plant unfurling. Schapiro often wrote that he felt like jumping with joy while examining a monument, and the buildings in his drawings seem to mirror this sense of affirmation and delight.

Schapiro was interested not only in the plan and the spirit of the works he studied. He also felt an intense concern for their details. With meticulous and loving regard, he investigated seemingly every particular of their articulation and ornament. He was captivated by the complexities of decoration, and sometimes he went bay by bay through a structure, recording its wealth of intricate moldings, figurated capitals, and lacy rinceaux. Surprisingly, Schapiro also measured many sculptures and buildings, often taking multiple readings and noting even the smallest discrepancies in the results. Such behavior might be routine for a team of archaeologists investigating a site, but it is quite exceptional in an art historian or a critic traveling alone.

The journals make clear that on this trip Schapiro was teaching himself how to see and how to think, and that he was amassing a vast and personal record of the monuments of the history of European art. Drawing was an act of analysis and memorization. In an unpublished manuscript, probably from the 1930s or 1940s, Schapiro wrote that "the historical study of art requires both the imaginativeness of the panoramic conception and the intimacy and detail of the study of the single object, trait, individual or school." In the notebooks we see him gaining panoramic knowledge through the attentive scrutiny of one work at a time, all over Europe and the Middle East. The sensitive description, the range of reference, and the intellectual exhilaration that distinguish his celebrated studies—both his works on medieval art, such as *The Sculptures of Souillac*, and his essays on modern art, such as "The Apples of Cézanne"—were habits of mind that he set out to acquire during his trip in 1926 and 1927.

THE OTHER RECORDS that document Schapiro's journey are the sixty-six letters that he wrote to his fiancée, Lillian Milgram, a young pediatrician. (They married shortly after his return to New York and lived together until Meyer's death in 1996. She died two years ago.) These letters, which make up most of the volume, form a perfect complement to the notebooks. Composed during the day, the journals are analytical, fragmentary, and utilitarian—the raw materials of and for intellectual labor. But the letters, written at night, are subjective, meditative, and emotional. In the notebooks, Schapiro discovers the art of the past; in the letters, he describes the joys of discovery.

In the letters Schapiro reflects often and at liberty on many topics in the study and the writing of history. But addressing his fiancée rather than a professional colleague, he avoids systematic discussion and routine academic subjects. Instead he seeks chiefly to convey to her the emotional and psychological experience of opening himself up, and of training his mind to understand what his eye is seeing. These are love letters, but of many loves: his love for Lillian, his love for art, his love for history. All these passions rush together in rhapsodic exultation.

The immediacy and the intimacy of his account of doing history are the source of much of the letters' interest. Certainly, these are qualities that separate them both from other reflections on historiography and from the published letters of other art historians. None of the letters of Jacob Burckhardt or Erwin Panofsky are so direct in their descriptions of the study of art or the past. Panofsky and Schapiro later became close friends, and they often wrote each other long and erudite letters about art history—but even in their correspondence neither master was ever as free in thought and expression as Schapiro was when writing to Lillian about his work in Europe and the Middle East.

TO UNDERSTAND THE themes that emerge in Meyer's letters, it helps to recall the outline of his recent education. Schapiro was the first graduate student ever at Columbia University in art history, which was then a relatively young discipline. There was no set program of study yet, and he was largely free to devise his own curriculum. Exasperated by the lack of imagination and rigor in the art history faculty, Schapiro took classes in an extraordinary range of other subjects, including logic and invertebrate biology, and studied at the Columbia School of Architecture (surely one reason for the exquisite quality of his architectural drawings). But the major influence on Schapiro at university was most likely

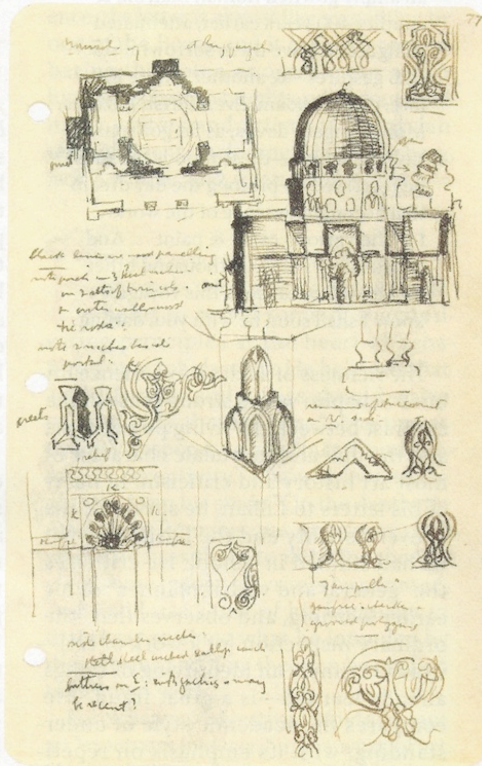
Franz Boas, the great anthropologist.

Boas's love of primitive art, his desire for a panoramic view of human culture, and his interest in the migrations and transformations of language and mythology were important for Schapiro, as was his belief that academic study should serve progressive and modern ideals. Boas was a charismatic teacher who attracted many rising stars: among his other brilliant students in the mid-'20s were Zora Neale Hurston, Ruth Benedict, and Margaret Mead. (Mead was researching her dissertation, which became *Coming of Age in Samoa*, at the same time that Schapiro was working on his dissertation in Europe.) Moreover, Boas and his students often did fieldwork in remote places, and in primitive, even dangerous conditions. To accomplish their research required a measure of daring and determination more characteristic of explorers than scholastics. Although Schapiro was bound for Europe, not Samoa or Nunavut, he shared the same spirit of enterprise and adventure.

Schapiro writes of his journey as a voyage of exploration, a trip into the unknown. "I have concluded a happy voyage in which I have seen wonders," he tells Lillian from Paris, "and learned gaily & with passion." He never mentions the *Odyssey* by name, but themes found in Homer's epic make a regular appearance in the letters. Writing of his hope that his brother will share his experience, Schapiro says, "I always encourage him to cross the ocean, to learn languages, to move alone among new people & objects." These words recall the description of Odysseus at the start of the epic: "He saw the townlands and learned the minds of many distant men." On another occasion Schapiro declares, "But always the trouble [of travel] yields some interest & not merely interest, but experience that afterwards seems an indispensable destiny, always good to recall." Destiny, memory, the thirst for experience and knowledge—exactly the themes we find in Odysseus and the Sirens.

Like a hero on a quest, Schapiro faced true hardship and peril on his journey. The most direct correspondence with an event in the *Odyssey* occurred during Schapiro's trip from Naples to Port Said. Sailing through the Strait of Messina, his boat ran into a storm so ferocious that the passengers could not leave their bunks, and one traveler was killed. The Strait of Messina, as it happens, is traditionally identified as the site where Odysseus encountered Scylla and Charybdis, which made the seas so violent that some of his companions were washed overboard and drowned.

The similarities with the *Odyssey* may be coincidental, of course—but they point to something frequently overlooked about the researching and writing of history. Too many historians think of travel as useful rather than as essential. Study generally is a still, silent, and contemplative activity, carried out in museums, archives, and libraries; and getting to such faraway institutions, or to the sites and settings of the texts that are the subject of study, is often viewed as an unavoidable practical problem rather than as a crucial part of one's professional and intellectual formation. But not in Schapiro's case. His letters remind one of the truth of L. P. Hartley's famous observation that "the past is a foreign country." Traveling there should be like an act of pilgrimage that sharpens curiosity, and trains the mind, and stimulates the imagination.



Meyer Schapiro, Mausoleum of Al-Sayeda Ruqquyah, Cairo, 1927

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Indeed, the importance of travel to writing history was made clear by two of the greatest historians who ever lived, Herodotus and Gibbon, and in ways that have a direct bearing on experiences that Schapiro reports. Herodotus, the first historian, was also one of the most celebrated voyagers in antiquity. More than once in the *Histories* he speaks of his lust to know what is over the horizon. He traveled to discover; and whenever, for some reason, he could not go on, he would make inquiries of locals to learn what lay beyond. In a similar manner, Schapiro on his journey was intensely stimulated by the exotic and the unknown. Writing from Damascus, for example, he reports:

> His Arab friends excited me enormously—for when they learned I was a student, they proceeded to tell me of strange monuments & unknown cities in the desert & beyond the Jebel Druse—I wrote down names & resolved to return to this region: And even more wonderful—I learned that with proper credentials, I could apply to the military commandant at Damascus, & obtain from him a Bedouin, who would guide me, (likewise in Bedouin dress) throughout the farther country.

Twenty-five hundred years after Herodotus, Schapiro trekked through many of the same lands, aflame with the same desire.

The act of travel can also be a source of inspiration. Clio, the goddess of history, is a muse, and so must be invoked, and this is best done on site, in one of her precincts. Thus, Gibbon in his memoirs speaks of the importance of travel in his discovery of purpose. In an account of "the benefits of travel" he remarks: "Yet the historian of the decline and fall must not regret his time or expense, since it was the view of Italy and Rome which determined the choice of the subject. In my Journal the place and moment of conception are recorded; the fifteenth of October 1763, in close of evening, as I sat musing in the Church of the Zoccolanti or Franciscan friars, while they were singing Vespers in the Temple of Jupiter on the ruins of the Capitol." And a few days after his arrival in France, Schapiro had a similar experience of reverie and inspiration. He tells Lillian:

> I foresaw nothing of these days. Even the architecture is new, beside the few bare details we had learned at school. To walk in and out of a cathedral, to follow the vaulting from below & to trace its ribs, supports, & buttressing from all sides, to climb the towers & pass thru the triforium openings & galleries & to discover the adjustment of parts everywhere, and the variation from bay to bay, & column to column, & to see the whole

> in space with such liberty of movement that I seem to learn at each step—it is an awful sentence to finish, dear—but these things quite fill me & I easily lose myself in amazement & then fall into reverie which descends to melancholy historical retrospection & I awaken to a beautiful tolling in the lantern which tells me to draw & take notes.

II.

SCHAPIRO OFTEN WRITES Lillian of the importance of reverie in the development of his historical vision and knowledge. When he speaks of dreaming, he is attempting to describe a complex state of mind, with three elements: experiential, emotional, and intellectual. Before his trip, the historical past had been for Schapiro chiefly an imaginary domain, which he could only glimpse dimly through lectures, books, and the handful of remains cast up at the Metropolitan and other American museums. But on his journey in Europe and the Middle East he could physically enter the realm of the past, and know that it was actual and living. The sensory experience of the buildings and monuments he explored—their scale, their physicality, their beauty—was beyond all expectations. And what had been imaginary not only turned out to be real, it also had a heightened intensity and a supercharged presence far unlike anything he had experienced before: it was dreamlike in its beauty and its force. Schapiro uses the word "dream" in his letters also to characterize his response to this encounter, to describe both the wonder he felt and the unleashing of his mind to think freely about what he was observing.

His fullest account of this experience is in an unforgettable letter from León, in Spain, in 1927 near the end of his trip. It is too long to quote in full, but even a few sentences will give a sense of its power:

> I walked late this afternoon to the cathedral, which is beautiful, & took me from this vexatious business—I think the earlier preoccupations were good, since they left me in a mood in which the architecture was wonderfully relaxing or quieting—There was no desire to know—or to study; & every detail had some charm for me: & I noticed what usually escapes me. The air of the interior, the quality of the space, the darkness & half-shadow, the scale of the few others in the building, beside the rising shafts.... There was a happy collusion of my mood (reduced to innocence by fatigue & the thoughts of the past few days) with the objects about me. I was practically alone with them. The statues & pictures & capitals & windows were in an immense space, limited & undefinable—all mine, in shadow & light... I thought that nothing could be happier than to give oneself completely to these objects, to study them minutely, know every detail—living whole years with them—There would be no method—no school of thought—no simple approach which criticized the others—Besides the perfection of craftsmanship & thought, the peculiarities of individual minds—the possible moods in which a man 300 years ago made the Virgin look proudly at the angel Gabriel—as an amply gowned Roman matron; & another 400 years earlier, attenuated all figures & gave them sorrowful staccato gestures—& another, a little before, carved Adam, Eve, Christ, Lazarus, Moses, angels, devils, as fat goitrous smiling people—these moods too must be recreated, to prolong the day dream that accompanies love of the work.... I wished also to carve & paint... And I wish also a hundred thousand other things—all because of this voyage. I know I shall soon be with you, darling.

The richness of such an experience imbued Schapiro with a strong sense of the contrast between the living power of art and the dull and formulaic character of most art history and criticism. In many of his letters to Lillian, he speaks of the conventionality and the falsity of what he had studied in school. He criticizes the "general and verbal manner" of his earlier learning, and observes that "the ordinary inspection [of a work of art]—which is simply an identifying of things already learned—is a great fraud." He compares the academic style of understanding, with its emphasis on repetition and rhetoric, with the new method that he is discovering during his journey, a method that is at the same time more empirical, and more imaginative and open-minded. "This is a pleasant town to dream in," he writes from Florence. "It is so joyful to stand before Donatello or Brunelleschi—even in the most melancholy mood—if only the thoughts consequent to such perfection are allowed to ramble, to thicken, to move." And in one of the most illuminating passages on the value of the trip for his intellectual development, he writes that

> My mind feels differently & thinks in other ways about matters that had occupied me long before; but it has happened unconsciously, as if I have acquired a new craft—And it is a craft—for the great part of the journey's experience was in learning by touching, seeing & moving about objects—school now seems strangely passive or another habit with other ends. I love architecture all the more. May we make this same journey many times together, sweetheart.

The conviction that art history and criticism were often tendentious and too abstract remained with Schapiro throughout his career. As a writer, scholar, and teacher he sought to avoid pre-conceived schemata of interpretation, and instead to concentrate on the actual experience of looking at the work of art.

JOY IS ANOTHER fundamental theme in Meyer's letters to Lillian. In his initial note to her after his arrival in Moissac, he writes about looking at the sculptures there: "To be with them is to be happy indeed. And to study their details is to live in perpetual discovery and pride." Upon first studying the illuminations from the monastery, he reports to her that "the manuscripts from Moissac are so rich & fruitful, that I jump with every new volume." Visiting the city of Poitiers, he exults that "archaeologically there are problems here for generations, artistically, joys forever."

Such comments were not merely the unfettered expressions of youthful enthusiasm. Schapiro believed that the making and study of art were deeply serious and nearly sacred acts, but he also believed that art was intended to bring pleasure, joy, fulfillment. In a letter to Panofsky in 1953, he expressed his concern over the decline in the quality of young scholars, and added this: "But I think that besides the limitations on research imposed by teaching duties, there is also a lack of confidence that people in our field have in scholarship. They have not tasted its joys, but only its assigned routines." And in an unpublished set of notes on teaching at university level, written probably in the 1940s or 1950s, Schapiro worried that art history "tends to substitute acquaintance with facts about art, for experience of art; it emphasizes classification, names, dates, historical relationships, at expense of understanding and perception and growth of power of enjoyment."

Schapiro's strongest statement of the life-affirming pleasure he experienced on the trip comes in a letter he wrote to Lillian at two o'clock in the morning after an extraordinary day near the end of his journey. He had spent the morning in Madrid at the Prado, then traveled in the afternoon to Toledo to examine

its architecture and El Greco, and finally moved on to Segovia to spend the night. As he composes the letter, he is high on the coffee he has been drinking for hours, and on everything he saw that day. He jumps from subject to subject, in a joyful rush of images, too impatient to complete sentences or to follow the rules of regular grammar. It is one of the longest letters he wrote while in Europe, and perhaps the hardest to characterize or quote from, given its interweaving of references and its sudden shifts of tone and subject. Here I can give only an idea of the text:

> On the train, I was in great joy—to be going once more ... Small stretches of the trip excited me as bits of El Greco & Titian this morning in the Prado—I think of the evening coolness, and the one cloud, the still faint crescent moon over a world that was all below me, receding in one place, alternately fertile & populous and arid desert—were the very opposite of Madrid, where I only saw tall houses and an endless stream of people in cafés & shops & narrow streets & driven by the heat—But when I entered Segovia I rode into the town square—which was again a small Madrid; a band play—; under the arcades and out into the square cafés and seated crowds; and children dancing & as much animation as in a city ten times the size of this—Here I was delighted: I had no sooner found a room than I ran down to the square & walked about, finally sat down, & drank coffee till midnight (Hooray! I have found some ink!) ... The Mozarab church of S. Cristo de la Luz kept me several hours—for it has a great variety of construction: & a most beautiful south wall. From the photos I had judged it a large building—It is tiny. The exterior arcades are proportioned to effect an endless movement & variety. One half of the building is pure Arab—the other mixed, Roman, and Byzantine & Persian—I wandered around the walls of Toledo, thru the old gates—which are a great thrill to me, & show that the Moors could also mass, & work finely with voluminous towers and walls. In one church I jumped to see apsidal fenestration identical with that of the Pantokrator in Constantinople—the street was no different from the oriental— ... Later, near the Alcantara bridge was another view equally exciting—without warning, mountains rose from a plain: the river turned twice; & on high rocks—gloomy & jagged, stood the city—El Greco painted this—his finest landscape—I [went] to his house, once the home of Simon Levi—furnished with Moorish & Christian fittings—Next to it in the Greco Museum were 20 of his pictures—but not the very best ... The best of El Greco is in the Prado, beside Titian & Rubens—I thought to cry out with joy at some pieces—You should have been there: & I would have kissed you wildly instead: & my meaning would have been clear—I did not know what to look at—or why to stand & gaze—what to think....
> It is two AM. All the church bells of Segovia are now playing.

This is a form of ecstasy. In its excited celebration of movement, art, and experience, the letter is almost like something by one of the Beats; and it is worth remembering that later, as a professor at Columbia, Schapiro taught and encouraged many writers and artists of Dionysian temperament, including Allen Ginsberg, Jack Kerouac, and Allan Kaprow.

III.

By allowing us to watch him at work, *Meyer Schapiro Abroad* helps to reveal some of the motivating principles at the heart of Schapiro's own scholarship. He believed that art historians and critics should strive to exemplify three ideals: "objective attitude," "responding sensibility," and "immense receptivity." I have drawn these phrases from his study "On the Aesthetic Attitude in Romanesque Art," from 1947, where he uses them to describe the ideals of some medieval writers he admired; and I will use some of his language in that essay to show what he intended by these terms and how they can be applied to his own work.

For Schapiro, "objective attitude" meant an "exactness in describing" a work of art. He sought to apply this standard both to an accounting of its physical attributes as well as to the judgment of its aesthetic characteristics. It denoted the desire for completeness and accuracy in measurement—how big a work is, how many parts it is made of, and similar questions; but it also pertained to questions of a higher order of analysis and interpretation, to "the effort to read the forms and colors and to weight their effects." The aspiration for truth is not merely an intellectual principle, it is also a moral one; and for Schapiro it was the supreme obligation of any historian. It is noteworthy how often throughout his career Schapiro was stirred to publish critiques of critics, philosophers, and historians—Berenson, Freud, Heidegger—when in his view they failed in this duty, especially when he believed that vanity, arrogance, or self-dealing contributed to the failure.

Yet Schapiro did not think that objective description and accurate analysis alone were sufficient for the history and the criticism of art. Art is made to create an experience, and if one ignores its experiential nature—its lived power—one is denying or distorting its essence. Hence he believed that it was necessary for the historian to bear a "responding sensibility," and to "convey the spectator's excitement and fascination as an experience of its own kind, sometimes so intense as to recall descriptions of religious ecstasy." The critic or historian should seek to understand and call attention to what was striking, moving, or inspiring in a work of art. Schapiro was an unembarrassed—more, a principled—enthusiast, and he wanted others to share in the joy of insight that he felt when studying a picture, a sculpture, or a building.

By "immense receptivity," he meant "curiosity about" and "readiness to admire" the art of new or foreign cultures, beyond native traditions and inherited expectations. Throughout his career, Schapiro shied away from the study of art that was generally regarded as classical, naturalistic, or normative. The only periods in the history of Western art he almost never wrote about were Greco-Roman antiquity and Renaissance Europe. Instead he was attracted to periods and styles that could be celebrated as new eruptions of energy, whether in the archaic, medieval, or modern eras.

Schapiro distrusted any effort to reduce cultural or intellectual activity to the reception of established opinions and settled practices. In aesthetics, likewise, he believed it was only by continual exposure to little-known, exotic, and primitive styles, and by a real effort to understand the motives behind such unfamiliar modes of creation, that one could challenge and refresh one's own assumptions. And even then we might fail to do justice to the art of other times and cultures. He worried that "our immense liberality toward the most varied styles, and our eagerness to enlarge the aesthetic horizon, do not exclude a certain narrowness and arrogant partisanship in taste." He sought to achieve a panoramic vision of human achievement; and although he recognized that it was optimistic or even naïve to do so, he hoped that the visual arts could serve as a vehicle of mutual understanding for people around the world.

Before taking up art history, Schapiro had considered becoming a painter, an

architect, or an anthropologist; and his training as an artist and an ethnographer gave him a perception of culture different from the typical view of most academics. The writing of cultural history is often characterized by a desire for stability and order. It tends to be retrospective, to look back to a Golden Age and an ideal setting, such as Raphael's Rome or Manet's Paris. The nostalgia in this point of regard is increased by the monastic traditions of the professoriate. Many historians spend their entire working lives within the protective walls of the academic cloister; and like medieval scribes, they see their work as primarily dedicated to the preservation of special monuments and sacred texts. Culture, for them, is made up of forms to be saved, copied, and imitated.

But there is another approach to cultural history, one that acknowledges that it is ceaselessly dynamic and endlessly changeful. This view emphasizes the migration of peoples, the exchange of goods, the transformation of traditions and symbols. It draws on the experience of the traveler in the world, rather than on that of the priest in the sanctuary. It looks outward and over the horizon, rather than only inward and back; it thinks in terms of the map rather than the holy book and the sacred totem. In this understanding, history is made up of a multi-nodal network in which there is a constant, unstoppable flow of energy—persons and things and ideas and images and practices; and the weight and the importance of the many nodes is always shifting. There is no Golden Age, no Caput Mundi, because there are so many.

Schapiro exemplified this second approach. Before he became a historian, he worked with Boas, who taught that "all cultural forms appear in a constant state of flux." Human culture has no one center, no single ideal manifestation; it never has and it never will. All is variation and movement; and each part must be studied in relation to the others. This synoptic and comparative view is very different from the Hegelian linearity that underlies so much of the writing of cultural history. Boas lectured about these differences and believed that historians should learn from the anthropological standpoint.

Both at the time of his dissertation and later in his career, Schapiro traveled widely to acquire a map in his head of the culture of the world, and he remained fascinated by the mutation of styles and symbols and iconographies across large expanses of time and space. He grasped connections between places and cultures that others viewed as disparate: Baalbek and Moissac, Constantinople and Toledo. Unlike most art historians who work only on one place and one time, Schapiro worked on many and believed that art history should seek to understand "the whole of known history in panoramic extension and relatedness." He did not admire the cloistered sacredness of medieval art, as others did; he argued instead that Romanesque sculpture was a form of discourse with the world at large. Similarly, he believed that academic study and teaching should thrive in its contribution to public discussion. Schapiro stressed that the experience of modern artists helped us to achieve a new understanding of culture, one in which "the accomplishment of the past ceases to be a closed tradition of noble content or absolute perfection." Instead it is "a model of individuality, of history-making effort through continual self-transformation." The effort, creativity, and independence of earlier genius, not the external forms of its products, are what we should emulate.

Schapiro was the most celebrated teacher of art history of his generation in America. Yet the example that he provides is perhaps even more urgent today. In art history now, "objective attitude" and "responding sensibility" are typically viewed as contradictions. Historians of empiricist inclination tend to look with severe distrust at the subjective components of aesthetic judgment, while those drawn more to interpretation often slip into the solipsisms of high theory. The results of this conflict are paralysis and sterility. Moreover, for all the talk of interdisciplinarity and multiculturalism, the profession is increasingly narrow-minded and presentist in attitude. Whole continents and many millennia are routinely overlooked. There are extremely few academic or museum positions in Indian, African, pre-Columbian, ancient Near Eastern, Southeast Asian, Oceanic, or pre-historic art, and even those for classical, medieval, and Renaissance art are in sharp decline; but every institution seems to have someone working on the status-conferring art of the last fifty years in America and Europe. The "arrogant partisanship of taste" and "the general and verbal manner" and "assigned routines" of scholarship that troubled Schapiro long ago are even more prevalent in art history now. Anyone today seeking to imagine afresh the possibilities of the discipline, and to give it new energy, would do well to look to the example of his universal range and his rigorous joy. ◆

David Thomson

THE MOGUL EMPIRE

IRVING THALBERG: BOY WONDER TO PRODUCER PRINCE
By Mark A. Vieira
(University of California Press, 504 pp., $34.95)

THERE ARE TIMES of such chaos and promise, danger and daydream, when all of us hope for a superb and flawless leader. If he can swing it, we are off the hook. But he need not be a hero who turns into a tyrant. He is not necessarily strong, fierce, and Herculean. Indeed, it may add to his charm, to his magic, if he is slight, youthful, on the pretty side, and—better still—dying. He should be gentler than other leaders, more reliant on reason, calm, and explanation than those commanders who insist on being obeyed. In modern times, I can think of three such figures—Michael Corleone (Ivy League, good military record, the clean boy in the family), Irving Thalberg (the sickly genius who led Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer in its great days), and Barack Obama, the once-marginal man who was so wise and so far-seeing that he believed he did not have to behave like an American politician to save America.

There is something religious in the way Irving Grant Thalberg appeared at the right moment—on May 30, 1899, just in time for the new age and its sensational light show. He was the son of a melancholy father, William Thalberg, German-Jewish, from near Coblenz, an importer of lace but such a failure that he had to rent a multi-room attic in Brooklyn. The mother, Henrietta Heyman, was made of sterner stuff. As one who knew her put it, "Rather unlovely physically, she was imbued with the American dream of wealth, success, and social status." Her family was in the department store business, and she was determined that Irving was going to defy every doctor's warning that he was frail, a

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