

Aspects of the Critical Reception and Intellectual History of Baxandall's Concept of the Period Eye

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Art historians have often examined the critical reception of works of art, yet few have evaluated art history's reactions to some of its own products. This paper examines aspects of the intellectual history and scholarly responses to Michael Baxandall's *Painting and Experience in Fifteenth-Century Italy* (1972) as a case through which to reveal some relevant tensions in art history during the early 1970s, a moment when the discipline was exposed to powerful stresses and a time, moreover, quite formative of our present way of doing things. The reasons for choosing *Painting and Experience* – and more particularly Baxandall's concept of the Period Eye – include the fact that the book is, even after twenty-five years, an art-historical bestseller, having gone through numerous printings and having been translated into several languages, most recently into Chinese. It is thus an ambassador of western art history. From a historiographic perspective, more telling than the book's broad and enduring popularity is that initial responses to it were particularly varied and strong, and analysis of these reactions generate maps of the discipline around 1972. Today it is easy to forget that this well-liked book drew fire from disparate quarters in art history, condemnations symptomatic of growing pains resulting from such things as the pressures of radical revisionism and accelerating intellectual cross-fertilization. What one gets from looking at some of the responses is an idea of what was at stake for certain individuals in specific institutions. The purpose of this essay is twofold: to examine aspects of the intellectual heritage of the central theoretical concept of *Painting and Experience*, the Period Eye, and to trace some of the various academic responses to the concept, notably the art-historical and – broadly defined here – the anthropological.

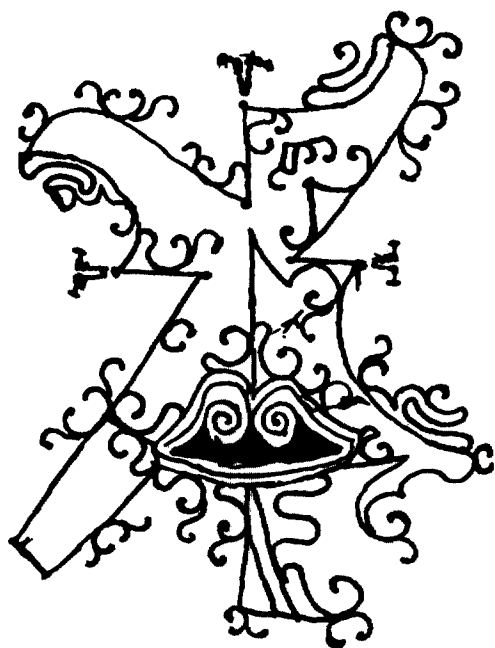
Painting and Experience elicited sympathetic attention from Clifford Geertz and, later, Pierre Bourdieu. In 1976 Geertz gave a laudatory synopsis of the Period Eye chapter of *Painting and Experience* in an article called 'Art as A Cultural System',¹ while in 1981 Bourdieu printed a French translation of the Period Eye chapter of *Painting and Experience*, which he prefaced with an essay entitled 'Pour une sociologie de la perception'.² Both were approving evaluations representing an exceptional reversal of intellectual capital during a period when art historians were much more apt to be looking outside their discipline for intellectual stimulation and few disciplines, certainly, were looking to art history for exemplary models. Within art history, however, Baxandall's book was

regarded by some with suspicion. For émigrés like E.H. Gombrich, the Period Eye seemed like a slippery new version of *Zeitgeist*, a notion which Gombrich abhorred, while T.J. Clark and others publishing in places like the Marxist *Histoire et critique des arts* attacked the book for not dealing with issues of class, ideology and power.³

Geertz's aforementioned 'Art as a Cultural System' took Baxandall's concept of the Period Eye as paradigmatic of a rigorous and deep anthropological analysis of a society's visual culture. For Geertz, *Painting and Experience* represented an advance in the analysis of visual culture's embeddedness in the myriad activities of a society.⁴ Geertz saw the book as a work which, more than many other studies attempting to link the styles of works of art with society or culture, meticulously articulated the mediating elements out of which such transformations were made. Earlier attempts at analysing the relationships between styles of art and other structures of a society had left these vectors of dissemination largely undetermined, contenting themselves with the identification of homologies without closely examining the mechanisms, social and institutional, which regenerated the forms of something like family structure to town planning, from styles of writing to painting, and so on.

One such earlier structuralist model is represented by 'A Native Community and its Life-Style', a chapter of Lévi-Strauss's *Tristes Tropiques*,⁵ where Lévi-Strauss attempted to ascertain the significance of the styles of the facial tattoos of the Caduveo natives (plate 1). He noted their formal attributes and the organizations of Caduveo society and concluded that Caduveo culture was generally characterized by a 'double opposition', which consisted of an '... opposition between a ternary and a binary organization, one symmetrical, the other asymmetrical'. The motif of the double opposition – graphically represented in the tattoos by crossing lines which double-back in spirals – was also evident in the hieratic physical and social organization of the villages as well as the odd social practice of arranging marriage with enemies rather than betray their caste.⁶ Lévi-Strauss attempted to identify the salient features of this system and demonstrate its symmetry throughout the culture. But he could not articulate truly definitive mediations or practices transmitting the structures of the facial tattoos, so that at the conclusion of his essay Lévi-Strauss found it necessary to hypothesize that the designs were expressions which unconsciously represented resolutions of repressed societal dialectics.⁷ His vocabulary of undefinable linkages is telling: the art of the facial tattoo in Caduveo art is a 'remedy' (*remède*)⁸ which resolves contradictions which 'haunt' (*troubler*) the Caduveo; it had 'mysterious appeal' (*mysterieuse seduction*); it is a 'phantasm' (*phantasme*) of a society; the tattoos are the traces of a 'collective dream' (*rêver* and *songe*).⁹ Even though a complex homology was identified and ingeniously articulated, the social practices or activities which facilitated the transferences were, for Lévi-Strauss, mysterious and intangible.

As an anthropologist interested in refining this early structuralist model, Geertz saw in Baxandall's concept of the Period Eye a sophisticated account of the practices by which organizational and stylistic aspects of a society might be projected or read, consumed and reproduced, in another part of that same society. Homologies or isomorphisms were no longer enough for the structural anthropology of the mid-1970s. As Geertz notes:



1 From Claude Lévi-Strauss, *Tristes Tropiques*, fig. 20. Face painting of the Caduveo consisting of two opposed spirals which are represented – and are applied on – the upper lip.

A theory of art is thus at the same time a theory of culture, not an autonomous enterprise. And if it is a semiotic theory of art it must trace the life of signs in society, not in an invented world of dualities, transformations, parallels, and equivalences.¹⁰

The Period Eye was, however, neither derived from nor meant to address problems in structuralist anthropology; more relevant for Baxandall were the socio-psychological theories of Melville Herskovits and his followers.¹¹ Herskovits was much involved in that problematic issue with which Baxandall grapples in his prolegomena to his Period Eye section in *Painting and Experience*: the balance of the constitutive roles of society and the individual. Herskovits was interested in wedding aspects of psychology with a structuralist anthropology, a concern best summarized by Herskovits's followers:

If culture includes the complex of accumulated behaviour patterns of a people, and if an individual's habits constitute the residues of his experience, then the study of culture and the study of habit-development are necessarily related. ... We do not refer here to the casual half-truth that psychology is concerned with the individual, while anthropology is concerned with groups. Rather we have in mind the psychologist's emphasis on process and the anthropologist's concern for pattern and structure.¹²

We can recognize the correspondence in these objectives and the Period Eye. For Herskovits, 'visual experience is *mediated* by indirect inference systems', while the 'phenomenal absolutists'¹³ (Gombrich in *Art and Illusion* might have been so

classified) accept the assumption that the visual world presents itself, as reality, to human perception.¹⁴ The emphasis here is on the nature and scope of enculturation in perception.¹⁵ Though the symmetry between this position and Baxandall's is clear, Baxandall departs from these notions by directing his attentions to those inculcative social practices constitutive of cultural difference.

To illustrate Baxandall's shift in emphasis we might consider a model which the followers of Herskovits accepted as viable, but which Baxandall thought too rigid. The 'carpentered-world hypothesis' refers to the tendency of people living in highly 'carpentered' (that is to say urban) environments to 'see' right angles:

For people living in carpentered worlds, the tendency to interpret obtuse and acute angles in retinal images as deriving from rectangular objects is likely to be so pervasively reinforced that it becomes automatic and unconscious. . . . For those living where man-made structures are constructed without carpenters' tools . . . the inference habit of interpreting acute and obtuse angles as right angles extended in space would not be learned, at least not as well.¹⁶

Instead of simply describing an environment as an entity programming and patterning the passive beholder to certain cues, as in the carpentered world hypothesis, Baxandall's emphasis is on particular social activities which engage and train the individual's cognitive apparatuses. The difference is subtle; Baxandall's individual in culture is seen as the site of a compilation of socially relevant and active skills rather than the programmed automaton implied by the carpentered-world hypothesis. Baxandall's contribution is located in that zone of mediation found in the practice of everyday life rather than on the spectral poles of the practices' manifestations.¹⁷ Geertz's enthusiastic response to Baxandall's concept of the Period Eye lay very much in the recognition of the anthropological antecedents, which had also formed Geertz's own anthropological perspective on art, a perspective that analysed aspects of the forms of art with the aim of finding out something about the culture in which the art objects travelled.

In the first chapter of *Painting and Experience*, 'The Conditions of Trade', Baxandall recruits a series of geological terms to describe the relationship between society and paintings. A 'painting is the *deposit* of a social relationship';¹⁸ the 'economic practices of the period are quite *concretely* embodied in the paintings';¹⁹ '... paintings are among other things *fossils* of economic life' (my italics).²⁰ The language graphically insists on a solid – virtually petrified – directly imprinting connection between a culture's economic practices and paintings. The lapidary confidence conveyed by the geological rhetoric comes from the fact that several mediating documents, artists' contacts, survive from this period, and these present the historian with a tangible and more or less clearly functioning arbitration between two cultural agents: the artist and the paying customer. The artist is executor, to recognizable extents, of a degree of fairly definable instructions of which some 'concrete' evidence exists. Baxandall's elaboration of the structures of the art market, the social relationships between artist and client, the intermediary functions of guilds, workshop practice and the cultural valuations of certain materials, such as gold and high grades of blue, presents

one with a number of fairly determinable kinds of social things which are 'concretely embodied' in paintings, partially because they operate and circulate so closely to the orbit of the production of painting itself. The last section of the first chapter (subtitled 'Perception of Skill') moves the discussion into far more indeterminate zones, farther away from practices surrounding the production of painting and into the less tangible realm of the beholder's subjectivity and tastes. There is a shift from more to less distinct purchasable pictorial elements; from things like numbers of figures, qualities of pigments, amounts of gold, and dimensions of works, to the far more elusive and indefinable commodity of skill.

The concept of the Period Eye, developed in the second chapter of *Painting and Experience* (yet taking up half the book), is Baxandall's most interesting and controversial notion, and it worried Gombrich and other scholars for whom the Period Eye invoked the *Zeitgeist* and all its ominous associations.²¹ The Period Eye seemed to argue that the Italian Quattrocento was a unified psychological entity whose articulated, empirical entirety would define the explicit parameters of an historical period. Gombrich had uncategorically stated his views on such tendencies in *Art and Illusion*:

I have discussed elsewhere why this reliance of art history on mythological explanations seems so dangerous to me. By inculcating the habit of talking in terms of collectives, of 'mankind', 'races', or 'ages', it weakens resistance to totalitarian habits of mind. I do not make these accusations lightly.²²

Indeed, it was partly against just such explanations of various artistic styles that Gombrich had undertaken *Art and Illusion*. Gombrich's discussion of the 'Beholder's Share' in *Art and Illusion*²³ used what were then contemporary theories in experimental psychology to examine how the beholder projects when seeing.²⁴ In Gombrich's discussion, tradition and conventional codes or schemata are two fundamental factors determinative of the psychology of vision, and he examines the degree to which the viewer projects in concert with or by using the schemata.²⁵ Changes in styles are generated by technical innovations or subtle alterations of the conventional schemata, but the way in which Gombrich discusses these innovations is by observing artistic production as a practice sealed off from other social activities. It is, to use the title of another of his books, a 'story of art', and *only* of art, which radically dehistoricizes artistic transformations by locating them in an isolated and specialized practice.²⁶ One of the most distinguishing features of Baxandall's *Painting and Experience* is how it integrates painting by embedding it in a much greater number and broader range of social practices, activities removed from the world of visual art, though not removed from the world of visibility. But in doing so Baxandall had to confront the labyrinth of problems his project generated: the individual versus the collective, the innate versus the conditioned, and so on. It is worthwhile to examine some of his strategies.

After establishing the physiological universality of human ocular equipment at the beginning of the chapter on the Period Eye, Baxandall notes that this is where commonality between people ends, and the way each brain interprets or decodes impulses is variable.

It is at this point that the human equipment for visual perception ceases to be uniform, from one man to the next. The brain must interpret the raw data about light and colour that it receives from the cones and it does this with *innate skills and those developed out of experience*. It tries out relevant items from its stock of patterns, categories, habits of inference and analogy – ‘round’, ‘grey’, ‘smooth’, ‘pebble’ would be verbalized examples – and these lend the fantastically complex ocular data a *structure and therefore a meaning*.²⁷ [my italics]

Two elements of this passage have been emphasized. What is meant by *innate skills*? Is Baxandall talking about something strictly psychological (universal) or behavioural (conditioned)? The difficulty with the use of this term is that it suggests something *inherent* and *inborn* in the individual's mind, since he clearly states: ‘... innate skills *and* those developed out of experience’. The ‘and’ suggests that there are skills of two different orders here. There may be an attempt to map an escape from the prison-house of visual culture, but these ‘innate’ skills are ultimately too elusive to articulate and are therefore cast aside while those ‘developed out of experience’ are the ones ultimately elaborated.

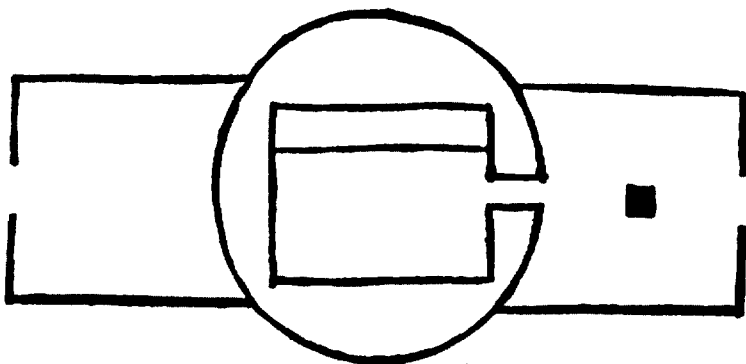
The second emphasis on structure and meaning, however, is more manageable, and it is this structure and how it might lend meaning which is really what Baxandall is undertaking. Throughout, we note the tension developing between agency and collectivity, between individuality and society, and between intention and rote imitation. Baxandall invokes the individual:

But each of us has had different experience, and so each of us has slightly different knowledge and skills of interpretation. Everyone, in fact, processes data for the eye with different equipment ... yet in some circumstances the otherwise marginal differences between one man and another can take on a curious prominence.²⁸

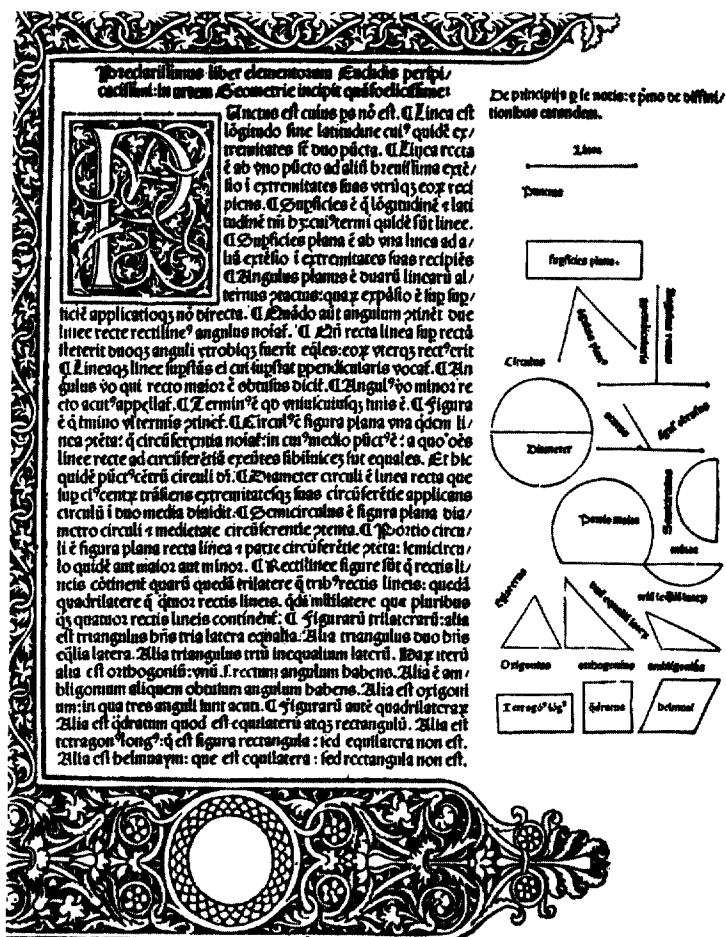
Then he shifts away from the individual, subtly invoking a group but concealing the shift by posing the problem as hypothetical:

Suppose the man looking at plate 13 [my plate 2] is well equipped with patterns and concepts of shape like those in plate 14 [my plate 3] and is practised in using them. (In fact, most of the people plate 13 [2] was originally made for were proud of being so equipped.)²⁹ [my italics]

Despite the emphasis on differences at the level of the individual, Baxandall has worked himself into a quandary, because while evoking difference at the level of the individual, he is working against the very thing he wants to posit here, and that is that there are differences between *cultures* and their mental ‘equipment’. When he gets to the point of saying: ‘Suppose a man is shown the configuration in plate 13 ...’, he really – as is made clearer a page or two later – means to say: ‘Suppose a man from a *certain culture* is shown the configuration in plate 13 ...’ (my plate 2). The assumption is that a significant degree of intellectual and hence perceptual homogeneity exists among a group who share a culture or subculture,



2 From Michael Baxandall, *Painting and Experience*, p. 30, fig. 13. Santo Brasca, *Itinerario ... di Gerusalemme* (Milan, 1481), p. 58 v, woodcut.



3 From Michael Baxandall, *Painting and Experience*, p. 31, fig. 14. Euclid. *Elementa geometriæ* (Venice, 1482) p. 2r, woodcut.

and that the skills and habits of that group operate in the unconscious as a sort of culturally regulated instinct.

Baxandall introduces his Period Eye chapter with the diagram reproduced here as plate 2.³⁰ He uses the diagram to talk about his version of cognitive style (a synonym for the Period Eye which he derived from anthropology and experimental psychology³¹) and points out that how one understands, what one *sees*, in this diagram is very much dependent upon 'the interpreting skills one happens to possess, the categories, the model patterns and the habits of inference and analogy ...'.³² Baxandall posits that if a viewer is 'well equipped with patterns and concepts of shape like those at left [plate 3] and is practised in using them', they will tend to understand the diagram as a circle superimposed on a rectangle rather than, say, 'just as a round thing with projections'.³³ The tendentiousness of a certain way of seeing involved here is determined by experiences which elicit stock responses and valuations. Culture and social experiences programme the individual.

So here are three variable and indeed *culturally relative* kinds of things the mind brings to interpreting the pattern of light plate 13 [2] casts on the retina: a stock of patterns, categories and methods of inference; training in a range of representational conventions; and experience, drawn from the environment, in what are plausible ways of visualizing what we have incomplete information about.³⁴ [my italics]

And later, an even more direct statement of his cultural relativism:

... some of the *mental equipment* a man orders his visual experience with is variable, and much of this variable equipment is culturally relative, in the sense of being determined by the society which has influenced his experience.³⁵ [my italics]

The use of the term 'mental equipment' echoes Panofsky in his *Gothic Architecture and Scholasticism*, where Panofsky desired to articulate

a connection between Gothic architecture and scholasticism which is more concrete than a mere 'parallelism' and yet more general than those individual ... 'influences' which are inevitably exerted on painters, sculptors *etc* ... What I have in mind is a genuine cause-and-effect relation ... It comes about by the spreading of what may be called, for want of a better term, a *mental habit* ... Such mental habits are at work in all and every civilization.³⁶

With these passages we are very much tempted to take note of Panofsky's 'mental habits' or *habitus*, and consider as well Lucien Febvre's *outillage mental*, or 'mental equipment'. To compare both of these to Baxandall, here is Febvre's comment in his book on Rabelais of 1942:

Each civilization has its own mental tools; and furthermore, each epoch of a given civilization, each bit of progress, be it in techniques or sciences –

requires a renewed set of tools, more highly developed for certain needs, less for others.³⁷

And Panofsky, on the structures of the scholastic *Summa*:

It was this technique of reconciling the seemingly irreconcilable, perfected into a fine art through the assimilation of Aristotelian logic, that determined the form of academic instruction . . . Needless to say, this principle was bound to form a mental habit no less decisive and all-embracing than that of unconditional clarification.³⁸

What unfolds in the Period Eye chapter of *Painting and Experience* are uniquely detailed considerations of several examples of socio-visual experiences which help form this mental equipment, and this is something which Febvre, at least, does not do in great detail. Roger Chartier, for example, finds Panofsky more sophisticated:

Febvre's notion of mental equipment differs in a number of ways from the idea that Panofsky developed at about the same time. First of all, the very word equipment (*outillage*) and the expression *outils mentaux* that Febvre sometimes used – which suggest the quasi-objective existence of a panoply of intellectual instruments (words, symbols, concepts, and so on) at the disposition of thought – contrast with Panofsky's manner of defining the mental habit, the group of unconscious schemes, of internalized principles that give their unity to an epoch's way of thinking no matter what the object of thought might be.³⁹

Further, and this bears on our evaluation of Baxandall's method, Chartier also believes Panofsky's concept turns out to be more 'social' than Febvre. For Panofsky,

. . . mental habits point back to their conditions of inculcation, thus to be the 'habit forming forces' – for example, the institution of the school in its different modalities. From thence it is possible to understand, in the unity of their production, the homologies of structure existing among different intellectual 'products' of a given milieu and also to conceptualize the variations among groups as differences in systems of perception and appreciation, themselves issuing from differences in modes of education or formation.⁴⁰

The above could easily be a description of Baxandall in *Painting and Experience* (or, for that matter, *Giotto and the Orators*) and it is in his elaboration of the Period Eye that Baxandall grounds the mental habits in the inculcation of social practices generated by individuals' relationship with their culture's institutions. The scope of Baxandall's inculcative factors is simply much broader than in Panofsky, and therefore provides us with a more detailed and, ultimately, a more convincing picture.

Because of this, however, there come moments in the book where Baxandall worries that his net is cast, sociologically, too widely, so he attempts to tighten the circle:

One is not talking about all fifteenth-century people, but about those whose response to works of art was important to the artist – the patronizing classes, one might say. In effect this means a rather small proportion of the population: merchantile men, acting as members of confraternities or as individuals, princes and their courtiers, the senior members of religious houses.⁴¹

It is interesting to observe the care and eloquence with which Baxandall negotiates the snares inherent in the approach. He maintains a precarious balance by implicitly conceding, at key stages in the development of his argument, that a society may be thought of as groups with numerous subgroups or subcommunities, and that one may articulate ever more specialized and particularized groups until, theoretically, one arrives at the individual, unique and exceptional; embedded in, yet separate from, society. But of course a decision has to be made as to the orbit of attention, so Baxandall sets the parameters of his discussion within the group of persons – not necessarily of the same classes – who are likely to have had access to a range of ‘generally accessible styles of discrimination’.⁴² This range of shared visual experience is also a datum for the painter. As Baxandall puts it, the ‘public’s visual capacity must be his [the painters’] medium’.⁴³

Given Baxandall’s sophisticated elaboration of the Period Eye, one quite naturally asks to what ends the notion might be put, ends beyond the mere explaining of the styles of pictures. It is here where we might consider reasons why Pierre Bourdieu liked the Period Eye so much, since he, perhaps more than anyone else, appreciated the potentials of the concept. The earlier considerations of Panofsky and his concept of the *habitus*, indeed, also raises an intellectual historical bridge to Bourdieu, who adopted and reworked Panofsky’s *habitus* into a much more complex and socially resonant paradigm. In terms of articulating a theoretical framework, Bourdieu offers insights into the kinds of problems inherent in Baxandall’s elision of issues of domination and power⁴⁴ and offers several hints about how Baxandall’s analyses might be pushed into wider, more inclusive discussions.⁴⁵ A synopsis of some key concepts of Bourdieu’s will help reveal the reasons behind his warm reception of the Period Eye.

In a general sense, Bourdieu has been involved in developing a social theory of practice which has also been called ‘generative structuralism’.⁴⁶ At the core is a concern for the reproductive aspects of culture and the relative roles institutions and agents play in this propagation. Two terms are central to Bourdieu’s theory of practice: *habitus* and field (*champ*),⁴⁷ terms which Bourdieu uses generously in his introductory essay to the French translation of the Period Eye chapter mentioned previously.⁴⁸ Bourdieu’s *habitus*, though adapted from Panofsky’s use of the term, is more complex. The Bourdieuan *habitus* is a system of ‘durable, transposable dispositions, structured structures predisposed to function as structuring structures, that is, as principles which generate and organize practices and representations’.⁴⁹ As Randal Johnson notes,

The *habitus* is sometimes described as a 'feel for the game' a 'practical sense' that inclines agents to act and react in specific situations in a manner that is not always calculated and that is not simply a question of conscious obedience to rules. Rather, it is a set of dispositions which generates practices and perceptions. The *habitus* is the result of a long process of inculcation, beginning in early childhood, which becomes a 'second sense' or a second nature.⁵⁰

One can see in this a number of resonances with Baxandall, such as inclinations, dispositions and habits derived through training, experience, and formal education.⁵¹ The concept of the field (*champ*) refers to the regulatory yet dynamic set of social relations within, say, the economic or educational field. The field is tied to and defined by the institution, and thus Bourdieu's attention to how institutions operate. For Bourdieu, the institution reproduces itself through forms of education and it is here that Bourdieu's concept of 'capital' comes into play. Bourdieu accepts a materialist view of capital as goods and products, but an equally important type of capital is 'symbolic capital' which works in concert with 'cultural capital'.

Two forms of capital are particularly important in the field of cultural production. Symbolic capital refers to the degree of accumulated prestige, celebrity, consecration or honour and is founded on a dialectic of knowledge (*connaissance*) and recognition (*reconnaissance*). Cultural capital concerns forms of cultural knowledge, competences or dispositions.⁵²

If we take these notions and apply them to some of the issues raised by Baxandall in *Painting and Experience*, we are able to see how they might locate themselves more directly in questions of social domination, and, indeed, why Bourdieu found Baxandall's elaboration of the Period Eye so congenial to his own concerns. For example, a 'Bourdieuian' reading of Baxandall might conclude that one reason so many people in Florence during the fifteenth century were taught the Rule of Three and gauging volumes 'by the eye' was because Florence was a banking centre and had a lively mercantile community which served as a hub for the products of the surrounding territory. The large and complex commercial and financial institutions of Quattrocento Florence generated fields in which people who lived there were obliged to operate. It was a game they more or less had to play and the dominant classes patronized the schools which trained groups of people in the types of skills which could be directly or indirectly exploited by the dominant classes.⁵³ Skilled labour becomes part of and partakes of the social infrastructure. A specific commercial and physical environment creates the need for a labour pool with certain competencies, institutions which reproduce those skills are created, and a populous with a definite range of aptitudes and values is generated and regenerated. The Period Eye, in Bourdieu's terms, would refer to the inculcative skills reproduced in the educational institutions (including apprenticeships, both secular and religious) which perpetuated the ideas, values and morals – that is to say the ideology – of those who controlled capital.

One of the only diachronic elements that Baxandall observes – in an otherwise elegant synchronic swathe through Quattrocento Florentine visual culture – is a shift from an appreciation of gold and high grades of blue in paintings to an appreciation of skill. This is a significant adjustment in Bourdieuan terms, for it is a translation from material to symbolic capital. The shift is exemplified by the waxing cultural capital of the painter, which works in concert with the cultural capital of the patron, who is able to appreciate or 'read' the new symbolic and cultural capital of skill in the works produced. It represents a reorientation of the terms, indeed the conceptual language, by which painters and patrons spoke to each other and was a central factor in the rise of the social status of the painter during the fifteenth century. If we consider the question of Albertian perspective, using a Bourdieuan conceptual frame, we see how it might not be simply a symbolic form in Panofsky's sense but a product of symbolic goods or symbolic capital. Since the execution of this type of perspective suggests a constellation of intellectual and executive skills, both in terms of the producer and viewer's skills (Euclidean geometry, mathematical proportion, high theory), we can see perspective as a common ground upon which Quattrocento people who shared these mathematical propensities could communicate and exchange symbolic goods. What we may conclude, then, is that what Baxandall articulates in the Period Eye chapter of *Painting and Experience* is very much a logical extension of his first chapter on economic relationships, rather than just supplementary to it. The economic (material) relationship becomes one of symbolic and cultural capital. A painting is not just a material object but, indeed, is art because it is overdetermined, one could say, since it partakes, represents and reproduces cultural capital. One might even speak of a 'pictorial excess' in characterizing the multiple meanings which might be generated by such considerations.

Although I have hoped that it might serve a clarifying purpose, there is admittedly an awkwardness in trying to get at certain potentials and inferences in *Painting and Experience* through notions elaborated by Bourdieu, since it is true that by deriving his problems from very closely defined parameters (visual skills of a certain class of early fifteenth-century urban Italians) Baxandall, by a perhaps necessary tactic of exclusion, skirts a number of problems central to his approach. By focusing on microsocial practices, macrosocial elements – ideological ones, for instance – are left either only vaguely defined or suppressed altogether. Bourdieu has attempted a synthesis of these macro- and microsocial elements. These problems are acknowledged, firstly, to affirm the critical problem of interpreting Baxandall through Bourdieu (something I have done for elucidation rather than to suggest a range of Baxandall's objectives, and of course to show why Bourdieu liked the book so much) and, secondly, to lead to aspects of the critical reception of *Painting and Experience* by some Marxist art historians who pounced on this very suppression of the social element that they were most interested in, the ideological.

The relationship between Leftist art historians and Baxandall was one of mutual frustration, with the art-historical Left taking him to task for circumventing any discussion of ideology. Instead of mining the methods of Baxandall's book for potential tools very adaptable to considerations of ideology, some chose to throw the baby out with the bathwater while, in turn, Baxandall

accused the Marxist camp of being narrow and attempting to close up the objectives of the discipline, of trying to create an art history which had only one purpose.

The best-known statements defining the interests and orientations of the new social history of art were made by T.J. Clark, first in his introduction to his *Image of the People. Gustave Courbet and the Second French Republic 1848–1851*,⁵⁴ and in a London *Times Literary Supplement* article.⁵⁵ Clark, perhaps more than anyone else at the time, was responsible for setting the parameters of interest for the social history of art.⁵⁶ Firstly, he made it clear that:

... I'm not interested in the social history of art as part of a cheerful diversification of subject, taking its place alongside the other varieties – formalist, 'modernist', sub-Freudian, filmic, feminist, 'radical', all of them hot-foot in pursuit of the New. For diversification, read disintegration.⁵⁷

This passage, a little odd-sounding today, is distinctive in that it posits the pursuit of a social history of art as the only legitimate course in art-historical scholarship. The primary goal of exposing the ideological in that social history was made explicit when he stated that 'the work of art stands in a quite specific relation to ... ideological materials. Ideology is what the picture is, and what the picture is not.'⁵⁸ Clark makes clear in the *Times Literary Supplement* essay that representations are always a problem of ideological structures. He poses some fundamental questions for the new art history:

The first kind of question has to do with the relation between the work of art and its ideology ... I mean by ideologies those bodies of beliefs, images, values and techniques of representation by which social classes, in conflict with each other, attempt to 'naturalize' their particular histories.⁵⁹

The issue of ideology, then, is central to the definition of Clark's branch of the new art history, and it was to form the division between the Marxists and Baxandall, which was made explicit by Clark in 1976. It is worth quoting at length to get both the point and the tone.

Our task is made the easier, I reckon, by one current fashion in the history of art. All the books, I mean – even as good a one as Michael Baxandall's – which have Art and Experience in their titles. '*Experience*' being the code word for a kind of art history which feels the need to refer to those historical realities with which artist and patron are constantly in contact, but which dares not name those structures which mediate and determine the nature of that contact – ideology, class, the conflict of classes, the contradictions within any ideological view of the world. So that 'Quattrocento man' floats safely somewhere above the 'churchgoing business man, with a taste for dancing' – the *actual* mover, who is referred to only to be conjured away. And several levels below, a whole host of Greeks ... medieval men and nineteenth-century Americans waits in the wings, ready to act out its part in a painless and absurd 'social history of

art'. Surely that soap opera cannot last long – at least, not for those who take the question of 'experience' seriously. After experience, ideology? Perhaps – but even that, remember, is a concept which could be recuperated, on its own.⁶⁰ [my italics]

Baxandall produces the best of what Clark sees as a unconscionable mode of scholarship. Clark's irritation here is not only that this type of work does not extend its discussions into the level of the ideological, but he suggests that it indeed plays an ideological role within art history that it does not recognize by naturalizing the concept of experience. But Clark's seemingly rigid adherence (seemingly, because his own art history was so much more intellectually flexible than these terse comments might indicate) to the aim of articulating the structures of ideology seemed at that time to offer little room for discussions of agency and the multi-directional and reciprocal nature of production and consumption without necessarily coming to conclusions about the ideological implications thereof.⁶¹

It is perhaps unfortunate that some on the Left dismissed *Painting and Experience*, for the germ of his method, whatever its conclusive shortcomings, offered a sophisticated resource for getting at the ideological.⁶² Through this period most Marxists recognized numerous fundamental problems in the old formulations of ideology.⁶³ In the search for the patterns of the bourgeois political economy, Marx digressed, perhaps necessarily, on his own larger, original project of a unitary knowledge of society.⁶⁴ Marx and Engels's own early pronouncements in works like *The German Ideology* emphasized that the products of a culture are the products of living and that 'life is not determined by consciousness but consciousness by life.' For Marx, the 'production of ideas, of conceptions, of consciousness is at first directly interwoven with the material activity and the material intercourse of men, the *language of real life*'.⁶⁵ Recalling these notions from *The German Ideology*, and reading Baxandall's *Painting and Experience*, we find in Baxandall, I think, a useful account of practices, of how consciousness is enmeshed with material activity.

Painting and Experience also tangentially engages one of the fundamental problems of Marxist cultural criticism: that of the relations between base and superstructure. An impression of Baxandall's oblique yet significant contribution to these problems can be gained by noting some of the ideas elaborated by Raymond Williams in his 'Base and Superstructure in Marxist Cultural Theory' of 1973.⁶⁶ In dialogue with Althusserian revisions of the concept and mechanisms of ideology, Williams proposed an amended definition of superstructure as a reflection and preferred to adopt the notion of mediation, where the superstructure does not mirror the base, but is bound to the base through mediating activities and social practices.⁶⁷ The base is also not stable, rather it is in flux and characterized by processes and contradictions rather than being in a monolithic, determining state.⁶⁸ Williams sees Gramsci's notion of hegemony to be rich in possibilities:

For hegemony supposes the existence of something which is truly total, which is not merely secondary or superstructural, like the weak sense of ideology, but which is lived at such a depth, which saturates the society to

such an extent, and which, as Gramsci put it, even constitutes the limit of common sense for most people under its sway, that it corresponds to the reality of social *experience* very much more clearly than any notions derived from the formula of base and superstructure.⁶⁹ [my italics]

In some respects, *Painting and Experience* can be seen as articulating a range of practices making up the hegemony of visual culture in quattrocento Italy.

Crucial too are Williams's comments on 'experience', not only in the quote above but in the following:

[hegemony] is a whole body of practices and expectations ... it is a set of meanings and values which as they are *experienced* as practices appear as reciprocally confirming. It thus constitutes a sense of reality for most people in the society, a sense of absolute because *experienced* reality beyond which it is very difficult for most members of the society to move ...⁷⁰ [my italics]

Baxandall articulates the first part of 'experience' but does not, as Williams does, go the extra step to suggest that this 'experienced reality' is a limit 'beyond which it is very difficult for most members of the society to move'. Baxandall's work presents 'experience' as constitutive of pictures and vice versa, but this constitution is otherwise seen as natural, the very point of departure for Marxists. What Baxandall articulates is the formation of 'experience' and the practices which revolve around visual culture, but, otherwise, 'experience' does not *do* anything, one just experiences it. In other words, experience is naturalized and is not moderated by issues of class or power.

Yet the parameters of experience and practice that Baxandall articulates do represent an example of the deep structural kind of social analysis which leads one up to the doorstep of any deep readings one might want to make of the workings of power and ideology in fifteenth-century Florence. To harry Baxandall for not pressing conclusions about power in society misses the fundamental purpose of the book, that it is a tool, a primer for the analysis of synchronic visual culture from which one is meant to move on in whatever direction one wishes.

As we look back from our present postmodern perspective, the early negative criticisms of the Period Eye from within art history seem neither to have been strongly heeded nor widely held, while the anthropological and sociological points of view exemplified by Geertz and Bourdieu, and echoed in Baxandall, seem to have been embraced. The generally positive responses from within art history, then, mark a moment when the discipline was clearly amenable to taking an anthropological turn, and was also keen, in the long run, to adopt a kind of depoliticized point of view regarding the analysis of visual culture. The adoption of the visual culture model finds its parallels in other disciplines as well, as do the failures of 1970s' Marxism,⁷¹ and one might also keep in mind that this is also the time of the rise of cultural studies. In hindsight, it seems more appropriate to classify *Painting and Experience* as a cultural studies primer on visual art than as an art history book. It is interesting also to consider how the book and its receptions inflected Baxandall's subsequent work. Like Raymond Williams for

literature and Marxism and Stuart Hall for Cultural Studies, Michael Baxandall became both provocative gadfly and watchful guardian to the practice of art history.

Allan Langdale

Notes

- 1 Clifford Geertz, 'Art as a Cultural System', *Modern Language Notes*, vol. 91, 1976, pp. 1473–99. In the same year Enrico Castelnuovo published an article on the social history of art in Bourdieu's *Actes de la recherche en sciences sociales*, where Baxandall was included, positively, within what now seems the unlikely constellation of Antal, Hauser, Klingender, Schapiro and others. See Enrico Castelnuovo, 'L'histoire sociale de l'art', *Actes de la recherche en sciences sociales*, vol. 6, December 1976, pp. 63–75.
- 2 Michael Baxandall, 'L'oeil du quattrocento', *Actes de la recherche en sciences sociales*, vol. 4, November 1981, pp. 10–49. And the introductory essay by Pierre Bourdieu and Yvette Desaut, 'Pour une sociologie de la perception', pp. 3–9.
- 3 See Timothy J. Clark, 'Preliminary Arguments: Work of Art and Ideology', in *Papers Presented to the Marxism and Art History Session of the College Art Association Meeting*, Chicago, Feb. 1976, p. 5. See also Adrian Rifkin, 'No Particular Thing to Mean', *Block*, vol. 8, 1983, p. 36; and critiques of *Painting and Experience* in Tom Cummins, Deborah Weiner and Joan Weinstein, 'Le rôle de l'historien d'art marxiste dans un société capitaliste', *Histoire et critique des arts*, vols. 9–10, 1979, pp. 97–102.
- 4 The paper was published in a special section of the *Modern Language Notes*, vol. 91, 1976, which reprinted a number of essays from The Charles Sanders Peirce Symposium on Semiotics and the Arts. Other contributors included Umberto Eco, Thomas A. Sebeok and Lionel Gossman.
- 5 Claude Lévi-Strauss, 'A Native Community and its Life-Style', in *Tristes Tropiques*, trans. John and Doreen Weightman, New York, 1984 (original 1955), p. 178. A related essay is Claude Lévi-Strauss, 'Split Representation in the Art of Asia and America', in *Structural Anthropology*, trans. Claire Jacobson and Brooke G. Schoepf, New York & London, 1963, pp. 245–68.
- 6 In this article the author concentrates on aspects of social hierarchy and connections through marriage. He writes: '... the asymmetry of the classes was, in a sense, counterbalanced by the symmetry of the moieties'. See Lévi-Strauss, *Tristes Tropiques*, op. cit. (note 5), p. 196.
- 7 *ibid.*, pp. 196–7.
- 8 Recall Plato's *pharmakon* and Derrida's deconstruction. The notion is interesting in this case where we have a culture without written language. In this case, do the facial tattoos serve some function like that of a written language? A graphic 'language' which operates as a 'remedy' to certain collective anxieties?
- 9 Lévi-Strauss, *Tristes Tropiques*, op. cit. (note 5), pp. 196–7. The original French terms may be found in Claude Lévi-Strauss, *Tristes Tropiques*, Paris, 1955, p. 203.
- 10 Geertz, op. cit. note 1), p. 1488. Here is a clear critique of Lévi-Strauss.
- 11 See M.H. Segal, D.T. Campbell, and Melville J. Herskovits, *The Influence of Culture of Visual Perception*, Indianapolis, 1966. Herskovits was interested in applying psychological studies on what was called 'cognitive style'. Baxandall used this terminology synonymously with Period Eye.
- 12 *ibid.*, p. v.
- 13 *ibid.*, p. 5.
- 14 A view which they also saw as the root of ethnocentrism, which is an ironic turn on Gombrich, who saw relativism as a contributing factor in the very same type of thing. See quote on page 483 above from Gombrich, *Art and Illusion*, (2nd ed.). New York, 1961, p. 20.
- 15 Precursors of these types of studies include the work of Franz Boas, Bronislaw Malinowski, and A.I. Hallowell. See, for example the account of Boas by one of his followers, Ruth Benedict, 'Franz Boas as an Ethnologist', in *Franz Boas, 1858–1942, Memoirs of the American Anthropological Association*, new series, no. 61, 1943. Also A.I. Hallowell, 'Cultural Factors in the Structuralization of Perception', in *Social Psychology at the Crossroads*, J.H. Rohrer and M. Sherif (eds.), New York, 1951, pp. 164–95; and by the same author *Culture and Experience*, Philadelphia, 1955.
- 16 M.H. Segal, D.T. Campbell, and Melville J. Herskovits, op. cit. (note 11), p. 84. The notion might well be used to hypothesize that the discovery of linear perspective was bound to happen in a culture that used accurate surveying and carpentry tools and where the physical environment was urbanized. That is to say, a location where right angles dominated the built environment and therefore the visual field.
- 17 Some of the early structural anthropology of

- Claude Lévi-Strauss bears more than a few similarities to the work of Herskovits and his followers, but Lévi-Strauss focused to a much greater degree on the exposure of parallel systems or patterns of representation, with far less attention to psychological processes involved in perception. Baxandall claims not to have known much about Structuralism at the time of the production of *Giotto and the Orators* [Michael Baxandall, *Giotto and the Orators: humanist observers of painting in Italy and the discovery of pictorial composition, 1350–1450*, London, 1971] and *Painting and Experience*. Even so, he recalls hearing a talk by Lévi-Strauss and notes that he was close friends with several anthropologists in London, such as Jack Goody and Peter Ucko, who were sympathetic to French Structural Anthropology. See Baxandall interview, Appendix I in Allan Langdale, 'Art History and Intellectual History: Michael Baxandall's Work between 1963 and 1985', unpublished PhD dissertation, U.C. Santa Barbara, 1995, pp. 372–3 (hereafter Baxandall Interview).
- 18 Michael Baxandall, *Painting and Experience in Fifteenth-Century Italy: a primer in the social history of pictorial style*, Oxford, 1972, p. 1.
 - 19 *ibid.*
 - 20 *ibid.*, p. 2.
 - 21 A review outlining these concerns was Ulrich Middeldorf, review of Michael Baxandall's *Painting and Experience in Fifteenth-Century Italy* in *Art Bulletin*, vol. 57, no. 2, June 1975, pp. 284–5. Baxandall commented on Gombrich's suspicious reaction in an interview in 1994. Baxandall Interview, p. 346. See also pp 364–5.
 - 22 Gombrich, *op. cit.* (note 14), p. 20.
 - 23 *ibid.*, pp. 181–287.
 - 24 Especially the theories of Adelbert Ames and his followers, as well as J.J. Gibson, *The Perception of the Visual World*, Boston, 1950. For comments on Gombrich's use of Amesian perceptualism, see the review by the perceptual psychologist John Beloff, 'Some Comments on the Gombrich Problem', *British Journal of Aesthetics*, vol. 1, no. 2, March 1961, p. 64. See also the objections in Rudolf Arnheim's review in *Art Bulletin*, vol. 44, no. 1, March 1962, pp. 75–9. See especially pp. 77–8.
 - 25 For an attack on the logic of the schemata, as well as other concepts argued by Gombrich in *Art and Illusion*, see the review by Richard Wollheim, 'Art and Illusion' *British Journal of Aesthetics*, vol. 3, no. 1, January 1963, pp. 15–37. See especially pp. 21–3.
 - 26 Perry Anderson, 'Components of the National Culture', *New Left Review*, vol. 50, July/August 1968, p. 39. See also the extensive critique of Gombrich's ideas and method in Norman Bryson, *Vision and Painting. The Logic of the Gaze*, New Haven and London, 1983.
 - 27 Baxandall, *op. cit.* (note 19), p. 29. The position is ultimately Kantian. I do not give an overview of the philosophical history of these notions, but I refer the reader to the introduction of Michael Ann Holly, *Panofsky and the Foundations of Art History*, Ithaca and London, 1984, pp. 21–45.
 - 28 Baxandall, *op. cit.* (note 18), p. 29.
 - 29 *ibid.*, p. 30.
 - 30 *ibid.* Baxandall's discussion of the diagram parallels in some respects the famous duck-rabbit drawing dealt with by Gombrich in *Art and Illusion* and, not unimportantly, Wittgenstein in his *Philosophical Investigations*, trans. G.E.M. Anscomb, New York, 1953, p. 194c.
 - 31 A good overview of related methods can be found in Kenneth M. Goldstein and Sheldon Blackman, *Cognitive Style. Five Approaches and Relevant Research*, New York, 1978. See Baxandall Interview, p. 12. In *Painting and Experience* Baxandall cites H. A. Witkin's 'A Cognitive Style Approach to Cross-Cultural Research', *International Journal of Psychology*, vol. 2, 1967, pp. 233–50.
 - 32 Baxandall, *op. cit.* (note 18), pp. 29–30.
 - 33 *ibid.*, p. 30.
 - 34 *ibid.*, pp. 31–2.
 - 35 *ibid.*, p. 40.
 - 36 Erwin Panofsky, *Gothic Architecture and Scholasticism*, Cleveland and New York, 1967 (original 1951), pp. 20–1.
 - 37 This translation is from Roger Chartier, 'Intellectual History or Sociocultural History? The French Trajectories', in *Modern European Intellectual History: Reappraisals and New Perspectives*, Dominick LaCapra and Steven L. Kaplan (eds), London and Ithaca, 1982, pp. 18–19. See Lucien Febvre, *Le problème de l'incroyance au XVI^e siècle. La religion de Rabelais*, Paris, 1968, pp. 141–2. Chartier also comments on this aspect of Febvre: 'What defines mental equipment in these pages is the state of language, its lexicon, its syntax, the scientific language and instruments, and also the "sensitive support of thought" represented by the system of perception, whose variable economy determines the structure of affectivity.' See p. 19.
 - 38 Panofsky, *op. cit.* (note 36), pp. 67–8.
 - 39 See Chartier, *op. cit.* (note 37), pp. 20–1.
 - 40 *ibid.*, p. 21. See the somewhat hedging criticism of Panofsky in Meyer Shapiro's, 'Style', in A.L. Kroeber (ed.), *Anthropology Today: An Encyclopedic Inventory*, Chicago, 1953, pp. 305–306, where Shapiro writes: 'The attempts to derive style from thought are often too vague to yield more than suggestive *aperçus*; the method breeds analogical speculations which do not hold up under detailed critical study. The history of the analogy drawn up between the Gothic cathedral and scholastic theology is an example ... Yet one hesitates to reject such analogies in principle, since the cathedral belongs to the same religious sphere as does contemporary theology.'

- 41 Baxandall, op. cit. (note 18), pp. 38–9. Baxandall also mentions that there is also a probable variation in this group as to profession, such as physicians 'trained ... to observe the relations of member to member of the human body as a means to diagnosis', p. 39.
- 42 *ibid.*, p. 40.
- 43 *ibid.*
- 44 It should be noted that other sociologists, who, like Bourdieu, are indebted to Durkheim and Weber (such as Anthony Giddens and Erving Goffman) could have been used to compare with the 'sociological' aspects of *Painting and Experience*. Bourdieu's concepts, however, offer richer resonances.
- 45 My account is derived mostly from essays in Richard Harker, Cheleen Mahar and Chris Wilkes (eds), *An Introduction to the Work of Pierre Bourdieu*, London, 1990; Derek Robbins, *The Work of Pierre Bourdieu: Recognizing Society*, Boulder and San Francisco, 1991. See also the informative introduction by Randal Johnson in Pierre Bourdieu, *The Field of Cultural Production. Essays on Art and Literature*, ed. Randal Johnson, New York, 1993, pp. 1–25. For a recent bibliography citing several overviews of Bourdieu's work, see p. 268, note 3 of Johnson's book.
- 46 *An Introduction to the Work of Pierre Bourdieu*, op. cit. (note 45), p. 3. There are some important levels of overlap with Bourdieu's theory of practice and Anthony Giddens's 'structuration theory'. For Giddens, see *The Constitution of Society. Outline of the Theory of Structuration*, Berkeley and Los Angeles, 1984. Giddens' central interest, like Bourdieu's, is to attempt a viable reconciliation between agency and structuralism.
- 47 See Pierre Bourdieu, 'The Genesis of the Concepts of Habitus and Field', trans. Channa Newman, *Sociocriticism*, vol. 2, December 1985, p. 5–20.
- 48 Pierre Bourdieu and Yvette Desault, op. cit. (note 2), pp. 3–9. Introductory article to Michael Baxandall, 'L'oeil du quattroceto', op. cit. (note 2), pp. 10–49.
- 49 Bourdieu, op. cit. (note 48), p. 14.
- 50 Johnson's introduction in Bourdieu, op. cit. (note 45), p. 5. Bourdieu also uses the term 'mastery' (*maîtrise*) to refer to the 'practical mastery which people possess of their situations ...' See Robbins, op. cit. (note 45), pp. 141–8.
- 51 Pierre Bourdieu and J.-C. Passeron, *Reproduction in Education, Society and Culture*, London, 1977 (original 1970). For an account, see Richard Harker, 'Bourdieu–Education and Reproduction', in *An Introduction to the Work of Pierre Bourdieu*, op. cit. (note 45), pp. 86–108.
- 52 Johnson's introduction in Bourdieu, *The Field of Cultural Production. Essays on Art and Literature*, op. cit. (note 45), p. 7.
- 53 The field of the academic is examined in Pierre Bourdieu, *Homo Academicus*, Cambridge, 1988.
- 54 Timothy J. Clark, *Image of the People. Gustave Courbet and the Second French Republic 1848–1851*, Greenwich, Conn., 1973, pp. 9–20. In the next year Clark published *The Absolute Bourgeois*, London, 1974.
- 55 Clark, 'The Conditions of Artistic Creation', *Times Literary Supplement*, 24 May 1974, pp. 561–2.
- 56 O.K. Werckmeister was also a central figure. See his 'Marx on Ideology and Art', *New Literary History*, vol. 4, no. 3, Spring 1973, pp. 501–519. Significant for its generally negative critical reception, even among Marxists, was Nicos Hadjinicolaou's *Art History and Class Struggle*, trans. Louise Asmal, London, 1978, which was originally published in French in 1973. See the review by Alan Wallach, 'In Search of A Marxist Theory of Art', *Block*, vol. 4, 1981, pp. 15–17. Another figure in the debates was Kurt Forster. See his 'Critical History of Art or Transfiguration of Values?' *New Literary History*, vol. 3, no. 3, 1972, pp. 459–70. See as well John Tagg, 'Marxism and Art History', *Marxism Today*, vol. 21, no. 6, June 1977, pp. 183–92.
- 57 Clark, 'The Conditions of Artistic Creation', op. cit. (note 55), p. 562.
- 58 *ibid.*, p. 561.
- 59 The work of art, in this structure, is directly linked to the fundamental relationship between classes. Clark, op. cit. (note 55), p. 562. See also T.J. Clark, *The Painting of Modern Life: Paris in the art of Manet and his followers*, New York, 1984, pp. 7–8.
- 60 Clark, 'Preliminary Arguments: Work of Art and Ideology', op. cit. (note 3), p. 5. See also Rifkin, op. cit. (note 3), p. 36. Clark and Baxandall are similarly juxtaposed – to the benefit of Clark – in Tom Cummings, Deborah Weiner and Joan Weinstein, 'Le rôle de l'historien d'art marxiste dans un société capitaliste', op. cit. (note 3), pp. 97–102. This article's authors seem to share Clark's views; for them, the economic is the only crucial realm in which 'ideology' operates. Adrian Rifkin criticizes Gombrich and Baxandall together in 'Can Gramsci Save Art History?' *Block*, vol. 3, 1980, pp. 38–9.
- 61 With the publication of *The Painting of Modern Life* critiques of Clark's method were forwarded by Marxists as well as conservative art historians. For the range, from Left to Right, see these reviews: Klaus Herding, 'Manet's Imagery Reconstructed', *October*, vol. 37, Summer 1986, pp. 113–24; Adrian Rifkin, 'Marx' Clarkism', *Art History*, vol. 8, no. 4, December 1985, pp. 488–95; section from Richard Schiff 'Art History and the Nineteenth Century: Realism and Resistance', *Art Bulletin*, vol. 70, no. 1, March 1988, pp. 44–8; and, finally, Hilton Kramer's reactionary response in 'T.J. Clark and the Marxist Critique of Modernist Painting', *The New Criterion*, vol. 3, no. 7, March 1985, pp. 1–8.

- 62 Professor Clark, however, has said that, in many ways, Marxist art historians did not ultimately dismiss this book, and his own *Painting of Modern Life* was partly a response to problems and issues generated by *Painting and Experience*. This comment was made in Professor Clark's capacity of a respondent to my paper given at the Getty Center in November of 1996, 'The Rise and Fall of the Social History of Art'.
- 63 See the section 'The Poverty of Ideology' in Alex Callinicos, *Marxism and Philosophy*, Oxford, 1983, pp. 127–36. See also Keith Moxey, 'Ideology' chapter in *The Practice of Theory: Poststructuralism, Cultural Politics, and Art History*, Ithaca and New York, 1994, pp. 41–50. Moxey gives a brief survey which, unfortunately, does not mention Gramsci.
- 64 There are many positions regarding how Marx is used by historians; whether, for example, the 'key' to Marx, or the 'true' Marx, is to be found in the early or late writings. Althusser identified what he called an 'epistemological break', a 'rupture' in Marx in his attempt to locate a 'true' Marx. See Dominick LaCapra, *Rethinking Intellectual History: Texts, Contexts, Language*, Ithaca and London, 1983, p. 326.
- 65 I here depend on Perry Anderson's observations on Marx and on the revisionary work of Edward Thompson, particularly his *The Poverty of Theory and other Essays*, London, 1978. See Perry Anderson, *Arguments Within English Marxism*, London, 1980, p. 59.
- 66 Raymond Williams, 'Base and Superstructure in Marxist Cultural Theory', *New Left Review*, November–December 1973, pp. 3–16.
- 67 *ibid.*, p. 5. See, as well T.J. Clark's later comments on ideology in *The Painting of Modern Life*, *op. cit.* (note 59), p. 8.
- 68 Williams, *op. cit.* (note 66), pp. 5–6.
- 69 *ibid.*, p. 8.
- 70 *ibid.*, p. 9.
- 71 Yet a recent experience of mine is surely played out many times in the art-historical world. A Marxian friend of mine got a job and was given the task of teaching Italian Renaissance art which was not really his field. He called me for suggested texts. '*Painting and Experience*,' I said. 'Obviously,' he replied, 'but what else?'