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Kathryn Brush, *The Shaping of Art History. Wilhelm Vöge, Adolph Goldschmidt, and the Study of Medieval Art*. Cambridge and New York, Cambridge University Press, 1996, 263pp., 28 black-and-white illus., $69.95 (U.S.)

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their built environment to construct their civic identity. It is a monument of scholarship that is unlikely to be surpassed for many years to come.

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Notes

1 Andrea Da Mosto, *I dogi di Venezia, con particolare riguardo alle loro tombe* (Venice, 1939).

2 See Otto Demus, "Zwei Dogengräber in San Marco, Venedig," *Jahrbuch der österreichischen byzantinischen Gesellschaft*, V (1956), 41–59.

3 Otto Demus, "A Renascence of Early Christian Art in Thirteenth-Century Venice," *Late Classical and Medieval Studies in Honor of Albert Matthias Friend Jr.*, ed. Kurt Weitzmann (Princeton, 1955), 348–61.

4 N. Barozzi, "Sulla tomba del doge Enrico Dandolo a Costantinopoli," *Nuovo Archivio Veneto*, III (1892), 213; and Da Mosto, *I dogi di Venezia*, 58.

KATHRYN BRUSH, *The Shaping of Art History. Wilhelm Vöge, Adolph Goldschmidt, and the Study of Medieval Art*. Cambridge and New York, Cambridge University Press, 1996, 263pp., 28 black-and-white illus., $69.95 (U.S.).

Kathryn Brush's *The Shaping of Art History. Wilhelm Vöge, Adolph Goldschmidt, and the Study of Medieval Art* deserved to be reviewed when it first appeared in 1996. It contributes significantly to English-language studies of the art historiography of Germany, and especially to an understanding of the beginnings of what became – perhaps only during the twentieth century – the institutionalized discipline of art history. In an increasingly borderless and global post-modern academic era, in which disciplines seek continuous redefinition and renewal, it is edifying to contemplate the territorial preoccupations of our European ancestors.

For a number of reasons, Brush singles out two art historical forebears, Wilhelm Vöge (1868–1952) and Adolph Goldschmidt (1863–1944) for intensive study. Neither art historian has received much scholarly attention in recent years, despite the self-reflexive nature of the field over the past two decades. This is in part explained by the lack of translations of their publications into other languages. Both men were active in the early decades of the discipline (1880s and 1890s), and both chose to focus on the sculpture and painting of the Middle Ages in an epoch privileging the Italian Renaissance. "Vöge and Goldschmidt stand out because they represented fresh blood, conceptually speaking, for the study of medieval art during the 1890s" (p. 5). Furthermore, a substantial body of unpublished material provides "remarkably comprehensive evidence of a creative intellectual partnership between the two young men, particularly during the crucial decade of the 1890s" (p. 10). The most curious of the documents in question are 360 letters and postcards written by Vöge to Goldschmidt between 1892 and 1938.

Using both published and unpublished writings, Brush proposes in her introduction to address two related interpretative issues: 1) "how, and with what tools of analysis, does one assess the role of the artist, and of the artistic process, when evaluating works produced in the past, and how does one determine the relationship between form and artistic content in those works?" (p. 11); and 2) how were art history debates related to the study of the history of Germany in the 1880s and 1890s? "To what degree, for instance, can medieval artistic monuments be read as historical documents recording the mentality and cultural behavior of a period?" (p. 11) As we shall see, her analysis of Vöge's and Goldschmidt's scholarship presents these issues as most fully addressed in 1894 in Wilhelm Vöge's *Die Anfänge des Monumentalen Stiles im Mittelalter* which takes into account both the macrocosmic view of "mentality" and the microcosmic perspective in an art history which is a cultural history empathizing with individual creators.

The first chapter provides the university background for Goldschmidt's and Vöge's work by discussing the influence of the art historian Anton Springer, with whom both students studied in Leipzig, and the impact of the historian Karl Lamprecht on Vöge in particular. These two elder scholars were both involved in the 1880s with the study of manuscripts, and thus the art history of the Middle Ages. Although they were not academic enemies, they represented divergent methodologies: Springer's Morellian scientific connoisseurship contrasted sharply with Lamprecht's cultural historical approach, which was more sensitive to psychology and aesthetics and even more interdisciplinary than Jakob Burckhardt's *Kulturgeschichte*. The contrast between fact and psychic energies, of matter and mind, which will constitute the novelty of Vöge's approach over Goldschmidt's is already apparent in Brush's focus on Springer and Lamprecht as poles of influence. Goldschmidt is influenced heavily by Springer, whereas Vöge, also influenced by Springer, is perhaps even more indebted to the more "unsystematic" and inspired Lamprecht. "Vöge declared that he found Lamprecht's view of history 'fresh' and 'invigorating' for his own work in art history, for Lamprecht did not concentrate on a mere accumulation of facts and data but rather on cross-sectional and interdisciplinary

avenues of inquiry" (p. 43). Furthermore, Lamprecht saw art, and especially that of the Middle Ages, as providing in Brush's words, "an analytical shortcut to understanding the mentality and psychological behavior (*Seelenleben*) of an era."

What may disappoint the reader is that only two pages (pp. 51 and 52) are given over to analyzing Goldschmidt's and Vöge's dissertations, even though the influential ideas of Springer and Lamprecht as well as other teachers – Justi, Thode and Janitschek – are said to be detectible therein. The orientation of these dissertations, which were published shortly after completion, is declared more than demonstrated. The examination of extrinsic historical influence on the students takes precedence over a study of the specific textual content of their youthful productions.

Part II "Monumental Styles in Medieval Art History," chapter two helps to alleviate some of this frustration for it analyses Vöge's second book, *The Beginnings of the Monumental Style in the Middle Ages* (1894) to show the ways in which his study of French sculpture broke new ground for the budding domain of medieval art history. Here, Brush sets up a dichotomy between a documentary, "objective" accumulation of facts and a more sensitive and speculative enterprise taking into account artistic will and intention. But this time Vöge's approach to the monumental sculpture of the French cathedrals is as much an example of the latter, as well as exemplary of the former, as was the consciously cautious and conservative reconstruction of a group of Ottonian manuscripts in his dissertation. Instead of taking stylistic difference and change as impersonal givens, he chose the seemingly anonymous twelfth-century façade sculpture of Chartres' west portals and proceeded to isolate the hands of various major and minor masters, insisting on individual technique and inspiration. His preoccupation with the psychology and identity of individual artists, running contrary to the "scientific" *Stilkritik* being done by contemporaries like Goldschmidt and Wölfflin, is shown to be more than superficially influenced by Robert Vischer's *Kunstgeschichte und Humanismus* of 1880. Moreover, Vischer's theory of *Einfühlung* is invoked to explain in part Vöge's departure from the more collective approach to mentality postulated by Lamprecht.

Chapter three is a comparison between Vöge's and Goldschmidt's prolific scholarship which situates both scholars' careers within the context of the developing discipline. In the concluding assessment of this chapter, as in the book as a whole, Goldschmidt provides the foil to Vöge's richer and more personalized approach. "The common denominator in their scholarship was their extensive and virtually unparalleled firsthand knowledge of monuments and their careful scrutiny of the formal and iconographic properties of individual works. Significantly, this was also the point where their work diverged, for Vöge, unlike Goldschmidt, was concerned with probing the internal, as well as external, dynamics of the forms he studied" (p. 107).

In the light of this "inequality" it is almost with relief that one learns that Goldschmidt enjoyed the more illustrious and public career, Vöge suffering a mental breakdown in 1915 and retiring from his academic position. His breakdown is not discussed, nor is the reader afforded a very clear psychological portrait of Vöge. Rather, it is the more reserved and repressed scholar and teacher who is more amply characterized by Brush via the testimony of his students and colleagues: "Others who attended Goldschmidt's seminars in Halle marvelled at the enormous gulf that separated their teacher's controlled, impersonal demeanour in his lectures from his passionate engagement with the same topic under more informal conditions" (pp. 95–96). Predictably, this contrast between dispassionate scientific observation and impassioned rhetoric is not found in Goldschmidt's published work. It is, as Brush points out, a feature of Vöge's more synthetic scholarship, especially his *The Beginnings of the Monumental Style*: "The structure of Vöge's discourse might be read on a certain level as necessitated by the directions taken by his arguments. Specifically, it alternates in a self-consciously Nietzschean way between a sort of Apollonian control – that is, precise scientific description – and the Dionysiac lyricism of poetry and music" (p. 84).

It is as though in Brush's coupling of Goldschmidt and Vöge, Vöge provides the humanity and psychic energy for the genesis of medieval art history, while Goldschmidt maintains the rational and institutional edifice. No danger seems to lie in taking a closer look at Goldschmidt's personal and professional life, whereas Vöge's is less a triumph of the rule of reason. Or perhaps Vöge has already been characterized sufficiently in and through his more passionate and "anthropomorphic" scholarship. Whichever the case, the central tension in *The Shaping of Art History* is between a dispassionate erudition and rigor, following the model of the natural sciences, and a more "subjective" and intuitive hermeneutics, modelled on the "human" arts and sciences, including psychology and literature. In the summary at the end of the chapter on Vöge's *Beginnings* his approach is said to reflect "the diverse and often contradictory nature of the sources he drew upon but also the broader dichotomies and tensions within art history (for example, the mutually exclusive 'history of style' and 'history of artists' positions), as well as within humanities scholarship in general in the late nineteenth century. In this regard, Vöge's particular conception of the genesis of Gothic sculpture manifests the double-edged thrust of the 'human sciences,' or *Geisteswissenschaften*, at the end of the nineteenth century: the study and explanation of general historical trends and developments over time *and* the study of the actions and deeds of the individual human being"

(pp. 86–87). These two "dichotomies" or "tensions" are also to be found in the attempt of the philosopher Wilhelm Dilthey (1833–1911) to elaborate the intellectual operations common to the physical and the human sciences, as the following chapter explains (p. 107).

Part III, "Resonances," is broken into two chapters which consider firstly the reception of writings of the 1890s, and finally these writings' impact on American scholarship of the 1920s and even later. Although it is a small point, the division of a book of only five chapters into three parts is puzzling.

Responses at the turn of the century in France, Germany and Italy seem to have ignored Vöge's synthetic approach in favour of the reproducible, scientific aspect of his work: "The deep ideological structure of Vöge's investigation of the personhood of individual masters was either marginalized or ignored in favor of the convenient visible surface structure, with its filiational narrative unfolding systematically from chapter to chapter" (p. 121). This same phenomenon is perceptible in the introduction of the "stylistic method" into American scholarship of the 1920s: there is evidence of the presence of Vöge's "'other half' – the half concerned with the nature of artistic process and the psychology of form in medieval art," but it remains in general the forgotten, or even repressed face of medieval art history.

One is left with the disquieting suspicion that, even here in a study consecrated to disclosing this other face, it remains nonetheless in the shadow. Verifiable historical fact seems to take precedence over the nature of the "artistic process" and the "psychology" of form. "Artistic process" and the "psychology" of form are never perhaps sufficiently defined. One understands that the artist, and even the sensate art historian, is put back into the formalist equation by Vöge, but this inclusion is left to seem an almost idiosyncratic supplement, rather than a necessary and integral component of the study of medieval art. After all, Goldschmidt fares very well without it; and it has gone all but unappreciated in Vöge's work.

Had the influence of Friedrich Nietzsche's philosophy on Vöge's theoretical position been focused upon, one might have seen more clearly this hidden face. While Brush states that Vöge's correspondence during the crucial years for the formation of medieval art history talks much of Nietzsche, her text does not go beyond suggesting that, as for others of his generation, the idea of supremely creative individuals as responsible for changing the course of art stems from readings of Nietzsche (p. 75).

Vöge's insistence on the psychology of the "living" artist and on vital artistic energies that change the course of aesthetic history seems to be grounded in a Nietzschean will to power more than sparked by nostalgia for a retrograde biographical, indeed hagiographical, history of Renaissance "geniuses." His choice of anonymous medieval art works as the focus of his investigations assures that his approach cannot become anthropomorphic or even "humanistic" in a sentimental or anecdotal sense. Vasari has left no "individual" material on which the aestheticizing medieval historian may build convincingly a "great man." Additionally, Vöge's decision to focus on the genesis of an artistic style can be seen as a thoroughly Nietzschean preoccupation, one manifest also in Warburg's fascination with the very earliest moments of a particular style, that of the earliest Florentine Renaissance. Vöge's close relationship to Warburg is not discussed, although it is alluded to on several occasions, and promised in a further study (see note 69, p. 191).

It is worth mentioning that Warburg's major studies were not devoted to the canonical masters of the High Renaissance, but rather to lesser known artists and to partly anonymous works. Vöge, too, is interested in the Renaissance, but curiously does not publish much in this domain – not that Warburg did either during his lifetime. One wonders how precisely Vöge's texts on Renaissance artists and art differ from those on medieval topics. Brush recounts that Goldschmidt and Vöge share an interest in the art of the later period (both write on Michelangelo), but of the potential link between periods and theories not a great deal is made. One is left to ask what exactly is transferred from an artist-centred Renaissance art history to a form-centred medieval art history, and vice-versa.

Aby Warburg may well thus constitute another of the repressed or hidden faces of this study. All three men, Nietzsche, Warburg and Vöge, seemed determined to go beyond positivism, even determined to question the very foundations of idealistic humanism. All three men refused to deny the Dionysiac in art and in life, art being the privileged manifestation of life. All three suffered mental breakdowns and were unable or unwilling to pursue classic academic careers. While this may be merely anecdotal coincidence, there is no doubt that their psychic histories have caused them to be marginalized – or at least have caused a part of their contribution to the history of thought to be neglected.

A regret similar to that regarding Nietzsche's absence can be voiced with regard to the philosophical underpinnings of the intellectual fathers of Goldschmidt and Vöge. What relationship do their theories of art history bear to those of Hegel? Springer, we are told, wrote a dissertation on Hegel's philosophy of history. More complete consideration of the philosophical stances of the art historians in question might go far toward explaining their importance to modern practitioners of the discipline, especially those concerned to create studies that are neither positivistic nor totalizing.

But perhaps it is not fair to regret pretensions that the volume does not possess. *The Shaping of Art History* is a paragon of concision and clarity, with carefully defined limits and bounda-

ries. It is painstakingly researched, carefully written, generously illustrated, lavishly footnoted, and most beautifully produced. Its meticulous attention to detail affords considerable pleasure to the reader – there are almost no misspellings or typographic errors in the book. Kathryn Brush provides sensitive analyses of a complex historical context and offers nuanced and tentative, rather than dogmatic, answers to the questions she raises. *The Shaping of Art History* opens fascinating avenues of inquiry that may well lead to new ways of thinking art history.

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