



Living on the Byzantine Borders of Western Art

Author(s): Robert S. Nelson

Source: *Gesta*, Vol. 35, No. 1 (1996), pp. 3-11

Published by: [The University of Chicago Press](#) on behalf of the [International Center of Medieval Art](#)

Stable URL: <http://www.jstor.org/stable/767222>

Accessed: 01/09/2014 17:36

Your use of the JSTOR archive indicates your acceptance of the Terms & Conditions of Use, available at <http://www.jstor.org/page/info/about/policies/terms.jsp>

JSTOR is a not-for-profit service that helps scholars, researchers, and students discover, use, and build upon a wide range of content in a trusted digital archive. We use information technology and tools to increase productivity and facilitate new forms of scholarship. For more information about JSTOR, please contact support@jstor.org.



The University of Chicago Press and International Center of Medieval Art are collaborating with JSTOR to digitize, preserve and extend access to *Gesta*.

<http://www.jstor.org>

Living on the Byzantine Borders of Western Art*

ROBERT S. NELSON

University of Chicago

Abstract

In general surveys of art history in current use, Byzantine art has been separated from Western Medieval art by several strategies. Most often Early Christian and Byzantine art follows Roman art and precedes Islamic art. Advancing as late as the sixteenth or seventeenth century in Orthodox and Islamic countries, the surveys turn back to early medieval Western Europe from which another narrative proceeds directly to the Renaissance. In some survey books, the transition from Rome to Byzantium and Islam is also the moment to introduce the arts of Asia, Africa, and the Americas. These organizational strategies, which disassociate Byzantium from Western Europe, are encountered in art history's first general handbooks, published in Germany in the mid-nineteenth century by Franz Kugler and Carl Schnaase, and still earlier in the influential *Philosophy of History* by G. W. F. Hegel. The surveys' chronological inversions and Hegel's general assessment of Byzantium should be understood as a manifestation of Orientalism, a cultural prejudice detected in other aspects of the treatment of Byzantine art in American textbooks. Instead, it is suggested that new accountings of medieval art transcend the rigid conceptual boundaries inherited from European nationalism and explore larger problems across the many cultures and spaces of the Middle Ages.

*"These petrified relations must be forced to dance by singing to them their own melody."*¹

When I began studying at the Institute of Fine Arts some twenty-five years ago, the history of art was divided into a number of fields. We grouped these fields together in order to define our work and ourselves. Two contiguous fields made one's major, a third became one's related minor and a fourth, more distant from the others, the unrelated minor. As I remember, the system that applied to us was basically the same as listed in the Institute's current catalogue:

... (15) Greek Art; (16) Roman Art; (17) Early Christian Art through Carolingian Art; (18) Byzantine Art; (19) Islamic Art to the Mongol Conquest, 690–1250; (20) Islamic Art after the Mongol Conquest, 1250–1800; (21) Romanesque Art; (22) Gothic Art; (23) Italian Art from 1300 to 1500 . . .

I made Early Christian and Byzantine art my major and minored in Early Islamic art. Fellow medievalists chose to major in Romanesque and Gothic art, or Gothic and Early

Renaissance art. Then as now, we were supposed to choose for an unrelated minor a field more distant from our major concentration, and I selected Gothic art. Persuading the faculty that Gothic art was unrelated to Byzantine art was not easy (nor, I confess, educationally wise, if intellectual breadth was the objective). But in the end I was supported by an indulgent adviser and by the classification itself, its construction of time, and the way that, like all temporal systems, it made the same other and the other same, as Johannes Fabian has put it.² Because Byzantine Art, no. 18 on the list, was numerically distant from Gothic Art, no. 22, the two subjects were deemed sufficiently remote and independent. How and why this might be possible—to understand two coeval periods in the history of Christian art as unrelated—is the subject of my essay.

In that past world, whatever choices we made about our fields, most of us gave little thought to the taxonomy into which we fitted our courses, our research, and our lives. We worked contentedly within a paradigm, seldom questioning its borders or its processes of ordering and controlling knowledge. Indeed, why should we have? Then, the problem of art history was art, not art history. In a generation, much has changed. The so-called New Art History is upon us, and exciting new methods sweep through our formerly isolated discipline. But the changing fashions of critical theory seldom affect the deep structures of our subject. Thus, Marxists may tell us much about the social context, for example, of certain Impressionist painters, but in the process merely reaffirm the canon.³ Semi-oticians might ply their craft on well-known monuments and thereby reinstate traditional genres. Scholars writing from the perspectives of feminism or post-colonialism critique and deny established modes of inquiry, while at the same time acknowledging and to some degree validating the old paradigms, because the act of studying, for example, the "Other" is also to recognize its existence as other. Our periodization of art history and our systems of organizing academic departments have changed remarkably little in the past century. We add to the canon; less often do we re-think how and why it is constructed as it is.

Because Byzantine art is and is not a part of the Western tradition, it is a useful place to ponder such issues. In so doing, one might study the scholarship on Byzantine art, the collecting and exhibiting of Byzantine art, revivals of Byzantine architecture, paintings, and minor arts in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, and even the visual and verbal representation of Byzantine art in popular literature, drama, posters,

and advertising. However, on this occasion, I will concentrate on the ways in which Byzantine art is framed by those popular codifiers and guardians of the canon, our modern survey books, those curious unions of aesthetics, pedagogy, and commerce, used everyday but seldom studied in and for themselves. Here, my concern is less the particular accountings of individual monuments and more the position of Byzantine art within the general sequencing of art history. A summary of that data and a listing of the books surveyed follows the conclusion of this article. I will first consider those histories of art in current use, reviewing as many of their editions as I found in my personal library and my university's library. Next, I extend this review back to various general books from earlier in the century and before them to the beginnings of the genre in mid-nineteenth-century Germany.

Of the most popular surveys in current use, the oldest is *Art Through the Ages*, first published in 1926 by Helen Gardner of the School of the Art Institute of Chicago and later reworked by a changing cast of authors. Gardner prepared editions One through Three, reviewing the last, of 1948, in galleys before her death.⁴ Thereafter, the book became a corporate endeavor in two senses, and, consequently, editions vary considerably in their arrangement of the material. The fourth edition of 1959 was "revised under the editorship of Sumner McK. Crosby by the Department of the History of Art Yale University." The names of Horst de la Croix and Richard C. Tansey of San Jose State University and later Diane Kirkpatrick of the University of Michigan appear on the title pages of later editions. For my purposes the most relevant aspect of the book is the progression from antiquity to the Middle Ages. After Greek and Roman art, Gardner's first edition moves to chapters X: Early Christian and Byzantine Period, XI: Mohammedan Period, XII: Persian Period, and so through chapters XIII and XIV, the Romanesque and Gothic Periods. Except for the term Mohammedan (appropriately changed to Islamic in the fourth edition), Gardner's sequence is identical to that of the Institute of Fine Arts.

The sequence continues to the present. As indicated in Table 1, Byzantine art is routinely followed by Islamic art in current books: Gombrich, Janson, Hartt, Honour/Fleming, and the latest of Marilyn Stokstad, the first volume of which has just appeared. Occasionally Islamic art is omitted entirely or, as in Gardner IV, relegated to a section entitled "Non-European Art," one of four larger categories that the Yale faculty created.⁵ But in the main, Islamic art is a standard feature even of the survey books with the most strongly Western orientation like Janson, Hartt, or Trachtenberg and Hyman, *Architecture . . . The Western Tradition*. Thus, despite the widespread critiques of Orientalism, inspired by Edward Said's fundamental book of that name,⁶ Islam or at least its art actually has some claim to be a part of the West. Its status in that tradition, however, is scarcely the equal of, say, French

Gothic art, and both the historical study of Islamic art and the production of art in the modern world by Muslims have been subjected to the many strategies and consequences of colonialism.⁷

In the survey books, the position after Byzantine and Islamic art is one in which it was evidently deemed permissible to insert "exotic" material. For example, in his *Story of Art*, first published in 1950, E. H. Gombrich devoted chapter 6 to Byzantine art. Chapter 7, entitled "Looking Eastward, Islam, China, Second to Thirteenth Century A.D.," is even broader than advertised, ranging from Islamic Spain to nineteenth-century Japan. In Wilkins and Shulz (1990), Byzantine art is followed by a chapter on Anglo-Saxon and Hiberno-Saxon Art, but immediately afterwards, the authors introduce chapters on Art in Japan, Art in China, and Islamic Art before returning finally to the standard medieval sequence of Carolingian Art, Romanesque Art, etc. In Stokstad's new book, even more diverse material is located after the Byzantine chapter, including the obligatory chapter on Islamic Art, but also Art of India before 1100, Chinese Art before 1280, Japanese Art before 1392, Art of the Americas before 1300, and Art of Ancient Africa.

In these books, no matter what comes after Byzantine art and the exotic interlude, the narrative ultimately returns to Western medieval art, most often in the period of the early Middle Ages—Hiberno-Saxon or Carolingian art—, as in Gombrich, Janson, Hartt, Wilkins/Schulz, or Stokstad. The same pattern is observed in the textbook surveys of medieval art, e.g., Calkins and Snyder, but not Zarnecki.⁸ The variations on this structure in Honour and Fleming are less radical than they first seem. Choosing section titles that depart from the usual Ancient, Medieval, Renaissance, etc., they create a Part 2, "Art and the World Religions" after Part 1, "Foundations of Art" or prehistoric through Roman art. Thus they interpolate chapter 6, "Buddhism and Far Eastern Art," between Hellenistic and Roman art (ch. 5) and Early Christian and Byzantine art (ch. 7). The latter chapter also treats "Christian Art in Northern Europe." Part 2 concludes with Early Islamic art (ch. 8). Part 3, "Sacred and Secular Art," opens with Ottonian through Gothic art (ch. 9). Thus, the standard western narrative resumes, albeit a bit later than usual, and in this respect has antecedents in earlier books on medieval art.⁹

Survey books, then, create a conceptual break between Byzantium/Islam and Western Europe. Introducing chapters about the arts of Asia and even Africa and the Americas has the effect of isolating Byzantine art from the art of Western Europe to which it is connected in many ways from the early Middle Ages into the Renaissance. A second distancing mechanism is the chronological inversion by which the narrative moves from Byzantium, which, of course, lasted until 1453, back to early medieval art, so that the rise of the West from late antiquity to the present can be told without interruption and, more importantly, without distracting

counter-narratives or even subplots. The result is to give the impression that Byzantine art is somehow early or at least not coeval with Western art, and hence a cultural cul-de-sac in art history's teleology. Needless to say, such histories are written from the vantage point of Western Europe and America. An entirely different story would result if the narrative center were shifted to Russia, Eastern Europe, Greece, Turkey, Egypt, etc.¹⁰

This deliberate denial of coevalness, what Fabian calls allochronism,¹¹ becomes even stranger in those books that classify Byzantine art as ancient, not medieval. The problem arose when authors began to use broad period categories to group individual chapters. Among the most popular American books, the practice started with Helen Gardner's second edition of 1936. There, she subdivided the table of contents by the usual headings, e.g., Classical Art, Medieval Art, etc. When Gombrich wrote in 1950, he was content with a simple listing of chapter titles, as in Gardner's first edition. In later surveys, however, groupings of chapters became obligatory, doubtlessly because they are useful pedagogically, reinforcing larger art historical structures for beginning students. Given the nature of these books, once a feature becomes widely accepted, market forces dictate that competing volumes have to adopt it and try to improve upon it, a process no different from that which drives the design of automobiles or computer software. For this reason the typography and design of tables of contents in these college textbooks becomes ever more elaborate. For the moment, at least, a climax has been reached in the latest book from Prentice-Hall, the collaborative effort guided by Stokstad. There, the standard table of contents is so detailed that it was evidently felt necessary also to include a "Brief Contents." Ironically, the latter looks much like the basic table of contents in Gombrich or the first edition of Gardner.

For over a generation, the best selling and therefore the most influential of the American survey books has been H. W. Janson's *History of Art, A Survey of the Major Visual Arts from the Dawn of History to the Present Day*, now continued by his son, Anthony F. Janson. From its first edition of 1962 to the fifth of 1995, it has paid careful attention to visual presentation: its many color photographs, but also the layout of its front matter. In the first edition, Janson père subdivided art history into four parts: the Ancient World, the Middle Ages, the Renaissance, and the Modern World. Surprisingly, at least to a specialist, Chapter 8, Early Christian and Byzantine Art, was located in the ancient, not the medieval section. Its classification presumably was a consequence of Janson's general assessment of Byzantine versus Western medieval art:

In Western Europe, Celtic and Germanic peoples fell heir to the civilization of late antiquity, of which Early Christian art had been a part, and transformed it into that of the Middle Ages. The East, in contrast, experienced no such

break; in the Byzantine Empire, late antiquity lived on, although the Greek and Oriental elements came increasingly to the fore at the expense of the Roman heritage. As a consequence, Byzantine civilization never became wholly medieval. "The Byzantines may have been senile," one historian has observed, "but they remained Greeks to the end." The same sense of tradition, of continuity with the past, determines the development of Byzantine art. We can understand it best, therefore, if we see it in the context of the final, Christian phase of antiquity rather than in the context of the Middle Ages.¹²

This passage, which has been repeated without change to the present, begs for further analysis, but to stay for the moment with the matter of Byzantine art as ancient, I turn to current editions of Gardner, *Art Through the Ages*. They also locate Byzantine art in antiquity and thereby distort the passage of "art through the ages." It had not always been so. Both Gardner in the second and third editions and the Yale Department had understood that Byzantium belonged to the Middle Ages. Matters changed with the fifth edition by de la Croix and Tansey. Published as before by Harcourt, Brace & Company, later Harcourt, Brace Jovanovich, the fifth edition appeared in 1970, eight years after the warm reception given Janson's book, the product of the competing firms of Prentice-Hall and Harry N. Abrams.¹³

The fourth edition of Gardner divided art history into Ancient Art, European Art, Non-European Art, and Modern Art. The Early Christian and Byzantine chapter was assigned to the second, not the first part. The fifth edition employed the following categories: The Ancient World, The Middle Ages, Renaissance and Baroque, The Modern World, and The Non-European World. The last, bearing the regrettable title Non-European, continues from the fourth edition, but the others follow Janson. Also like the latter, the discussion of Early Christian and Byzantine art (chapter 7) has now been re-located in antiquity and thus further separated from Western medieval art. Islamic art was added to the chapter, and the whole rewritten, not exactly a common occurrence in the world of survey books.

Chapter 7 opens with a general evaluation of Byzantine and Western medieval culture that resembles Janson's both in content and in position within the chapter. Discussing the invasions of the "barbarians," referring to the Germanic and Celtic peoples, de la Croix and Tansey continue as follows:

The subsequent actions of these "barbarians," Christianized and in control of the western empire by the end of the fifth century, make up the history of the Middle Ages in the west. The eastern empire, actually but not officially severed from the western by the beginning of the fifth century, goes its own continuous way as the Byzantine empire, reverting to its Greek language and traditions,

which, to be sure, had become much “Orientalized.” The Byzantine world was a kind of protraction of the life of the late empire and the Early Christian culture that filled it. With a quite Oriental conservatism, which reminds us somewhat of the ancient Near Eastern civilizations, the Byzantine empire remains Greek, orthodox, unchanging for a thousand years, preserving the forms of its origin, oblivious to and isolated from the new.¹⁴

This passage to which I shall also return is repeated from the fifth to the latest edition, the ninth of 1991.

Both the evaluation of Byzantine art and its position within art history has a long and unacknowledged history that belongs, in general, to what Said has helped us understand as Orientalism and, in particular, to a scholarly tradition of writing surveys or handbooks that can be traced back to mid-nineteenth-century Germany. The first example of these universal histories of art was, to quote the title page, “*Handbuch der Kunstgeschichte* von Dr. Franz Kugler, Professor an der Königl. Akademie der Künste zu Berlin,” published in 1842. Gaining his habilitation in Berlin in 1835, Kugler (1808–1858) was a remarkably precocious and productive scholar at a time when many fields of humanistic study were coming of age, and books, such as Kugler’s, were an important means of disciplinary self-definition. This capacious and ambitious book, written when Kugler was all of thirty-four years old, has a global scope. It begins with the monuments of Northern European antiquity, and what we would call Oceanic art, Pre-Columbian art of the Americas, the art of Egypt and Nubia, Western Asia, and Eastern Asia (Part I), then turns to Classical Art (Part II), Romantic Art (Part III) or what we know as the art of the Middle Ages, and concludes with Modern Art (Part IV). The latter extends from the Renaissance to the end of the eighteenth century and has a final chapter, “Blick auf die Kunstbestrebungen der Gegenwart,” about what we know as the art of Romanticism.

Kugler was an important figure culturally and academically in his day.¹⁵ Skilled in all the arts, he was an accomplished artist, vocalist, novelist, dramatist, song-writer, poet, and historian, and art historian. Friend of leading intellectuals and artists, Kugler also appears to have been a good teacher. Among his students was the historian and, thanks to Kugler, art historian, Jacob Burckhardt, who prepared the second edition of *Handbuch der Kunstgeschichte* (1848). In his letters, Burckhardt described Kugler as a “wonderful, lovable man.”¹⁶ In the year that the *Handbuch* appeared, Burckhardt wrote that “for the last two years I have found a real friend in Prof. Kugler, full of goodness, patience and esprit; I have learnt the history of art from him . . .”¹⁷ Kugler had begun teaching at the Academy in 1835 and immediately published a great array of books and articles, including a history of painting, *Handbuch der Geschichte der Malerei seit Constantin dem Grossen* (1837), the second edition of which

was made again by Burckhardt. Both handbooks were to be kept in print for decades, and the one on painting was later translated into English and remained popular until the next century.¹⁸

The *Handbuch der Kunstgeschichte* was Kugler’s great work. From our world it is hard to believe there was ever a time when new survey books did not arrive as predictably as another school year or exist at all for that matter, and hence it requires a bit of historical imagination to appreciate the efforts involved in creating the first one. Among the few antecedents that Kugler mentioned in his preface were his own history of painting and the study of ancient art, *Handbuch der Archäologie der Kunst*, published in 1835 by K. O. Müller.¹⁹ In his introduction Kugler felt it necessary to explain what he means by the word “Kunstgeschichte,” not because he was the first to use it, but because the discipline to which he belonged was, as he wrote, “still quite young.”²⁰ Nevertheless, he gives it a clear organization in his book. Because handbooks and surveys of all periods follow rather than lead, it is doubtful that Kugler invented this system, but he did help popularize a structure that in many respects is still with us.

His medieval section begins with chapter 11, “Die altchristliche Kunst,” divided into architecture and the other arts. The discussion of architecture includes what we term Early Christian and Byzantine architecture and ends, like Janson, with Russian architecture. It is necessarily brief on many monuments, especially those in the east; little was yet known about architecture in Constantinople. Ravenna was only beginning to be studied, and an important book by Kugler’s contemporary, von Quast, appeared in the same year as his handbook and is listed there as forthcoming.²¹ Salzenberg’s seminal study of Byzantine architecture, based on access to Hagia Sophia while the Fossati brothers were restoring the mosque, would be published in 1854,²² and Kugler would review it.²³ The remainder of the chapter on painting and sculpture presents a range of material from Rome, but Byzantine painting was largely limited to manuscript illumination. The detailed knowledge of frescoes and mosaics is the contribution of scholars of the next century. Like the many surveys of our world, Kugler’s follows Early Christian and Byzantine art with a chapter about Islamic art. The medieval section concludes with two chapters on Romanesque and Gothic art, the later being titled “Die Kunst des germanischen Styles,” leaving no doubt about the nationality of the author.

The same chapter organization was followed in the next major survey by Carl Schnaase (1798–1875). Trained as a lawyer, Schnaase labored for much of his career as what we call an independent scholar, until he could retire and devote all his attention to his *Geschichte der bildenden Künste* (Düsseldorf, 1843–64).²⁴ Dedicated to Kugler, this history treated art from its beginnings into the fifteenth century in eight volumes, but remained unfinished at Schnaase’s death. The series was conceived about the same time as Kugler’s, but on a much

grander scale and with different philosophical foundations. To judge from his introduction and from writings elsewhere, Schnaase, like his Berlin contemporary Heinrich Gustav Hotho, was a thoroughgoing Hegelian.²⁵

Kugler, in contrast, rejected such a level of abstraction in favor of simple, direct descriptions of monuments, a style that has more in common with the historical positivism of another Berliner, Otto von Ranke, the great historian, with whom Kugler had collaborated on a study of a church in Quedlinburg in 1838.²⁶ In this respect, Kugler works more like a careful archaeologist, and it was this aspect of his class lectures that Burckhardt remembered so fondly.²⁷ Because Kugler is not philosophically interesting, he warrants scant attention in Michael Podro's major account of German art history. Podro, however, does recognize that Kugler was "a central figure in nineteenth-century scholarship" and that he "shared the metaphysical view of art with the philosophically minded writers."²⁸

Thus, in spite of their differences, Kugler, Schnaase, and their successors organized their discussions of medieval art similarly. In his eight volumes, Schnaase traced the history of art from Antiquity through the Middle Ages and concludes with European art of the fifteenth century (vol. 8). Five volumes are devoted to the Middle Ages. The first treats Early Christian, Byzantine, Islamic, and Carolingian Art, in that order and like Kugler. Wilhelm Lübke, a continuator of both Schnaase and Kugler, made no changes to the basic system in his *Grundriss der Kunstgeschichte*,²⁹ nor did Anton Springer, the author of a multi-volume series with the, by then, venerable title, *Handbuch der Kunstgeschichte*.³⁰ The only exception from this period that I have encountered is *Geschichte der Kunst aller Zeiten und Völker* by Karl Woermann. His second volume is devoted to *Die Kunst der christlichen Völker bis zum Ende des 15. Jahrhunderts* (Leipzig, 1905). There he arranged cultures in strict chronological order, i.e., all developments in the period A.D. 100–750 or A.D. 1050–1250, so that Byzantine art appears scattered about various sections. Islam, as the title indicates, is entirely excluded.

Woermann is an exception. Otherwise, chronological displacement is used to re-position cultures, favoring some over others, an essential feature of all western-oriented histories of art to the present. Kugler and Schnaase were hardly the first to invent this notion, even if they were the first to apply it to art historical handbooks. It is a fundamental strategy of the writing of history in the late eighteenth- and early nineteenth-century beginnings of Historicism, and in the preceding Enlightenment. These matters exceed the present study, but one last writer is of critical importance and is someone known to both Kugler and Schnaase, namely G. W. F. Hegel (1770–1831). I would argue for the art historical relevance not only of Hegel's lectures on aesthetics, as Podro and others have discussed,³¹ but also of his *Philosophy of History*, compiled from lectures that he repeated

several times at the University of Berlin, the last being in the year of his death.³²

Hegel's general subject here is the progress of the World-Spirit through time and throughout the entire world. History is divided into four parts, The Oriental World, the Greek World, the Roman World, and the German World. The last part, "Die germanische Welt," stretches from the migration period to the Enlightenment and Revolution, or more or less to Hegel's day. In the version of the lectures most commonly encountered, the cultures that we understand as medieval are divided between the Roman and Germanic Worlds. Thus the former includes "Das Christentum" and "Das byzantinische Reich." Islam ("Das Mohammedanismus") is located not in the first part, the Oriental World, but in the last, the Germanic World. Early Islam is emphasized, and it is placed in the chronologically appropriate position between the migration period and the empire of Charlemagne. In the narrative Islam is presented as the opposite of the social and political developments that Hegel imagines taking place in early medieval Europe. Still, Islam is regarded as important until approximately the ninth century; by the Ottoman period it "sank into the grossest vice. . . . At present, driven back into its Asiatic and African quarters, and tolerated only in one corner of Europe through the jealousy of Christian Powers, Islam has long vanished from the stage of history at large, and has retreated into Oriental ease and repose."³³

The discussions of Byzantium and Islam precede and follow Hegel's introduction to Part IV, the Germanic World, and its first chapter on the Barbarian Migrations; and they function in that context as the antithesis of the rise of the German spirit. Against Byzantium, even more than Islam, Hegel hurls the full force of Orientalist prejudice. Eastern Christianity "had fallen into the hands of the dregs of the population—the lawless mob. Popular license on the one side and courtly baseness on the other side, take refuge under the sanctity of religion, and degrade the latter to a disgusting object."³⁴ The Byzantine Empire itself

presents a disgusting picture of imbecility; wretched, nay, insane passions, stifle the growth of all that is noble in thoughts, deeds and persons. Rebellion on the part of generals, depositions of the Emperors by their means or through the intrigues of the courtiers, assassination or poisoning of the Emperors by their own wives and sons, women surrendering themselves to lusts and abominations of all kinds—such are the scenes which History here brings before us; till at last—about the middle of the fifteenth century (A.D. 1453)—the rotten edifice of the Eastern Empire crumbled in pieces before the might of the vigorous Turks.³⁵

Eventually those same Turks, as we just read, also decline into sloth and turpitude.

In the century of Freud, it is tempting to interpret all of the above as the rantings of an elderly man, projecting onto a safely distant Other his deepest fears: lawless mobs, insanity, uncontrollable passion, murderous wives and sons, and lustful women. But one does not have to resort to biographical supposition, because these attitudes had enjoyed broad currency from at least the eighteenth century. These are the qualities generally associated with oriental civilizations, peoples, and especially rulers—in this context, despots. Thus, they are less the projections of particular authors (although there is still room for personal enthusiasms in the cataloguing of vices) and more the manifestation of a process by which Europeans developed their own cultural identities and political systems, a matter recently surveyed by Patricia Springborg for earlier centuries.³⁶ In regard to the Ottomans, in particular, that process began during the sixteenth century and can be followed in fascinating detail from Venetian ambassadorial reports, studied by Lucette Valensi.³⁷

To pursue these issues further is not possible in the present paper. Thus, I must be content to assert, instead of demonstrate, that they are relevant to the European construction of Byzantium and its art. In ways and for reasons that are still not entirely clear, Byzantium and Ottoman Turkey were conflated in European imaginations during a crucial and formative period when history as we know it came into being. On the one hand Byzantium and Islam are seen as relevant chapters in the rise of the West; on the other hand they function as foils for that history and thus must be isolated from the principal story in the ways that we have reviewed. When general histories of art come to be written later in the nineteenth century, they adopt the prevailing modes of temporal and spatial rhetoric, as well as general historical patterns. Hegel endorsed such histories, including the history of art, terming them fragmentary but capable of leading to a deeper understanding of a nation and its all important guiding Spirit. “In our time,” he wrote, “this form of the history of ideas has been more developed and brought into notice.”³⁸

In sum, the alterity of Byzantine art and the denial of its coevalness with Western medieval art have been features of general histories of art for 150 years and resemble the earlier ordering of universal history professed by Hegel. Even the titles of Hegel’s subheadings are the same as (the Ancient World) or related to (the Modern and Non-European Worlds) section titles in Janson or Gardner. Such titles become standard in *Weltgeschichte*, regardless of their era. Like Hegel, Janson and Gardner divide Byzantium and Islam between antiquity and the Middle Ages. Finally, the characterization of Byzantium in both surveys displays more than a slight trace of Orientalism. Janson’s reference to the senility of Byzantium is the most embarrassing in this respect. While Janson credits this judgment to an unidentified historian (Gibbon?), it was the late twentieth-century art historian who chose to repeat it without criticism and thus to make it his own. Janson’s assessment of Byzantine art, appropriated and awkwardly rewritten, surfaces again in current editions of Gardner. The

notion that Byzantine art is ancient, not medieval and thus need not be taken seriously by students of Western medieval art is thereby inculcated at the most basic level of art historical education. This assessment continues to be professed in other surveys. See, for example, yet another volume from Prentice-Hall and Harry N. Abrams, *Architecture from Prehistory to Post-Modernism* by Marvin Trachtenberg and Isabelle Hyman.³⁹

Again and again, Byzantine art is introduced in order to say something not about the visual culture of particular people and institutions living in the Eastern Mediterranean from the fourth to the fifteenth century, but to define by contrast Western European art of the Middle Ages and therefore Western Europeans and Americans of the current age. But no culture is pure, either in the Middle Ages or the present, and the act of constructing a culture as a coherent unified entity is both historically distorting and ideologically motivated to a degree greater than usual and in ways seldom acknowledged. The result of art history’s temporal constructions is to create categories and differences and thus from the outset to frustrate attempts to draw closer to many of the phenomena studied. Even Byzantinists participate in these rhetorical strategies, when they write about Byzantine art in splendid, self-validating isolation, when they compare it to other monolithic entities, such as Islam or the West, much less when they acquiesce to the traditional location of Byzantium within general history or endorse Orientalist constructions and metaphors.⁴⁰

A less divisive approach to a medieval art set in a larger frame might yield more interesting perspectives on the artistic cultures of the many regions of Western, Central, and Eastern Europe and the Christian and Muslim lands of the Levant. Viewing the Self from the Other and vice-versa illuminates both and the process of categorization itself. Artistic cultures can be useful in this regard. Because of their empirical basis, they easily transcend our ethnocentric narratives; hence our frequent unease with surveys of all sorts; for much has to be left out or distorted to fit the proposed thesis. What if issues in medieval art were pursued beyond our traditional disciplinary subcategories of artistic medium, chronology, or geography? What if we blurred boundaries created by post-medieval nationalisms and thus surveyed, as some already have, the means, purpose, and intentions of devotional images, ecclesiastical rituals and associated arts, the processional life of urban spaces, the social exchange of luxury objects, the lighting as well as the decorating of churches, the external embellishment of churches or lack thereof, containers for the sacred, the orality of texts and images, the historical reception of all forms and sites of medieval art, the representation of social differences, the economic status of artists/artisans, the visual as mediated access to the holy, the social functions of visual representation, or the act of seeing itself? Our world is dramatically different from the Berlin of Hegel, Kugler, or Schnaase—so is Berlin for that matter. Shouldn’t we have a different art history?

NOTES

- * A version of this paper, focused on the organization of survey books, was presented in a session chaired by Annabel Wharton at the annual meeting of the College Art Association in 1992. As I finished this essay, the *Art Journal*, LIV (Fall, 1995) appeared, an important fascicle devoted to the related issues of the art history survey course. In particular, see the article of Mitchell Schwarzer, "Origins of the Art History Survey Text," 24–29, which also discusses the handbook tradition in Germany.
1. Karl Marx, as quoted in Johannes Fabian, *Time and the Other, How Anthropology Makes its Object* (New York, 1983), 143.
2. "Of Dogs Alive, Birds Dead, and Time to Tell the Story," *Chronotypes, The Construction of Time*, edited by John Bender and David E. Wellbery (Stanford, 1991), 197. This article is a sequel to Fabian's major study, *Time and the Other*.
3. See the excellent review by A. Rifkin, "Marx's Clarkism," *Art History*, VIII (1985), 488–95; and, most recently, Keith Moxey, "Motivating History," *Art Bulletin*, LXXVII (1995), 398–99.
4. An older accounting of the book is Marcel Franciscono, "History, Textbooks, and Art: Reflections on a Half Century of Helen Gardner's *Art Through the Ages*," *Critical Inquiry*, IV (Winter 1977), 285–97.
5. The subsections chosen are listed below. According to the editor, Sumner McK. Crosby, this re-organization of the contents presents "the arts of different periods and countries in a more normal order" and provides "a clear and coherent chronological account of the history of art throughout the world" (p. xi).
6. *Orientalism* (New York, 1978).
7. The article of Wijdan Ali, "The Status of Islamic Art in the Twentieth Century," *Muqarnas*, IX (1992), 186–88, describes briefly but poignantly how artistic practice in predominantly Muslim countries was marginalized by the cultural ascendancy of the West and by actual colonialism and how today it is searching for new identities.
8. The latter divides Byzantine art into the, by now, commonplace Early, Middle and Late phases. These then are introduced where chronologically appropriate. Thus, for once Middle Byzantine art (ch. VI) follows the Carolingian Renaissance (ch. V). Yet while there is a separate chapter on Late Byzantine art (ch. XI), it strangely has been placed between Romanesque (ch. X) and Gothic art (ch. XII). A second praiseworthy feature of Zarnecki's volume, now unfortunately out of print, is his inclusion of Armenian and Georgian art. Both cultures, however, are appended to the Middle Byzantine chapter, even if some of the material, the work of T'oros Roslin, for example, might more logically be discussed with Late Byzantine art. Thus Zarnecki ironically puts T'oros Roslin earlier than he belongs within the larger category of Byzantine art, which itself, as I am explaining, is usually positioned earlier than its historical due. Thus, Armenia is to Byzantium as Byzantium is to Western Europe, i.e., the Oriental's Oriental.
9. E.g., *Medieval Art from the Peace of the Church to the Eve of the Renaissance*, 2nd ed. (London, 1912), influential especially in England, by W. R. Lethaby, a follower of William Morris, co-author of a book on the church of Hagia Sophia, and professor at the Royal College of Art. Lethaby discusses "Constantinople, Ravenna, and the Age of Justinian" (ch. 2), "Later Byzantine, and Romanesque Origins" (ch. 3), leading to "Romanesque Art in Italy" (ch. 4) and further chapters on Western medieval art.
10. That research would require access to textbooks used in those countries, precisely the sort of material not normally collected by American libraries.
11. *Time and the Other*, 32.
12. Janson, *History of Art*, 1st ed., 158.
13. See the review by Edwin C. Rae in the *Art Journal*, XXIII (1963), 77–78.
14. Fifth edition (New York, 1970), 234.
15. A brief but excellent recent discussion of Kugler with further references is to be found in Peter Paret, *Art as History, Episodes on the Culture and Politics of Nineteenth-Century Germany* (Princeton, 1988), 16–19. The chapter on Kugler in Wilhelm Waetzoldt, *Deutsche Kunsthistoriker*, II (reprinted Berlin, 1986), 143–71, is fundamental and the basis for the superficial remarks about him in Udo Kultermann, *The History of Art History* (New York [?], 1993), 89–91.
16. *The Letters of Jacob Burckhardt*, edited by Alexander Dru (New York, 1955), 56.
17. *Ibid.*, 68.
18. The art critic and journalist J. A. Crowe (1825–96) and the painter Sir Charles L. Eastlake (1793–1865) were some of those associated with the English editions. The latest is dated 1900. Kugler also wrote a multi-volume history of architecture later in his life: *Geschichte der Baukunst* (Stuttgart, 1856–73); the last two volumes were completed or written by Jacob Burckhardt and Wilhelm Lübke.
19. Kugler, *Handbuch der Kunstgeschichte*, xi–xiv. On Müller's work, see Alex Potts' remarks in his excellent book, *Flesh and the Ideal, Winckelman and the Origins of Art History* (New Haven, 1994), 33.
20. Kugler, *Handbuch der Kunstgeschichte*, x.
21. *Ibid.*, 345. Ferdinand von Quast, *Die alt-christlichen Kirchen von Ravenna vom fünften bis zum neunten Jahrhundert* (Berlin, 1842).
22. Wilhelm Salzenberg, *Alt-Christliche Baudenkmale von Constantinopel vom V. bis XII. Jahrhundert* (Berlin, 1854).
23. *Beiblatt zum Deutschen Kunstblatt*, VI (1855), 13–16, 25–27.
24. I have had access to the second edition, Düsseldorf 1866–79. Schnaase is discussed by Wilhelm Waetzoldt, *Deutsche Kunsthistoriker* II (reprinted Berlin, 1986), 70–92; and by Michael Podro, *The Critical Historians of Art* (New Haven, 1982), 31–43.
25. Podro, *The Critical Historians*, 31–43. On Hotho, see Waetzoldt, *Deutsche Kunsthistoriker*, 53–70; and Kultermann, *History of Art History*, 92–93.
26. "Beschreibung und Geschichte der Schlosskirche zu Quedlinburg" (Berlin, 1838), not available to me. It is cited in the biography of Kugler by Friedrich Eggers in the third edition of *Franz Kugler's Handbuch der Geschichte der Malerei seit Constantin dem Grossen* (Leipzig, 1867), 15.
27. "Kugler sets to work more conscientiously than any of [the other scholars of this architecture], compares mouldings, cornices and pilasters carefully, and then, after establishing the date where manuscript evidence is available, draws his conclusions with regard to the others," *Letters*, 50.
28. Podro, *The Critical Historians*, xx.
29. First edition, Stuttgart, 1860. I have used the sixth edition, Stuttgart, 1873.
30. The series is the continuation of an earlier one, the first edition of which is Stuttgart, 1855. I have used the sixth edition of the *Handbuch*, Leipzig, 1902. The second volume, *Das Mittelalter*, has three sections, "Altchristliche Kunst," "Die Scheidung der orientalischen und der occidentalen Kunst" in which Byzantine and Islamic art are treated, and a final section with a title that introduces the subject for another paper, "Die Entwicklung nationaler Kunstweisen."

31. Podro, *The Critical Historians*, 17–30; E. H. Gombrich, “‘The Father of Art History’, A Reading of the *Lectures on Aesthetics* of G. W. F. Hegel (1770–1831),” in *Tributes, Interpreters of our Cultural Tradition* (Ithaca, 1984), 51–69, 254–55.
32. *Vorlesungen über die Philosophie der Geschichte* (Frankfurt, 1970), 561–62. The English is *The Philosophy of History*, translated by J. Sibree (New York, 1956).
33. *Philosophy of History*, 360.
34. *Ibid.*, 338–39.
35. *Ibid.*, 340.
36. *Western Republicanism and the Oriental Prince* (Austin, 1992).
37. “The Making of a Political Paradigm: The Ottoman State and Oriental Despotism,” *The Transmission of Culture in Early Modern Europe*, edited by Anthony Grafton and Ann Blair (Philadelphia, 1990), 173–203. The article is a sequel to the book: *Venise et la Sublime Porte* (Paris, 1987).
38. *Philosophy of History*, 8.
39. (Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey, 1986), 182–83. I might add that the subdivisions of this book (The Ancient World, The Middle Ages, The Renaissance and the Baroque, and The Modern World) are virtually the same as Janson’s. On the book’s treatment of Byzantine architecture, see the article by Robert Ousterhout in this issue.
40. An example of the last, in my opinion, is the adoption of the Byzantine poems of Yeats as epigraphs to books about Byzantium. To cite one example among many, see the introduction to Otto von Simpson’s recently re-issued book, *Sacred Fortress, Byzantine Art and Statecraft in Ravenna* (Princeton, 1987), vii–viii. While I readily agree that “Sailing to Byzantium” is a great poem, by this point in my essay its title alone ought to be suspect.

APPENDIX

ART HISTORY SURVEY BOOKS CONSULTED

Books

- Bazin, Germain, *A History of Art from Prehistoric Times to the Present* (Boston, 1959).
- Blum, André S., *A Short History of Art* (London, 1926).
- Calkins, Robert G., *Monuments of Medieval Art* (New York, 1979).
- Cheney, Sheldon, *A World History of Art* (New York, 1947).
- Cornell, Sarah, *Art, A History of Changing Style* (Englewood Cliffs, N.J., 1983).
- Cotterill, H. B., *A History of Art* (New York, 1922).
- Gardner, Helen, *Art Through the Ages, An Introduction to its History and Significance*, 1st ed. (New York, 1926); 2nd ed., 1936; *Art Through the Ages*, 3rd ed. (New York, 1948); *Helen Gardner's Art Through the Ages*, 4th ed., "revised under the editorship of Sumner McK. Crosby by the Department of the History of Art Yale University" (New York, 1959); *Gardner's Art Through the Ages*, 5th ed., "revised by Horst de la Croix and Richard G. Tansey" (New York, 1970); 6th ed., 1975; 8th ed. (San Diego, 1986); 9th ed. with Diane Kirkpatrick, 1991.
- Gombrich, E. H., *The Story of Art*, 1st ed. (New York, 1950).
- Hartt, Frederick, *Art, A History of Painting, Sculpture, Architecture*, 1st ed. (Englewood Cliffs, N.J., 1976); 2nd ed., 1985; 3rd ed. 1989.
- Hautecoeur, Louis, *Histoire de l'art* (Paris, 1959).
- Honour, Hugh and John Fleming, *The Visual Arts: A History*, 1st ed. (Englewood Cliffs, N.J., 1982); 2nd ed., 1986; 4th ed. (New York, 1995).
- Janson, H. W. with Dora Jane Janson, *History of Art*, 1st ed. (Englewood Cliffs, N.J., 1962); 2nd ed., 1977; 3rd ed., "revised and expanded by Anthony F. Janson," 1986; 4th ed., 1991; 5th ed., 1995.
- Kugler, Franz, *Handbuch der Kunstgeschichte* (Stuttgart, 1842); 2nd ed., with Jacob Burckhardt, 1848.
- Pijoan, Joseph, *History of Art* (New York, 1927).
- Snyder, James, *Medieval Art* (Englewood Cliffs, N.J., 1988).
- Springer, Anton, *Handbuch der Kunstgeschichte*, 6th ed. (Leipzig, 1902).
- Stokstad, Marilyn, *Art History I* (New York, 1995).
- Upjohn, Everard M., Paul S. Wingert, Jane Gaston Mahler, *History of World Art* (New York, 1949).
- Zarnecki, George, *Art of the Medieval World* (Englewood Cliffs, N.J., 1975).

Organization

Byzantine Art As Ancient

Gardner V, VI, VIII, IX
Janson
Cornell

Byzantine Art As Medieval

Kugler
Schnaase
Lübke
Gardner II, III, IV
Hautecoeur
Hartt

Byzantine Art followed by Islamic Art

Kugler
Schnaase
Lübke
Springer
Cotterill
Blum
Gardner, I, II, III
Cheney
Gombrich
Janson
Hartt
Honour/Fleming
Stokstad

Byzantine Art Followed by Early Medieval Art

Pijoan
Upjohn
Gardner IV
Bazin
Cornell
Calkins
Snyder

Other Arrangements

Woermann
Hautecoeur
Honour/Fleming
Zarnecki