

"genius" as found in the scholarly literature on the *Garden of Delights* by Hieronymous Bosch.

I suspect that non-art historians will be more interested in the theoretical scaffolding of Moxey's book than in his particular interventions in Renaissance studies, so my comments will focus on the "theory" part. A general introduction, which rehearses the issues of "doing history" in the wake of "deconstruction," lays out Moxey's rationale for thinking about art history as a form of cultural politics. It must be said, however, that by renouncing anything like a political program (p. 27) Moxey's idea of "politics" becomes rather modest: strictly speaking, any intervention in the "tissue of conventions" that define culture is a form of "cultural and political change," but this seems a rather quiet form of activism (p. 61).

Three subsequent chapters sketch out, respectively, a "semiotic" understanding of representation, of ideology, and of authorship. Representation for Moxey is mainly about connecting signs (verbal or visual, although his conflation of the two is not without problems) to the ongoing system of cultural semiosis: for this he turns to Pierce's triadic concept of the sign (representamen/object/interpretant) and Bakhtin's notion of dialogism to derive the possibility of multiple voices constantly creating new cultural forms. Ideology is a bit more tricky. Moxey rejects both Marxist "false consciousness" (for its distance from material life) and the "discursive practices" of Foucault (for their lack of agency). He opts for an Althusserian model because the "interpellation" of subjects by ideological state apparatuses strikes him as semiotic in character. He "recuperates" agency in Louis Althusser via Lacan: Moxey equates the Lacanian "screen" we project to counter the "gaze" of the symbolic order with Althusser's definition of ideology as the "imaginary relationship of individuals to their real conditions of existence" (p. 47). Moxey returns to Lacan in the chapter on authorship, where he suggests the Lacanian "screen," a construct that both defines subjectivity and creates new signs in the symbolic order, be "metaphorically extended to cover the image produced by the artist" (p. 53). Obviously, if the work of art both creates a subject and a resistance to the symbolic order, it must embody both conscious and unconscious forces, in which case interpretations that search for artistic "intention" are simply misguided. Moxey accepts that his position entails the demise of the humanist "subject," the sacrifice of continuing to write history in a semiotic field of floating signification. Why is this? Like any subject, an historian constructs a "screen" that might produce knowledge against the grain of the symbolic order. "The fascination of history and the historian's power," writes Moxey, "lie precisely in purporting to afford us access to what is by definition inaccessible" (p. 60). In short, the historian becomes a kind of artist.

Little of what Moxey proposes alters profoundly the social situation of doing art history: a work of art (the screen), an "interpreter," and a body of material or

symbolic "traces" left by prior moments of Althusserian "interpellation" that one might call the archive. He dislodges, however, the social protocols for argument and consensus among historians: first, by undermining any claim to have "mastered" the archive, especially relative to another interpreter's similar claim; and second, by insisting on the role of individual subject-formation in the process of interpretation, in which case the shared ground where two subjects might discuss different readings is dissolved. Moxey's position leaves room for little more than a brownian-motion, semiotic "buzz" in real-time, everywhere directed to the surface of signs, dispersed hierarchically, with no space where the other's personal "screen" or "interpretation" might be debated. In short, the modest gain in "politics" offered by Moxey seems far outweighed by the loss of reasoned argument and intellectual exchange within the discipline.

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THOMAS BENDER and CARL E. SCHORSKE, editors.  
*Budapest and New York: Studies in Metropolitan Transformation, 1870-1930*. New York: Russell Sage Foundation. 1994. Pp. xiv, 400. \$39.95.

Comparative history is a fascinating field, but the road leading to it is full of dangers. The risk of publishing a collection of essays on New York and Budapest by American and Hungarian scholars is that neither side would be familiar with the history of the other. Fully aware of the difficulties of their pioneering work, Thomas Bender and Carl E. Schorske have decided to solve this problem by writing a general introduction and an afterword. Except for these two texts, comparison is virtually limited to the brief introductions to the five sections. Although no name is attached to these interchapters, it is safe to assume that the American editors are responsible for their composition. Since their knowledge of Hungarian history is secondhand, their summaries are inevitably onesided.

Most of the essays on Budapest are analytic rather than synthetic. When some details are taken out of their original context and placed in a new one, the result may be an interpretation that will not hold up under scrutiny. Sometimes a shift in emphasis may lead to misunderstanding, as in the case of the discussion of the 1919 Commune in Hungary. In the general introduction, the editors mention that "one of the actions of the brief revolutionary government in Budapest in 1919 was to abolish the admission charge to Margaret Island" (p. 16). While this statement is absolutely correct, it may mislead a reader who is unaware of the consequences of the dictatorship introduced by Béla Kun and his colleagues after March 21, 1919. In a similar way, the argument that Admiral Miklós Horthy represented "Hungarian reaction and provincialism" (p. 9) seems far-fetched if compared to the much more complex characterization of this statesman given by Thomas Sakmyster in his recent book

*Hungary's Admiral on Horseback: Miklós Horthy, 1918–1944* (1994).

The most valuable chapters are those in which the contributors seem reluctant to draw parallels. The analysis of municipal policy in the two cities gives readers a chance to reach their own conclusions. Here, the excellent American contribution is preceded by an equally subtle examination of the interrelations between the adoption of liberal ideas by the city leaders and the rise of the Hungarian capital. Somewhat less satisfying is part 2. While the essay on New York's Central Park is highly illuminating about changes in the use of public space, the equivalent chapter on Budapest lacks a clearly defined focus. Once it has been established that Városliget "was and has been the only urban public park of the city that can be compared to well-known urban gardens elsewhere," the reader expects a history of this "City Grove" (p. 89). Instead, the author devotes special attention to a working-class demonstration held in different parts of the city on May 23–24, 1912. The exhibition of 1896 is also neglected, although it was held in Városliget and is generally regarded as an unquestionably significant public event that made a lasting impact on the life of Budapest as a whole. As is well known, the first subway line and several important public buildings and monuments date from 1896 and continue to remind citizens and tourists of the millenium celebration that radically changed the image of the Hungarian city.

Of particular interest is the next section entitled "Neighborhoods: Class and Ethnicity." Here the methods followed by the two scholars are different: the inquiry into the residential distribution of immigrant groups in New York City is based on published sources, whereas the description of St. Imre Garden City relies on field research. In the Hungarian essay, social history is happily combined with semiotic investigation. What I find less convincing is the theoretical underpinning of this interdisciplinary study. In my view, it was not Roland Barthes but John Stuart Mill who "worked out the denotation-connotation antithesis" in *A System of Logic* (1843), translated into Hungarian in 1874–1877. C. S. Peirce, Jacques Derrida, and Hans Georg Gadamer cannot be characterized as representing "a historical analysis of semiotics," and it is an exaggeration to assert that "the historical disciplines—with the sole exception of ethnography—have made little use" of semiotics (p. 175).

The last two sections are devoted to the cultural life of the two cities. While it is perfectly understandable that popular culture is taken very seriously by specialists of urban history—vaudeville, operetta, and journalism are given a substantial and thought-provoking treatment—it is somewhat surprising that only accidental references are made to musical activity in Budapest. The libretto of *The Gypsy Baron* is based on a text by the Hungarian novelist Mór Jókai, but it was composed by an Austrian for his native Vienna, and even *The Merry Widow* was originally intended for a Viennese audience. Ernő Dohnányi, Béla Bartók, and

Zoltán Kodály, on the other hand, lived and worked in Budapest in the early twentieth century and were attached to such institutions as the Budapest Academy of Music, founded in 1875, or the Opera, opened in 1884. The first president of the Academy was Franz Liszt and the Opera had directors as distinguished as Ferencz Erkel, Gustav Mahler, and Arthur Nikisch.

Historians examine works of art as social documents; it is not their task to do justice to aesthetic value. Still, I find some of the conclusions reached by the authors of the last essays questionable. If we remember such paintings as *The Eastern Station at Night* (1902) by Tivadar Csontváry Kostka or the cityscapes of János Vaszary (two major artists not even mentioned in the book) or the long line of novels written about Budapest, we may doubt the relevance of the statement that "the city of big tenements and brownstone schools, of the eclectic and ambitious public buildings, of millenary monuments and broad avenues, does not surface in the pictures painted or stories told of Budapest" (p. 317). *Midás Király* (*King Midas* [1891–1892]), a long novel by Zoltán Ambrus, opens with the naturalistic presentation of a tenement in the Budapest of the late nineteenth century; *Budapest* (1901) by Tamás Kóbor is about the life of prostitutes in a rapidly changing city; *A vörös postakocsi* (1913, published as *The Crimson Coach* in 1967) by Gyula Krúdy portrays the life of actresses; *A kristály-ézők* (*Crystal Gazers* [1913]) by Kálmán Harsányi is about the activity of Odön Lechner, the most important Art Nouveau architect in Budapest; *A régi ház* (1913, published in New York as *The Old House* in 1922) by Cécile Tormay deals with the transformation of Biedermeier Pest-Buda into a capitalist metropolis; and *Anna Édes* (1926) by Dezső Kosztolányi tells the story of a district of Buda in the politically crucial years 1919–1922.

It is an interesting hypothesis that in Budapest aesthetic modernism was opposed to urbanism, but the validity of such a generalization may be limited if we do not forget that Hungarian artists could hardly paint skyscrapers. The social and political criticism formulated by some of the contributors is also somewhat vulnerable. It is easy to ridicule the Hungarian gentry; it is far less easy to explain why so many original artists and writers of the early twentieth century came from that class. In view of the fact that several among these composed their best works in the interwar period, it is a simplification to maintain that "the 1919–1920 emigration completely broke the continuity of Hungarian culture" (p. 322).

The reason for some of the weaknesses of the volume may be careless translation. The statement that "Ady created the unforgettable figure of Kornél Esti" (p. 360) suggests that inconsistencies are probably due to the translator's imperfect understanding of the original Hungarian text. *Kornél Esti* (1933) is a book by Dezső Kosztolányi, one of the landmarks in twentieth-century Hungarian literature. Other aspects of the book have similar imperfections: the map of Budapest

has some inaccuracies (p. 37), the first permanent bridge of the city is mentioned under two different names (pp. 1, 3), and Hungarian words are misspelled and titles mistranslated in several parts of the book. Minor as these errors may seem, they occur quite frequently and remind the reader that the distance between New York and Budapest is so wide that coordinated projects run the risk of being uneven. Yet the shortcomings of the editorial work should not make us forget that this collection includes several brilliant essays, and the American-Hungarian project has helped break the ice for further experimentation with the comparative study of regions that have very different historical legacies.

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SIMON SCHAMA. *Landscape and Memory*. New York: Alfred A. Knopf. 1995. Pp. xi, 652. \$40.00.

Simon Schama divides nature into three components—wood, water, and rock—and examines how humans have responded to each. He believes that we experience all aspects of nature in cultural terms. No one, whether a lover of jungles or of Riviera resorts, escapes a web of cultural associations and, more importantly, a body of myths that have attached themselves to the natural world. Each section of this book, then, takes us on a journey into our collective unconscious, what (following Maurice Halbwachs) he calls memory. This involves tracing powerful, recurring myths that may differ from place to place. Schama remains faithful to the tenets of the new cultural history by focusing on the outward (rather than hidden) manifestations of these myths in ceremonies, art, and literature.

Forests, as Schama sees them, embody most powerfully what humans cannot control, and they therefore speak most directly to a dark, mystical streak that can never be fully extinguished and that we dismiss only at our own risk. That is why, more than rivers and mountains, forests foster strong ethnic identities. That is also why this section is the most troubling for historians. Poles, Germans, Americans, and Britons project onto the forest their deepest beliefs about their own identity: nationalist, racist, or democratic. And, because we already know what this entails, the argument often reads like the shibboleths of yore. Schama believes that our attitudes are culturally conditioned rather than psychologically determined (as in Carl Jung's universal archetypes), but he allows only a constricted version of these influences. Thus nations can only have a single forest myth. For the alternate version, please cross the border.

If ethnic identity frames the argument on forests, the section on water revolves around the weighty cultural baggage of the Nile, a legacy that permeates the Western imaginary. Schama takes a curious, post-*Black Athena* stance toward Egyptian culture, even

going so far as to speak of "the whole Egypto-Romano-Christian tradition" (p. 299). As in other sections, we move from religious to secular visions, lingering on man's determination to pierce the mysteries of nature. The Nile thus remains the river that cannot be possessed in an era of exploration, canals, dams, and (in a brilliant series of digressions) fountains. Here Schama is at his best, allowing his imagination to roam in a series of free associations. The stories, as throughout the book, are told with verve, a Dickensian delight in idiosyncracies, and a stupendous ability to engage and entertain the reader.

Because of this variety, and because of its construction as a series of almost self-contained stories, the book can be picked up at any point without confusion. One advantage of reading it front to back is that the tone noticeably improves. Early sections are marred by jibes at professional historians, Marxists, Zionists, and fat California women, giving an occasionally jarring insight into Schama's psyche. All this disappears in the discussion of mountains. This part also spans continents and centuries, but a significant segment concerns the eighteenth century and changing English appreciation of the Alps. Schama's delight in human inventiveness becomes transparent. For although he denounces irresponsible abuses, he clearly relishes our muscular engagement with nature. Climbing peaks or carving presidents on Mount Rushmore are treated as fertile obsessions.

Schama's greatest contribution is his effortless marriage of high and low culture, showing how similar responses permeate all ranks of society. He is less successful at convincing us that he has found ways of writing a postcolonial, poststructuralist history. His rejection of Enlightenment dualities (such as wild/tame) leads him to overstate a single cultural explanation (such as ethnicity) or to invoke so many that they dissolve into a series of anecdotes, albeit highly entertaining ones. Schama makes a good case that Western civilization always expressed an interest in nature. He has not convinced me, however, that this interest took the form of myths established at the dawn of time, doomed to be forever repeated.

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ROY PORTER and MIKULÁŠ TEICH, editors. *Sexual Knowledge, Sexual Science: The History of Attitudes to Sexuality*. New York: Cambridge University Press. 1994. Pp. xiii, 408. Cloth \$69.95, paper \$19.95.

This collection is the eighth in a series of volumes edited by Roy Porter and Mikuláš Teich for Cambridge University Press, each offering an interesting and varied selection of papers on some broadly defined historical topic. Taking us from England and America to India and the Persian empire, the papers deal with abstinence and abortion, incest and impotence, masturbation and murder, and a good deal more.